

**EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON NEWS PUBLICATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE  
STANDARD GROUP**

**KINYANJUI SHARON WACEKE**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES OF THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS  
COMMUNICATION**

**OCTOBER 2022**

## DECLARATION

This research thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any form either in this University or any other Institution of higher learning.

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 5.4.2021

**Kinyanjui Sharon Waceke**

**K50/12013/2018**

## ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR

This research thesis has been developed under my guidance and submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 5.4.2021

**Prof. George Nyabuga**

**University of Nairobi**

## DEDICATION

This project is sincerely dedicated to my beloved parents, who have constantly inspired me and provided their spiritual and financial support and to my brothers for their encouragement and advice. Above all, I dedicate this study to the Almighty God for protection, sound mind, good health, courage, strength and favour to undertake this work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor George Nyabuga for his invaluable guidance, comments and suggestions throughout this project. I remain grateful to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication administration for supporting me during the entire phase of the course.

## ABSTRACT

News institutions are continually rethinking and redesigning their strategies because of the potentially disruptive effects of social media. The emergence of new media has affected operations of news organizations as well as the manner in which audiences consume news. The debate on the effect of social media on news publication continues amid technological disruptions. Current literature on social media usage in the context of journalism practice has largely delved into use of social media as a means of news gathering or news distribution, and consumption. This study was informed by the following objectives: to assess social media effects on news publication; to examine the adoption of social media on news publication at the Standard Group; and to determine the effects of social media on news publications at the Standard Group. This was a qualitative study with a cross-sectional research design, which sought to determine the effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group. Key informant interviews were conducted with news staff of the Standard Group who were purposively selected. The sample size of the study constituted of 10 seasonal editors. The Standard Group's social media policy and the digital/online department documentation of policies, procedures and work instructions were reviewed to obtain information about the effects of social media on news publication. Further, the news institution's social media sites were analyzed to gain a deeper understanding on use of social networks for news publication. Analysis of qualitative data was done thematically. The data is presented in a narrative description and verbatim quotes. The overall findings of the study show that social media has become a major news source, it has proliferated hate speech and falsity, affected exclusivity in breaking of news, led to content disruption, steered versatility and creativity in news publication, and affected publication of breakings news. Further, the results of the study establishes that the Standard Group has adopted social media primarily to break stories in real time, receive feedback and interact with its content users, post links to stories, preview newspapers, as well as a news platform for production and publication of news. Social media has disrupted news sourcing, processing, and created opportunities for the media house to shift towards a digital newsroom. The study further shows that social media has improved audience experience and given rise to a new structure of work at the Standard Group. This digital media technology has further stirred the need for multimedia journalism at the Standard Group. The study recommends that media institutions and journalists to fact check and verify information they source and process as news from social media platforms.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, rationale, and significance of the study. It also provides the scope and limitation of the research as well as operational definition of some of the key terms.

#### **1.1 Background information**

Social media has contributed to disruptions on news sourcing, distribution, and publication and is presently a reality in Kenya just like it is around the world (Ogola & Owuor, 2016). Over the last decade, different informative sites, blogs, and social networks on the internet have provided news media with opportunities to interact with news consumers in real time (Bowd, 2016). According to Erlis (2015), advancements in information technology, and in particular, availability of internet, has led to proliferation of internet users and the spread of social media usage across different parts of the world. The availability of digital gadgets and affordable internet has changed the way audiences access information and news.

Scholars (for example, Hepp, 2013) argue that digital media encompasses the newest phase of media's contribution to modernity, with emphasis on the internet as a network of networks that connects all types of communications. The technological changes have continually created a progressive effect in the manner in which media houses function. In the modern world, people no longer wait for prime news from media outlets to get acquainted on current affairs, events, and occurrences. In this context, media institutions have recognized the impact of technologies, adapted accordingly and customized content to satisfy audience needs.

Harper (2010) notes that “many traditional and non-traditional media outlets report and comment on how the internet and social media, especially social networking, have begun to seriously affect news organizations and how they operate” (para. 2). Currently, newspapers face a crisis on how to make the news profitable in the digital age. Social media now creates a variety of platforms where people express themselves in different ways. Bergstrom and Belfrage (2018) indicate that social network sites are becoming essential to how people consume news.

The increasing popularity and use of platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook across the world has provided audiences with opportunities to create, collaborate, and share their media, a state of affairs that has baffled traditional news institutions and governments (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). This is illustrated by, for example Hitwise (cited in Newman, 2011) who contends that social networking is now the most popular online activity in the United Kingdom. Hitwise points out that one in six page views are now spent on Facebook alone with an average of around 30 minutes per user per day in the UK. A report published by Pew Research Center in 2017 revealed that 45% of American adults use Facebook as their main source of news with a half of this number relying entirely on Facebook as the sole site for news (Pew Research Center, 2017).

According to *Kenyan Media Trends and Predictions 2020 Report* published by the Innovation Centre of the Aga Khan University’s Graduate School of Media and Communications, many Kenyans are now consuming content via social media. The report also indicates that the media industry in Kenya has been struggling with implications of the digital disruption occasioned by the

mobile phone, internet and social media platforms (Aga Khan Graduate School of Media and Communications, 2020). The report further highlights that news media organizations ought to rethink their strategies to keep up with the digital disruption. It also highlights that technology will be at the epicenter of these strategies in the form of data, artificial intelligence, machine learning and tech-empowered storytelling. In this case, publication of news via social media is a result of use of technology for storytelling.

Social media has changed the way news is generated and accessed in Kenya, especially among the young demographic, as the country has largely relied on various digital media technologies to disseminate information in education, entertainment, and sport, including marketing and commentary (Ogola & Owuor, 2016). Despite importance of social media platforms in generation and access to news, the debate on their effects on news publication has been inconclusive, given that there are conflicting views on the nature of this relationship. In fact, there are scholars (see, for example, Araújo & Zilber, 2016) who argue that social media provides a platform for news gathering, distribution, and consumption; while others, such as Newman (2019), suggest that it acts as a barrier to making news profitable. Against this background, the core purpose of this study was to examine how the social media has altered news publication in media institutions with a particular reference to the Standard Group as a case study.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

There have been concerted efforts by media institutions to overhaul their business strategies and models given that the media industry has been experiencing a shift from the traditional outlets, such as magazines and newspapers, to digital-based sources of news (Aga Khan School of Media

and Communications, 2020). Advertising revenue has already plummeted because of structural shifts, which will continue to affect journalism even in the future. In fact, companies are looking to subscriptions to make up the difference, but the limits of this are likely to become apparent in the future (Newman, 2019). Taken together, these trends are leading to a wave of journalistic layoffs as a result of lethargy to adapt social media for news publication.

According to Kenya Media Landscape Report of 2019 conducted by Reelforge Media and TIFA Research, Kenyan media landscape has undergone several significant transformations over the last five years. There has been growth in data subscribers, which could be attributed to the massive investments by mobile operators and internet service providers into base stations and the last mile fiber optic transmission links to support the increasing bandwidth demand in the country. Further, the report says that Kenyans are using their mobile phones data services to access radio, TV and print content on-demand. Cost of internet in Kenya is considered to be among the cheapest in Africa, making social media access generally affordable to many Kenyans.

The media landscape in Kenya and the world at large has increasingly been reflecting the effects of digital technology that has taken competition for business and audiences to the doorsteps of conventional media houses (Aga Khan School of Media and Communications, 2020). Digital media emerged and consumers have changed their preferences (Fang et al., 2014). These could be an indication that more Kenyans are now consuming news via social media, which in turn could be affecting news publication.

Besides, there is evidence that studies have been conducted in Kenya on social media and journalism. Ndonge and Khasandi-Telewa (2013) explored the interlinkage between internet technology and the 21st Century newspaper in Kenya. Nyamboga (2014) discussed social media in Kenyan journalism in regards to its opportunities, benefits, and challenges. Ogola and Owuor (2016) examined citizen journalism in Kenya as a contested “third space”. The Media Council of Kenya explored the impact of digital technologies and internet on media and journalism in Kenya (Media Council of Kenya, 2016). None of the aforementioned studies, however, investigated the effects of social media on news publication in Kenya with specific reference to the Standard Group. Internationally, much of the existing literature focus on effects of social media on news consumption (for example, Flaxman, Goel & Rao, 2013; Fissel, 2017; Levy, 2020), effects of news consumption via social media and news information overload (Lee, Lindsey, & Kim, 2017) and an international exploration of sensationalism and social media recommendations in online news publications (Kilgo et al. 2018). In view of this, active research linking the effects of social media on news publication by the Standard Group, is worth exploring.

Despite the impact of digital disruptions caused by social media on production of journalism, little information exists on how media outlets are prepared to execute commercial and content strategies in the face of news contained in the media of the new generation, which often lacks fact-checking, but greatly accessed, posted, and shared by various individuals online. In this regard, the proposed study sought to fill the identified gaps in knowledge by investigating the effects of social media on news publication by the Standard Group.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The main objective of the study was to investigate the effects of social media on news publication in Kenya, with a particular focus on the Standard Group.

This will be supported by the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess social media effects on news publication.
- ii. To examine the adoption of social media on news publication at the Standard Group.
- iii. To determine the effects of social media on news publications at the Standard Group.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- i. What are the effects of social media on news publication?
- ii. How has the Standard Group adopted social media in its news publication?
- iii. What are the effects of social media on news publications at the Standard Group?

### **1.5 Justification**

The Media Council of Kenya (2019) indicates that significant numbers of newspaper readers and electronic media audiences have shifted from relying on traditional media for news to digital platforms. Further, it indicates that access to mobile and digital technologies and their increasing application in Kenya have had numerous consequences on media production, dissemination, reception and publication.

There is limited data on the effects of social media on news publication within the context of Kenyan media outlets given that much of the existing literature has largely focused on the nexus between internet technology and newspapers (Ndonye and Khasandi-Telewa, 2013), social media

and print journalism (Kiguta, 2018), social media in Kenyan journalism (Nyamboga, 2014). Accordingly, evidence linking the effects of social media on news publication, and, in particular, by Standard Group, is insufficient and thus it is critical to determine this specific relationship.

## **1.6 Rationale**

Social media, which is a component of the wider digital media, is disrupting traditional media and thus, voices of social media users can now shape a wide range of debates that are of interest to the public, which in turn will have an enormous influence on news publication. Tech savvy citizens can verify and unearth information that was previously a reserve of mainstream media. In this regard, there have been concerted efforts by mainstream media to seek information at the same pace as social media users and publish the same on platforms where they source information. Inasmuch as traditional media is still shaping the news agenda, social media has occasionally set the social media agenda especially in instances where the issues at hand directly touch the citizens.

In addition, traditional media have their own online versions, some have embraced social media fully, while others are still lagging behind. Social media has seen the birth of new content formats, packaging and modern journalism skills. According to the Social Media Use in Kenya: Trends and Practices report conducted by United States International University Africa, twenty two percent (22%) of Kenyans spend time on social media looking for information. This means there is a higher likelihood that media houses, such as Standard Media Group, might be investing in use of social media for news publication since an increasing number of individuals receive information on current affairs and politics via social media as opposed to mass media.



### **1.7 Significance of the study**

The findings of this study will provide insights on the effects of social media on news publication where scholars and academicians will gain better understanding on the implication of adopting social media on publication of news by media organizations. Therefore, the results to be obtained from this study will contribute to academic and scholarly knowledge.

The regulators and policy makers, such as the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), will be provided with opportunities to understand various dynamics in the media sector. In doing so, this ought to influence the nature of policy formulation regarding best practices of harnessing digital technology, particularly social media, to boost revenues and keep their audience. The findings of the study may offer a basis for further research related to the effects of social media on news publication, as well as build up to more theoretical frameworks on the effects of social media on news publication. From the theoretical perspective, this study will enhance the adaptive structuration theory and the new media theory, and as such, contribute to scholarly knowledge on the applicability of these paradigms.

### **1.8 Scope and Limitation**

The research study was limited to the Standard Group, and thus while the findings and conclusions will be relevant to social media use by media companies, the same might not be generalizable to the rest of the media houses in Kenya. However, given there are similarities in modalities of use of social media in Kenya, it is possible that the conclusions will be applicable to other media in Kenya with similar uses of social media.

## 1.9 Operational definitions

- Social media** Refers to applications and websites designed to facilitate sharing of content in real time, efficiently, and quickly by media institutions as they engage with the public.
- News publication** Involves news published and shared on social media by media organizations to engage their audiences.
- New media** Refers to the means of communication that use digital technologies, such as Twitter and Facebook.
- Twitter** A microblogging website that permits one to send or receive short posts that are 140 characters long.
- Digital media** Media that distributes information through electronic devices, such as a mobile phone or device, or computer.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the appropriation and use of social media, and its effects on journalism with particular focus on news publication. It also offers the theoretical framework within which this study is based.

#### **2.2 The Effect of Social Media on Journalism**

The last few years have brought many new challenges for news media (Monahan & Ettinger, 2018). The advent of the Internet and the accompanying implementation of new distribution models have radically changed the way journalism is practiced (Griessner, 2012). One aspect of this development is social media. Interactive platforms like Facebook or Twitter have brought about new dimensions and dynamic ways of newsgathering (Wilding, Fray, Molitorisz, & McKewon, 2018). As traditional news media like newspapers or broadcasters have already adapted to this information and communication tools to a large extent, there is still a big task at hand for news agencies (Griessner, 2012). In effect, this suggests that media outlets are in the state of realigning their business models to make use of these platforms to interact with users.

Rapid changes have taken place at a global level on the overall news environment and news consumption practices. The sustained transformations have led to the inclusion of ordinary individuals in the information cycle process, unlike in the past where professional journalists controlled the information cycle (Bergstrom and Belfrage (2018). Domingo, Masip and Costera Meijer (2015) posit that reputable media outlets are responsible for most of the news production, which is consumed in the modern era, as well as which goes round in the social media. However,

Bergstrom and Belfrage (2018) observe that there has been a decrease in use of legacy news media, such as radio, television, and newspapers, on their traditional platforms. At the same time, social network sites are becoming central to the way people consume news. In fact, Barthel, Shearer, Gottfried, and Mitchell (2015) argue that these social media sites overall, and particularly, conversational networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, are becoming significant sources for news.

The change to the use of social media sites and digital media channels is increasingly becoming a day-to-day norm among young people, especially in the West (Pothong & Nielsen, 2016). Consequently, the mode of news consumption by this generation has become a challenge for democracy, journalism practice, and news industries in entirety. Social media sites have become important regarding the way young people experience news since content posted online encompasses of both public and private publication and the news is connected to a wide range of activities (Domingo et al., 2015). Social media is therefore, a platform that provides opportunities for the young people to express their viewpoints online on different topical issues irrespective of whether their perspectives will jeopardize democracy or not (Abdulrauf, Hamid, & Ishak, 2015).

A Digital News Report on Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions report, Newman (2019) states that “journalism will continue to be hollowed out by structural shifts that have already led to significant falls in advertising revenue because of market power, privacy and misinformation” (para. 1). The report notes that young people are used to reading news on the Internet, while older people prefer traditional media channels like TV or printed newspapers. Social media was once seen as an enabler of free information, helping citizens to break free from

elite gatekeepers like journalists who already aggravated disinformation and misinformation, which is harder to defeat or control.

While social media is penetrating the whole news industry, concerns have been raised on whether or not it poses competition to news organizations (Nielsen, Cornia & Kalogeropoulos, 2016). Some readers believe they should, and others think that social media is another way of delivering information (Araújo & Zilber, 2016; Newman, 2019). Digital media has emerged as a major source of news in the last decade where a growing number of people are accessing news through smartphones, implying that this trend has disrupted the way news is found or accessed (Lee et al., 2017). Pew Research Center (2017) states that the number of people who read news on several social media platforms grow every year. For instance, while only 15% of all American digital news readers used to get news from two or more platforms in 2013, 18% did that in 2016. Their number increased to 26% in 2017.

News organizations are becoming increasingly worried about the potentially disruptive effect of social media on their business models (Newman, 2019). They are struggling to square the circle between using these new powerful open networks to drive traffic and engagement whilst maximizing commercial revenues on their own websites (Lehtisaari et al., 2018). Social media platforms, and in particular, Twitter and Facebook, have become essential tools for journalists (Carlson, 2018). In fact, they have spread rapidly through newsrooms, and now play a central role in the way stories are sourced, broken and distributed and thus, contributing to speeding up of the news cycle.

News organisations may not always be first to publish the news, but their agendas and discussions continue to shape conversations around major news stories (Wilding et al., 2018). News correspondents and columnists are gaining new authority and influence through their expert use of social media. Accordingly, social media platforms have made it possible for some journalists to attract a relatively higher number of audiences without relying on the brands of their news organizations (Kilgo et al., 2018).

### **2.3 Adoption of Social Media on News Publication**

Media institutions have leveraged social media platforms to achieve business targets and results (Akram & Kumar, 2017). Social media has emerged as a newest mode of communication among people and between companies and people where the former utilizes existing online tools, like YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook (Gómez, Lopez, & Molina, 2019). The emergence of large technology firms has continued to enable people globally to use digital media platforms in an attractive and easier manner by making services available like messaging, video sharing, social networking, and search (Nielsen et al., 2016). Utilization of internet tools, particularly those related to social networking, are shaping the existing relationship between firms and the public, including the way people interact (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015).

Araújo and Zilber (2016) indicate that social media constitutes of several sites that facilitate conversations and communication among many people. In spite of these sites being used to reach targeted audiences, firms have a responsibility of identifying platforms being used by their target users (Akram & Kumar, 2017). Communication taking place on social media relies on features that promote content publishing and sharing like music, photos, and videos (Alarcón, Sepúlveda,

Valenzuela-Fernández, & Gil-Lafuente, 2018). The capability of social media goes beyond conversations taking place online to include other services, such as informal, professional, and personal networks; location guides and event locations; commerce, involving sharing of purchases and online store recommendations; and mass multiplayer, social, or casual games.

A research by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2012 on internet economy, found out that 69% of the firms studied, possessed websites whereas 96% utilized the internet. Further, it revealed that a lot of people were increasingly using the internet, particularly social media, for banking, social networking, learning, shopping, and communicating (OECD, 2012). The OECD report further notes that almost half of all employed individuals are connected to the Internet at work.

Besides, a survey carried out by Pew research in 2017 notes that more Americans were turning to social media for news as the number of those using mobile phones to access news grows. The survey by Pew further found out that television news consumption reduced drastically as more people were consuming news online. In fact, there was a 7% gap between television and online news consumption where the former stood at 50% while the latter was 43% in 2017. Equally, the survey revealed that social media links from news organizations were more accessed for news, as users preferred recognized sources.

The rapidly changing environment of doing business and the increasing number of individuals taking advantage of mobile phone-based technologies to access news online has led to adoption of social media by media institutions as a means to obtaining and attracting audience online (Park,

2019). Beginning the decade after the year 2010, most media organizations have continually adopted social media as the basis of routing traffic to their sites (Hong, 2012). For example, Emmett (cited in Hong, 2012) posited that New York Times had adopted social media as one of the strategic means of broadcasting news online and uses new generation media as a marketing tool.

#### **2.4 Benefits, Opportunities and Challenges of Social Media**

Advances in technology have contributed a lot to the growth of journalism worldwide (Weaver, & Willnat, 2016). Sourcing information and disseminating information has been made easy by the internet. Social media especially has made it possible for journalists and others to publish, share, and discuss news events (Nyamboga, 2014). After the commencement of technology on new media, newspapers have been undergoing reduction of sales, and as such, signaling the onset of difficulties in media outlets to raise substantial amount of income to remain afloat in the digital environment (Abbey, 2019).

The proliferation of internet and social media usage continues to grow at an exponential rate where there were 3.8 billion social media users as of January 2020 (Hruska & Maresova, 2020). These users are able to interact with one another, as well as with countless news companies who have entered the social media world. Thus, journalism not only has to cope with what shaped the last decades in regards to changing work flows, but it is also confronted with a new type of audience (Lewis & Molyneux, 2018). People are able to gather more news from many different channels than ever before, using traditional sources like newspapers, television or radio alongside online sources or apps on their smart phones.



Social media and the internet in general have expedited gathering of different types of news and increased the speed with which audiences receive or access such news (Safari, 2018). According to Thomas (2013), “having been previously restricted to morning newspapers and on-the-hour news broadcasts, which only presented a selection of news stories, now access to this information is only a mouse click away. Interactivity facilitated by social media usage ensures both access to the audience as users and producers, and the development of a relationship with sources that can publish news off their own back” (p. 17). There is participatory and feedback from the receivers of information and constant involvement of journalists, leading to a shift of how journalistic roles are perceived.

There has been phenomenal growth in the use of social media in Kenya, partly contributed by the relatively cheaper internet and availability of cellphones among most of the people in the country (Aga Khan School of Media and Communications, 2020). Consequently, the journalism industry has undergone transformations because of the arrival of social media, which is designed to facilitate the process of news gathering and dissemination. Social networking sites, email, instant messaging systems, blogs, and websites have created opportunities for journalists to collaborate, exchange information, and connect among themselves (Wise & Shorter, 2014). Nyamboga (2014) notes that Kenya is embracing social media as a tool to disseminate information thus everyone has the potential to be a watchdog, citizen journalist or photo journalist and constantly survey the world around them and share what they source online.

Despite the growing importance of social media usage globally in making access to information more possible, there are concerns that it may contribute to misinformation, including the diminished ability to acquire compelling stories from a large volume of information published online by different users on a daily basis (Newman, 2019). This is illustrated by, for example Beacker (cited in Nyamboga, 2014), who posits that “while some journalists, especially those from big media houses, report objectively; many journalists do not crosscheck facts from their sources” (p. 92).

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.5.1 Adaptive Structuration Theory**

The Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST) as one of the extensions of structural theory, was propounded by Anthony Giddens to deepen the social dimension related to information technology (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011). The theory elucidates adoption and utilization of information systems within the context of social construction through use of technology by personnel affiliated to a given institution. The adaptive structuration theory extends structuring models that view organizational change as technology-centered to include the mutual influence of both social processes and technology (Daltro, dos Santos & Da, 2020).

The theory is used to examine usage of advanced information technologies, defined by DeSanctis and Poole (1994) as those that allow for many parties to participate in a myriad of activities in an organization, for instance, messaging systems, executive information, decision support systems, and remote collaboration system, as well as social media, which has been taken into consideration in the present research as facilitating publication of news.

Social media has been operationalized in this study as those platforms that make it possible for development of collaborative content, social interaction and information sharing/publication in a wide range of formats, like videos, audios, image, and texts. Given that technology provides opportunities for structuring, the adaptive structuring theory offers a framework, which explains how the use of social media has acted as a springboard of facilitating organizational change made possible through advancement in technology (Daltro et al., 2020). Social media has occasioned disruptions in the media industry and media institutions are continually readjusting their strategies and business models to remain competitive.

Shiel, Violanti and Slusarski (2011) indicate that there are fundamental resources involved in the interplay between organizational change and technology. The authors define resources as equipment, rules, and people. It is emphasized that, in describing people as resources, the authors classify generation interference; the previous experience with advanced technologies, including in personal scope and in the way of learning the technology, are individual factors that, combined with organizational factors, explain the organizational change triggered by social media.

On the use of social media, the adaptive structuration theory avers that the original purposes associated with web 2.0 platform technologies have expanded beyond what developers have proposed and have increasingly replaced traditional structures, rules, and functionalities in organizations. Bergstrom and Belfrage (2018) posit that there has been a decrease in use of legacy news like television and newspapers as social media sites have become important in the way people access and experience news. Change in technology, particularly social media, has often disrupted traditional journalism practice, necessitating media organizations to recognize the effect of

technology and adapted accordingly by customizing content that is appealing to their audiences.

### **2.5.2 New Media Theory**

New media theory explains how digital technologies have changed the entire landscape of mass communication and fostered a digital culture where viewers and readers have become major drivers of social interactions (Earnshaw, 2018). According to the new media theory, emergence of new media has affected the media landscape to a great extent, revolutionizing processes related to content generation, which affect the political and social environments at local, national, and global scale (Stevenson, 2016).

Kent and Li (2020) posit that social media as a computer-mediated technology constitute one of the formidable social innovations within communication, changing the mode of human interactions or how they communicate and the overall practice of journalism, public relations and marketing. The underlying value proposition of social media platforms has precipitated the conscious adoption of this technology by media institutions for promoting or delivering their work (Pathak, 2018). Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, affect the whole spectrum of communication ranging from new gathering, distribution, and consumption.

Individual producers and newscasters are using social media platforms to gather news content and sources through online postings for audiences to contribute and provide views on topical issues, which are later published or covered in televised newscasts (Adornato, 2015). To this end, this theory provides a meaningful theoretical foundation and insights to understand the overall effects of social media usage on journalism practice, especially content and news generation processes.

However, this study delves into the effects of social media on news publication, including the adoption of social media platforms by news organizations.

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter has presented the literature review and theoretical framework that relate to the effects of social media on news publication. Based on the reviewed literature, it is evident that studies have been conducted on the effects of social media adoption by news organization on a wide range of aspects, such as newsgathering, distribution, and consumption. However, active research or literature linking to the effects of social media adoption on news publication is minimal in Kenya. Despite enormous literature depicting social media as having influenced significantly the nature of journalism practice, it has generated inconclusive debates and many perspectives that require scholarly attention.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The chapter discusses the methodological approaches adopted in this research. It starts by looking at the study design, which examines broadly the plan and approaches to the study. The chapter also covers the study site, research approach, research methods, data needs, types and sources, population, sampling procedure and data collection, data analysis, data presentation, validity, reliability, and ethics.

#### **3.1 Study Design**

A study design provides a methodical procedure describing how a study will be carried out. According to Maxwell (2012), a research design highlights a plan used to attain the objectives of a research work. It is the research design that connects the research problem to methods (of data collection, analysis and presentation) in the attempt to respond to research questions (Kothari, 2010).

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design. In this research design, researchers seek to record relevant information of the phenomenon being studied at specific point in time. The design often supports gathering of information from participants who possess different characteristics and demographics (Gopaldas, 2016). The design was both interpretive and descriptive. A cross-sectional design was appropriate for this study since it involves data collection at a specific point in time from a given population with the intention of making inferences about likely relationships. In this regard, it was anticipated that the design would make it possible for the researcher to establish the effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group.

### **3.2 Study Site**

Given that this research work was a case study, the study was conducted inside the Standard Group. To gain better understanding of the thematic area under this study, the researcher sought to get first-hand information from experienced editors and reporters who had been working with the media institution for a considerable amount of time. Moreover, the site of the research extended online where the researcher analyzed the social media sites of the Standard Group, particularly the Twitter account.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The study used the qualitative research approach to explore in detail the effects of social media usage on news publication. The approach provides opportunities for the researcher to explore different viewpoints, experiences, beliefs, perspectives, and opinions from the respondents in relation to the subject matter under this research work. Gopaldas (2016) posits that qualitative research encompasses several methods, which include case study, historical research, , literary criticism, focus group, casuistry, grounded theory participant observation, open-ended interview, discourse analysis, and ethnography.

Zohrabi (2013) argues that qualitative research is a form of social action that puts much emphasis on the way individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences as a way of understanding social reality. Qualitative research focuses on collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as audio, video, and text, to gain a deeper understanding of experiences, opinions, and concepts. The approach helps to develop new ideas for research and it can be utilized to put together

information about a problem (Mohajan, 2018). The qualitative approach utilizes open-ended questionnaires, observations, focus groups, and interviews to generate information about the experiences and perspectives of people.

The qualitative research approach provides a description and interpretation of phenomena or issues in a systematic manner from the point of view of the population or individuals under study, and its data collection is exploratory and majorly focuses on gaining insights, motivations and reasoning of the subjects under study (Mohajan, 2018). In addition, this approach describes the underlying norms of a group and aims to explain and describe relations. Accordingly, it was expected that this design was be instrumental to the study by describing and explaining the effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group.

### **3.4 Research Methods**

This was a case study based on use of social media in news publication at The Standard Group. Case study research makes it possible for researchers to explore and understand complex issues (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017). It can be considered a robust research method particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required (Gopaldas, 2016). A case study method allows researchers to explore data within an explicit context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study.

To examine and understand the effects of social media on news publication in media institutions, a case study was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to understand complex real-life activities



wherein several sources of evidence were utilized, such as the Standard Group's digital and online department documentation of policies, procedures and work instructions. Case studies become particularly useful where one needs to comprehend a specific problem or situation in great-depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information (Stoecker & Avila, 2020). Interviews and document analysis formed the core methods of obtaining information on the effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group. Moreover, the researcher analyzed the Standard Group's Twitter social media site to garner rich data that offered critical insights into the use of this social network for news publication.

### **3.5 Data Needs, Types and Sources**

The study used both primary and secondary data where the former was gathered from respondents through interviews whereas the latter was generated by a means of document review. In addition, information available on the media institution's sites was analyzed to discern adoption of social media on news publication. The study used key informant interviews as the main method of data collection. The interviews were conducted using interview guides, which provided a richer understanding of data gathered from offline and online interactions.

### **3.6 Population, Sampling Procedure and Data collection**

#### **3.6.1 Population**

The research population for this study constituted of the news-room staff of the Standard Group. Target population is a pool of individuals from which the respondents of a study can be drawn (Cooper & Schnindler, 2014). The population of study for the current research work entailed newsroom staff of the Standard Group, particularly those who had at least a decade-long experience in journalism practice and were knowledgeable about the disruptions and shifts in news

publication that have been occasioned by technological advancements especially social media.

### **3.6.2 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

The researcher used purposive sampling as one of the forms of non-probability sampling to select respondents who took part in the study from a sampling frame of the news-room staff of the Standard group, which was obtained from the company's human resource department. Purposive sampling technique is based on the expert judgment of the researcher regarding the choice of the respondents to take part in any research work, often informed by the reason that the chosen members of the population possess information needed to provide answers to research questions. Sharma (2017) avers that this sampling method is useful and effective when a researcher is interested to study a given phenomenon with knowledgeable experts within.

The sample size of the study was contingent upon the sampling frame of the Standard Group's editors, senior reporters, and top management. The sample size comprised of the Standard Group digital managing editor, chief operations officer, digital and business editors, KTN managing editor, Radio managing editor, Nairobi newspaper editor, chief and deputy editorial directors, and the managing director weekend editions. Accordingly, the sample size of the study constituted of 10 editors who had served previously in several capacities in the media industry before occupying their current editorial positions at the Standard Group. The sample was considered adequate since the respondents had information required in this research work. Further, information redundancy and data saturation was a sharp pointer to this sample being adequate for the study.

In the evaluation of evidence contained in the documents obtained from the Standard Group, the researcher critically analysed each of the sources of information used to ascertain their credibility in terms of meaning and the contribution, which they would make to the topic being explored by this research work (cf. Bowen, 2009). The documents were further sampled to establish whether they were relevant to the purpose and research problem of the study. Moreover, documents underwent assessment to determine their original purpose and if they were comprehensive and complete to elucidate the required information to answer the research questions.

### **3.6.3 Data collection**

Key informant interviews aided collection of data from respondents. Key informant interviews involved interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed insights, ideas, and information on the subject matter of this study (Jamshed, 2014). Such informants were selected because they possessed information or ideas that were solicited by the investigator. Interviews were carried out by telephone and through face-to-face interactions with the respondents. Telephone based interviews enhanced flexibility in data collection given that some key informants preferred them, or they were appropriate in circumstances where respondents were unavailable for face-to-face interviews. They were appropriate in this study given that the researcher was working under limited time.

Data collection consistency, quality, and efficiency for the interviews were enhanced through tape-recording and note-taking to document all the views of the respondents. Each of the key informant interviews took 30 minutes while the entire process of data collection took approximately one month.

A wide range of documents are used to generate background information of a thematic area being explored by a researcher. For the determination of the effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group, data from the interviews was triangulated against information generated from the review of documents obtained from this particular news organization. The documents that were reviewed included the Standard Group's social media policy as well as the digital/online department documentation of policies, procedures and work instructions. Similarly, the Standard Group's social media posts were analyzed to determine use of social networks for news publication. Data from these sources helped to enhance the meaning and voice of the study, contributing towards triangulation of data from the interviews and thus, allowing for corroboration of findings in the assessment of the effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group.

The key informant guide was subjected to pretesting to gauge whether its wording, language and content were appropriate to yield required information from the respondents. The researcher carried out 2 interviews with editors from other media organizations who had been active in the media industry for the past 10 years before the actual process of collecting data from the Standard Group. Pretesting provides opportunities for the modification of the questionnaire by carefully reviewing all questions to ensure that they are free of mistakes as well as removing those that are ambiguous. Pretesting contributes to reliability and validity of the tools/instruments of data collection by ensuring that they provide information required to answer research questions.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Analysis of qualitative data generated from the key informant interviews was analyzed thematically by Nvivo using open coding. Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis software, which has the ability to produce greater insights and findings supported by rigorous evidence. Nvivo aided thematic analysis (TA) of interview data by supporting in transcription, grouping of responses from the questions, cataloging themes and findings the connections among these themes to draw analytical insights.

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) indicate that thematic analysis consists of five steps: data familiarization, code generation, theme search, themes revision, and theme definition. A theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. The study used open-coding to identify all stimulating information about social media usage and news publication at the Standard Group, suggesting that the study did not have predetermined codes or themes, but relied on development and modification of the indexes throughout the coding process.

### **3.8 Data Presentation**

Qualitative data was presented in narratives and verbatim quotes. Key findings that arose in the themes of the study were first reported and supported by verbatim quotes followed by appropriate discussions. Use of the abbreviation *K.I* at the end of each of the verbatim quotes referred to key formants of the study. Presentation of data was in line with objectives of the study.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability**

#### **3.9.1 Validity of Research Instrument**

Validity refers to the degree to which a research instrument is able to measure what it is supposed to measure (Cooper & Schnindler, 2014). Content validity of the key informant interview was enhanced by cross-checking whether the question contained therein assessed what they were supposed to measure. Moreover, Validity of the interviews was enhanced by using an appropriate study design. The key informant interview guide was checked for face validity by ensuring that it had captured the topic under study effectively.

The interview schedule underwent necessary modification and refinement based on the supervisor's expert review and judgment, which ensured that the research tool was free from confusing, double, and leading questions. Validity is realized in all types of research by conducting a pilot test, which is essentially a pre-test type of the research tool before the actual study is undertaken. In this regard, the research carried out a pilot test as the basis of detecting potential shortcomings at the initial stage by aiming to identify possible weaknesses and other problematic areas, which might require amendments or refinement.

#### **3.9.2 Reliability of Research Instrument**

Reliability is the extent to which a research instrument provides results that are consistent (Mohajan, 2017). The reliability of the key informant interview was improved through a pilot study. Therefore, the process of pretesting helped the researcher to establish that the manner in which respondents were answering questions was not influenced by the way they had been ordered, including if the respondents were able to understand the questions correctly. Moreover, pretesting ensured that measurement errors were significantly reduced, and contributed to the identification

of areas that were problematic within the interview schedule. Pretesting contributed to reliability of the instrument of data collection by ensuring that it provided information required to answer research questions to this research work.

### **3.10 Ethics**

Before the process of data collection commenced in the field, the researcher sought consent from the respondents by explaining to them the goal and importance of this research work. Acts of academic dishonesty, such as data falsification and fabrication, were avoided. The respondents had informed consent to make the choice to participate or not. They were guaranteed that their privacy would be protected by strict standards of anonymity.

### **3.11 Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodological approaches used in the study. The chapter has justified the study site, research approach, research methods, data needs, types and sources, population, sampling procedure and data collection. The chapter has explained that data analysis was carried out through thematic analysis (TA) whereas data presentation was done through narratives and verbatim quotes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

#### **4.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of fieldwork data. It starts by providing the overview of the findings followed by brief explanations based on themes that emerged from the study. Presentation of the findings is done systematically in light of the objectives of the study, which comprised of social media effects on news publication, adoption of social media on new publication at the Standard Group, and the effects of social media on news publication at the Group. Several themes that emerged from inquiry are identified and discussed.

#### **4.1 Social media effects on news publication**

The first objective of the study was to assess social media effects on news publication. Findings under this section indicate that social media has become a news source, increased hate speech and falsity, and affected exclusivity in terms of agenda setting and breaking news. Further, the findings show that social media has led to content disruption as well as steered versatility and creativity in news publication.

##### **4.1.1 Social media as a news source**

Responses from the newsroom staff at the Standard Group demonstrated that social media has become a useful source of news for media houses. For instance, a reporter from the Standard Group noted that newsmakers, personalities and politicians have taken up social media platforms to update their followers on a wide range of issues as well as comment on topical matters. These posts have often ended up as news, signaling that social media is a boulevard of great potential in news sourcing for subsequent publication.



*Whatever is happening on social media is also becoming a fodder for newsrooms. Personalities and politicians have walls dedicated to update their followers and they comment on tropical issues on their walls. The posts end up as news. (K.I. 2, 2021)*

Besides, breaking news on social media has become part of the news that media houses follow up and verify. A reporter acknowledged that social media has been utilized, to a great extent, by journalists to source and verify important information while at the same time supplementing information from existing sources.

*There is breaking news on social media and which media houses follow up and verify because content contained therein is largely raw, unfiltered, unduly sensational, and inordinately magnified thus rendering it incongruous with publication in mainstream print and digital media. (K.I. 4, 2021)*

#### **4.1.2 Hate speech and falsity**

Whilst social media has the potential to offer opportunities for creation and expansion of audiences, including interaction of news consumers in a timely manner, an editor at the Standard Group notes that some media houses might be using new media to spread propaganda and falsehood. The respondent acknowledged that incitement and misinformation have become more profound and continue to thrive in contemporary times, significantly contributed by social media. However, the editor stated that media houses in Kenya have come up with verification desks, which have hastened fact-checking of information to determine what will be published. Increase in fake news is the greatest disruption caused by social media on news publication.

*Social media is not controlled, as such falsehoods, hate speech and incitement thrive. In the USA for example, media houses such as Fox news have thrived and increased falsehood and hate spewed by former President Donald Trump. Closer home, media houses have come up with verification desks which fact check information on social media. This influences what will be published; either giving the correct information, finding the source of information for clarity or publication of the information as it is. (K.1. 1, 2021)*

*The greatest disruption caused by social media is fake news. The speed of breaking news on social media can leave verification behind. (K. 1. 8, 2021)*

#### **4.1.3 Exclusivity**

A reporter at the Standard Group indicated that with the expansion of internet connectivity, agenda setting and breaking news, which was traditionally carried out by legacy news media is increasingly shifting towards social media users. There has been a practice towards social media users posting various videos or photos of news events on social networking sites and thus, moving the debate to the impact that this information will have on social media and the web in general.

*With majority of social media users having mobile phones, breaking news and agenda setting which was an exclusive of media houses is no longer holding. In house journalists are competing with social media to get information, which is not out there. At the same time, it is no longer of information is exclusive, but what impact will it have on social media and the web. (K.1. 7, 2021)*

*Most people today will encounter breaking news on social media well before they watch it on TV, hear it on radio, or read it in the newspaper. (K. I. 5, 2021)*

Another reporter states that users of new media participate actively in news by sharing news stories, videos, and images, information in house journalists are also competing to gather.

*News making is no longer a reserve for traditional media; social media has broken the geographic, social, and technological barriers. (K. I. 9, 2021)*

#### **4.1.4 Content disruption**

A Standard Group editor stated that social media has disrupted content and news publishing among media organizations. The editor says that there has been a shift towards the erection of paywalls and subscriptions, which have further led to the dwindling of the fortunes for traditional print media. The disruption brought about by social media means that consumers have become active users and participants in news gathering, production, distribution, and publication. The respondents further posited that there is new demand for journalists who are familiar with the contemporary digital trends for news publishing, noting that realization of sustained performance is possible if traditional media outlets are inclined towards digital media, and in particular, social media.

*Social media has disrupted content or news publishing. We have seen media shifts towards social – in terms of paywalls, digital subscription models, which are dwindling the fortunes of traditional print media. In terms of talent acquisitions, we are now seeing new demands for journalists that are conversant with current digital trends for news publishing. At a time when The Guardian, BBC, CNN, and the likes, which have to address the new media consumption – it's a revelation that*

*media shifts will now be inclined towards digital for sustained business performance. (K.I. 6, 2021)*

#### **4.1.5 Publishing of breaking news and live streaming**

A digital business editor stated that publishing of breaking news and live streaming of events and current affairs on social media has had monumental effects on electronic and print media. The business editor clarified that electronic media experienced a gradual hit because of social media, as compared to print media, which is essentially a day-two newsmaker.

*Publishing of breaking news and live streaming is affecting news publishing especially, print, and electronic media. Although electronic media is now gradually experiencing the real effects of social media impact, compared to print media – which is day-two newsmaker. Print media has been hugely affected due to its nature of news access and timeliness to provide current and timely news. (K.I. 3, 2021)*

#### **4.1.6 Versatility and creativity**

According to an editor at the Standard Group, social media has made digital and print media to be versatile and creative as a means to retaining their audience after the advent of the new media. It appears that media institutions have to continually take into consideration the interests of their audience when they publish news either in their digital or print media.

*Digital and print media have become more versatile and creative to retain their audience since the advent of social media. (K.I. 8, 2021)*

This assertion was supported by another editor who opined that available content on social media acts as a guide on the interests of people and therefore, journalists have a duty to cover it or endeavor to do it.

*Content on social media is like a guide for what people are interested in, simply, if people are talking about it then as a journalist it is my duty to cover it or look into doing so at minimum. Further, newsmakers are also on social media, so we must keep an eye on what they say and how they say it. (K.1. 5, 2021)*

## **4.2 Adoption of social media for news publication at the Standard Group**

The second objective of the study was to examine the adoption of social media on news publication at the Standard Group. Results show that the Standard Group has adopted social media to break stories in real time, receive feedback and interact with its content users, post links to stories, preview newspapers, and as a news platform for production and publication of news.

### **4.2.1 Break stories in real time**

Standard Group's production editor observed that the media house has adopted social media platforms, such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, to deliver or break stories in real time. Moreover, a business editor stated that the Standard Group leads in digital news. The editor recounted that before stories run in other platforms, they first have to appear on digital whether complete or simply as previews.

*Platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter allow access to millions of readers/viewers and make it easier to break stories in real time. (K.1. 9, 2021)*

*At Standard, we lead with digital. Before a story runs on any other platform it is on digital whether in full or in part or just a preview but it is on digital. (K.1. 5, 2021)*

Analysis of the Standard Group’s social media posts showed that the media house uses social media platforms, such as Twitter, to break news in real time. For instance, screen grabs in figures 4.1 and 4.2 below, which were obtained from the Standard Group’s digital twitter page show how the media institution uses this digital platform to break news.



Figure 4.1: The Standard Digital Twitter Page



Figure 4.2: The Standard Digital Twitter Page

Besides, data generated from the Standard Group’s digital and online department documentation of policies, procedures and work instructions augmented data from the interviews as well as the trends that arose from the analysis of the Group’s social media sites. Analysis of the

aforementioned document revealed that the Standard Group publishes breaking news on social media within 10 minutes after occurrence. In effect, this appears to be an affirmation that the media company has adopted social media to break news in a timely manner.

#### **4.2.2 Feedback and Interactivity**

A reporter at the Standard Group said that the media house leverages social media to get feedback from their audiences. The reporter noted that social media monitoring has added value to the existing feedback processes, indicating that the media institution continually embraces use of social media platforms, as part of consumer-centric focus, to get feedback from news consumers on topical issues that they publish. There is participatory feedback from news consumers as well as other receivers of information and constant involvement of journalists.

*Yes, the Standard Group has social media accounts that are primarily used for breaking news, live events and getting feedback from news consumers. (K.1. 4, 2021)*

Data drawn from the Standard Group's media policy showed that the media house advocates for the engagement of the audience that consume its content. Information contained in the policy is a sharp pointer to the fact that the media organization values feedback from its audience whether such responses are constructive or raise substantial criticism. In addition, data from the social media policy of the Standard Group indicated that the media company's staffers are expected to develop catchy and creative ways of publishing posts to enhance traffic and interactivity with users.

### **4.2.3 Posting links to stories**

An editor at the Standard Group noted that media organizations utilize social media to promote their work by mostly posting story links to route traffic to their websites. The editor said that Twitter and Facebook are increasingly being used by the Standard Group to engage its audiences, and this interaction has yielded significant advantages, which include increased referrals and readership in the website.

*The Standard Group uses its social media accounts, particularly Twitter feeds, to provide links to stories that have been published in the website. (K.1. 1, 2021)*

The systematic review of the Standard Group's social media policy revealed that the media institution uses its social media accounts to post links to stories published in its website. In addition, the documentary data showed that it is a necessity for the staffers of the media house to link content that has been published online as an approach to increasing traffic to the website. Journalists of the Standard Group are further encouraged to live-tweet news events as the basis of promoting the image of the organization as a timely source of news.

### **4.2.4 Newspaper previews**

An editor acknowledged that the media institution shares front pages of their print day-to-day newspapers on social media. This, the digital business editor says, has triggered the buying behavior of traditional newspaper copies. The editor also indicated that displaying of the front pages of newspapers on their social media accounts, including links to a few stories, has been a partial solution to the dwindling fortunes of the print media. He further alludes that the presence



of paywall copies, though cheaper, means that consumers are able to access news instantaneously over the internet.

*Opportunities are now on sharing front pages on social media. Of which are easily sharable which can trigger the buying behaviour of the traditional copies. Paywalls will be the ultimate solution to the dwindling fortunes of the print media – of course paywall copies come at a cheaper price, and instantaneous at the palm of consumers that have adapted to newer ways of long form of print media consumption in the digital era. (K.1. 6, 2021)*

A business editor hinted that the Standard Group has pioneered a multimedia approach to newspaper previews on social media. Mainstream media has been adapting to the contemporary methods and trends of social media to ensure that they are successful by capturing the contents of the print newspaper on social media in the form of previews.

*We have pioneered a multi-media approach to newspaper previews that include video. We work hard on bringing our multi-media expertise to bear on everything we do. (K.1. 3, 2021)*

#### **4.2.5 News platform**

A digital business editor from the Standard Group says that the media institution considers its social media news platforms, stating that they have made concerted efforts to build social media handles in the same manner of building news platforms. The editor pointed out that the organization leads with digital in regards to its news production and publication.

*We consider our social media news platforms. We have taken meticulous care to build our social media handles the same way we would build a news platform. We try to lead with digital in terms of our news production. K.I. 5, 2021)*

### **4.3 Effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group**

The third objective of the study was to determine the effects of social media on news publications at the Standard Group. Findings from social media use at the Standard Group indicate that this component of digital media has led to disruption on news sourcing and processing and added to the media institution shifting towards a digital newsroom. The results further demonstrate that social media has improved audience experience, changed the manner of newsbreak, and given rise to a new structure of work.

#### **4.3.1 Disruption on news sourcing and processing**

A reporter at the Group noted that digital media technologies, more especially social media, have disrupted the manner in which news are sourced and processed. The respondent hinted that the news first appears on digital, followed by day-two journalism, which is more informative and analytical.

*Social media has affected the newsroom. First, it has disrupted how news is sourced and processed. The news is now for digital first, then day two journalism which is more analytical and informative follow. (K.I. 7, 2021)*

A business and digital editor offered that social media has affected how the media institution sources news. The editor disclosed that a tweet or news source from a newsmaker can contribute directly to a story.

*Social media has also affected how we source news. A tweet or a news source from a newsmaker can lead to a story. (K.I. 10, 2021)*

Data extracted and analysed from the Standard Group's digital and online policies, procedures and work instruction showed that the media institution requires that its journalists frequently monitor social media platforms for breaking news, events and trends. In fact, the Standard Group's social media policy espouses that staff and journalists are encouraged to possess personal accounts on social networks, which they can use to gather news and share links to the media company's published work. The Standard Group's digital and online policies, procedures and work instruction pinpoint that there should be live tweeting of all important events because social media has become a significant tool for reporters and other staffers in the media industry.

#### **4.3.2 Shift to digital newsroom**

An editor at the Standard Group said that social media has contributed to the growth of its digital platform. He stated that the growth was attributed to more audiences and readers accessing news through social media. The editor disclosed that the media company is intentionally packaging news for social media where more consumers are increasingly accessing news. However, he admits that the growth has not been immense as anticipated in the past because of the rural population, which is not sophisticated in terms of adapting to digital based sources of news.

*With more audiences and readers accessing news through social media, we are now, intentionally packaging news for social media, where more people are accessing news. The Standard Group is experiencing growth on its digital platform – largely driven by social media. However, the growth has not been immense as expected. This is due to the fact that, most of the Kenyan rural population is not as*

*sophisticated in terms of adapting to digital-enabled devices which they might already have. (K.I. 1, 2021)*

Another editor acknowledged that, to a large extent, electronic media leads in news consumption. Moreover, the editor said that new mode of news publication has been witnessed in the media industry where radio stations are streaming news on social media.

*To a larger extent, electronic media still rules in terms of news consumption. However, we are seeing a new mode of news publication where several radio stations are now streaming on social media. (K.I. 8, 2021)*

A production editor hinted that there has been a strategic shift by the media organization to become a digital-first newsroom. The editor pointed out that access to digital platforms has increased, culminating in the company focusing on online publication with the print focused on day two journalism. He argued that digital-first newsroom is the future, indicating that much of the work is to move away from workflows that were traditionally designed to be print-centric.

*There has been a strategic shift to become a digital-first newsroom. Much of the work is to move away from workflows that were designed to be print-centric. Engagement on our digital platforms has increased. The focus is now to publish online with print focused on 'Day 2' journalism. (K.I. 9, 2021)*

The digital policies demonstrate that the news organization has sought to harness the benefits of social media by sharing information on its social media platforms, including live tweeting of key events by its newsroom staff. The policies stipulate that the Standard Group's social platforms

should be utilized to relay crucial information from the media institution, route traffic to the website and promote interaction with the audience.

#### **4.3.3 Audience experience**

A reporter at the Standard Group affirmed that increasing number of news consumers were adopting digital journalism by adjusting to the novel format of delivering information through social media platforms. The reporter averred that people are specific on news they consume across the spectrum of sports, politics, business, and health, among others. It was also disclosed that news consumers are gradually willing to pay for premium content.

*More and more people are adopting digital journalism. At the same time, they are particular on what they consume be it politics, sports, health, business etc. They are also willing to pay for premium content. (K.I. 2, 2021)*

The Standard Group's social media policy suggests that its social media platforms are utilized to send information from the Group to interact with the audience as well as drive traffic to the website. The media house's social media policy states that posts being shared or retweeted should be relevant to the secondary audience. For instance, a Pulse Magazine feature could be shared by Str8 Up on a musician/event since their audiences have similar interests.

#### **4.3.4 Manner of news break**

An online and business editor at the Group said that social media has affected the way news break. The editor observed that people are more likely to encounter breaking news on social media before it appears on television, airs on radio or is published in the newspaper. He also pointed out that the Group's priority is to offer more insight, context and information behind the news than just the

news. The editor noted that the media ensures that breaking news content is available on social media platforms where it has to be shareable and easy to download and consume.

*Social media has affected the way news breaks. For most people today they will encounter breaking news on social media well before they watch it on TV, hear it on radio or read it in the newspaper. Repeating the same facts therefore later on legacy media will be of no use. For us at Standard our priority is therefore on providing more insight, more contexts and more information behind the news than just the news. (K.I. 5, 2021)*

Besides, an online editor from the Group posited that the media company breaks news on social media in a more pronounced way with a multimedia approach. The Standard Group breaks news with videos, images, and texts. However, the editor was of the view that the speed of breaking news on social media without proper verification and vetting of sources has propagated fake news.

*We have shifted our priority to breaking news on our social media channels in a more pronounced way with a multi-media approach where possible. If we can break news with video and images not just text we will do so. The biggest disruption caused by social media is fake news. The speed of breaking news on social media can leave verification behind. (K.I. 3, 2021)*

A critical review of the Standard Group's digital/online policies, specifically the policy statement on content acquisition and publishing, further served to demonstrate how social media has affected the manner in which the media institution breaks news to their audience. The policy states that

journalists ought to break news on social media within 10 minutes after its occurrence. The policy points that the breaking news must be accompanied by related high-quality images/videos.

#### **4.3.5 New structure of work and need for multimedia journalism**

A production editor indicated that social media has affected the newsroom by hastening development of a new structure of work where new roles and desks have been set up in the media company to fit into the accelerating technological change. The editor further revealed that the Group has a new newsroom which supports convergence. This, he noted, has necessitated the requirement for journalists to produce multimedia stories. In this respect, the media institution has been sending alerts on current affairs, occurrences and events, while at the same time customizing text for online.

*The Standard has a new structure of work, that is, it has created new roles and desks to fit in the digital first transformation. At the same time, has a new newsroom which accommodates convergence and journalists are now required to produce multimedia stories, that is, send alerts on what is happening, short videos and audio and then text for online. (K.1. 9, 2021)*

These developments occasioned by social media imply that media institutions have invested resources in digital media as the basis of reaching more audiences online. The expanding digital media environment has provided media organizations with opportunities to develop services that attract most people. At the same time, the increasing competition for audience attention means that legacy media, such as newspapers and broadcasters, though crucial news producers, are becoming

less important. This, therefore, indicates that media houses are developing new digital business models by, for example, introducing new structures of work.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter of the study has presented findings on the effects of social media on news publication, a case study of the Standard Group. The results indicate that media institutions are harnessing social media as a digital technology to source, process and deliver information. However, social media has propagated hate speech and falsity. The findings of reveal that the Standard Group has realigned its business models to take advantage of social media platforms. The Group has adopted social media to break stories in real time, get feedback and interact with its content consumers, post links to stories, and preview newspapers. Social media has generally disrupted news sourcing and processing and contributed to the Standard Group shifting towards a digital newsroom. Moreover, this tech-empowered platform has improved audience experience, altered the manner of newsbreak, and led to a new structure of work at the Standard Group.

Based on the Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST), this study has demonstrated that media institutions adopt social media platforms for a wide range of reasons, one of them being to break stories in real time. Indeed, the results demonstrate that the Standard Group uses social media to break stories, post links to stories in the website, preview newspapers, and interact with their online audiences.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **5.0 Overview**

This chapter of the study provides the summary of the key findings based on the arguments above. It also offers the conclusions and recommendations of the overall results of the study.

#### **5.1 Summary**

The purpose of this study was to research the effects of social media on news publication in Kenya, with a particular focus on the Standard Group. This study was informed by the following objectives: to assess social media effects on news publication; to examine the adoption of social media on news publication at the Standard Group; and to determine the effects of social media on news publications at the Standard Group. Qualitative data was collected from news staff of the Standard Group using interviews. In addition, the Standard Group's social media sites, social media policy, and the digital/online department documentation of policies, procedures and work instructions were reviewed to obtain information about the effects of social media on news publication. The summary of the results has been undertaken methodically in light of the objectives of the study.

##### **5.1.1 Social media effects on news publication**

The first objective of the study was to assess social media effects on news publication. Based on the results of the study, several themes regarding social media effects on news publication emerged. From the results, social media emerged as a news source, it has increased hate speech and falsity, and affected exclusivity in terms of breaking news and agenda setting, which was

previously a reserve of legacy news media. The findings of the study further revealed that social media has led to content disruption as well as steered versatility and creativity in news publication. Similarly, the results established social media affected publication of breakings news and streaming of live events.

### **5.1.2 Adoption of social for news publication at the Standard Group**

The second objective of the study was to examine the adoption of social media on news publication at the Standard Group. According to the findings, the Standard Group has adopted social media primarily to break stories in real time, receive feedback and interact with its content users, post links to stories and preview newspapers. It also emerged that the media outlet adopts social media as a news platform for production and publication of news.

### **5.1.3 Effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group**

The third objective of the study was to determine the effects of social media on news publications at the Standard Group. The findings of the study revealed that social media has led to disruption on news sourcing and processing and added to the Standard Group shifting towards a digital newsroom. Besides, the results showed that social media has improved audience experience where the media institution utilizes this new generation media to send information to interact with the audience as well as drive traffic to the website. The manner of newsbreak is another effect of social media that arose from the findings of this research work. Lastly, the results of this study showed that social media has given rise to a new structure of work and stirred the need for multimedia journalism at the Standard Group.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The study concludes that social media has become a critical news source, it has proliferated hate speech and falsity, and affected exclusivity in breaking of news and agenda setting, which was previously a reserve of traditional media outlets. The study further found out that social media has led to content disruption, steered versatility and creativity in news publication, and affected publication of breaking news among media houses.

The study's findings reveal that the Standard Group has adopted social media for news publication. In effect, the study concludes that the media company has adopted social media primarily to break stories in real time, receive feedback and interact with its content users, post links to stories, preview newspapers, and as a news platform for production and publication of news.

Findings from this research work reveal that there are several effects of social media on news publication at the Standard Group. In this regard, the study concludes that social media has disrupted news sourcing and processing and created opportunities for the media house to shift towards a digital newsroom. Further, the study concludes that social media has improved audience experience and given rise to a new structure of work at the Standard Group.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

There are global concerns about misleading and fake news on social media where those who use this new generation media are more likely to state that they have been subjected to misinformation on the news they consume. It has also been revealed from this study that social media has amplified

hate speech and falsity. Accordingly, the study recommends that media institutions and journalists continually fact check and verify information they source and process as news from social media.

In the quest to grow revenue by leveraging social media, it is recommended that media organizations post links to stories on their websites with paywalls where prospective readers will be expected to subscribe first before they can gain access to digital content or news. In other words, media companies should ensure that their best content has been paid for through digital subscriptions by routing traffic from social media platforms to websites. Although most media houses have taken this initiative, it appears that digital subscriptions go to few brands, accentuating the need to institutionalize this among smaller brands through formulation of relevant strategies, which will ensure that such brands also realign their business models to harness digital technology to their advantage.

Given that social media continues to disrupt the structure of work and stir the need for multimedia journalism in the form of new skills into the contemporary newsroom, this study recommends that media institutions should train their journalists and newsroom staff on how to deliver news in multiple layers as the basis of performing well in a converged news environment.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for further research**

Future inquiries into social media adoption should strive to undertake a systematic study on the scale of opportunities and challenges resulting from the disruptions caused by internet platforms in developing countries, such as Kenya. Future studies should also investigate the extent to which

news consumers have placed a premium on reliable news sources in Kenya, ranging from social media, television, and print journalism.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix I: Key Informant Interview Guide**

1. How does content on social media affect news publication both on print and digital media?
2. Has social media affected the way you publish news at Standard Media Group? If so, how?  
In what ways have you adapted to this shift or disruption effected by this new media?
3. How would you describe the news consumption practices of your audience after the advent of social media? Has this affected how you publish news in digital or print media? If so, in what ways?
4. Have you adopted social media in publication of news at the Standard Group? If so, describe how you utilize social media to aid news publication.
5. How would you describe the performance of digital and print media in the advent of social media?
6. Do you use social media as a way of gathering and delivering news? If so, how?
7. What innovative ways have you developed to gain the attention of your audience in print and digital media news publication in response to the upsurge of social media usage?
8. Overall, what benefits, opportunities, and challenges does The Standard Group face in news publication?