

EXAMINING NAIROBI INTERNET USERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEWSPAPER  
PAYWALLS IN KENYA

CHRISPINUS WEKHOLI JUMA

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## **Declaration**

### **Candidate's Declaration**

I declare that this is my original work and has not been presented in any other University or College for Examination or Academic purposes.



22 November 2022

**CHRISPINUS JUMA**

**DATE**

**Reg: K50/34000/2019**

### **Declaration by Supervisor/s**

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.



22 November 2022

**PROF. GEORGE MORARA NYABUGA**

**DATE**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this research project to my late father, Sylvanus Juma; my mother Esther and family members. Your support and prayers have been worthwhile.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to most sincerely thank the almighty God for giving me the strength and courage to undertake this research successfully as well as the informants who participated in this study. My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Prof. George Morara Nyabuga and the entire teaching staff at the University of Nairobi's Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DOJMC), who kept me on track. Prof Nyabuga, thank you for the wise counsel and for the time you heavily invested. For the kind words of encouragement from friends; Caleb Wangira Mbayaki, Benard Ogoi, Ephline Okoth, Lawrence Wafula; colleagues - Omar Bakuli, Sharon Vieliza, Tabitha Rotich, Kendi Iringo, Pamela Kadima and Young Muthomi - you have not only supported my course, but also encouraged me every day: I thank you. Exceptional regard to Elizabeth Kivuva for the moral support. My deepest gratitude goes to my family members – my late father Sylvanus Juma (may his soul rest in peace), mum, Esther, brothers Benedict, Alfred, Kevin and my sisters Teresa and Gertrude; you are all great.

## **Abstract**

The study was conducted to assess internet users' attitudes towards newspaper paywalls. The study had three specific objectives namely; to determine the level of awareness of newspaper paywalls among internet users, identify the factors affecting the uptake of newspaper paywalls among internet users, and; assess the attitude of internet users towards newspaper paywalls. The study used a descriptive survey research design, in which 158 randomly selected respondents, including non-media professionals, students, businessmen, and manual laborers to whom questionnaires were administered, participated. Data were collected, examined and checked for completeness and clarity, and logged in the computer and analyzed using SPSS. Percentile tables, pie charts, bar graphs and narrations adopted from interviews were used to present the findings. The study established that cost (data and subscription fee), content and leakage of personal data (privacy concerns) inhibit paywalls uptake in Kenya. This implies that the general attitude of internet users in Kenya towards newspaper paywalls is negative and do not approve of it, nor do they have the intention to pay for news. Most respondents had a reservation about the cost of subscription and data bundles (31.7 percent), while others (29.3 percent) maintained that the content behind paywalls is available elsewhere for free. The study finds that the attitude internet users accord to newspaper paywalls is negative for numerous reasons among them cost of data and subscription, lack of exclusivity of content, and complexity of paywalls among others. Media managers equally point to brand recognition, the exclusiveness of stories and even the superiority of journalists who publish such stories as among issues internet users are interested in, thus influencing attitudes. The study recommended that to experience success around paywalls, news media enterprises should pay attention to costs, and particularly the misuse of private data that they may collect from subscribers.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACM	Access Control Management
CMS	Content Management System (CMS)
CRM	Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISP	Internet Service Provider
JHR	Journalists for Human Rights
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MCK	Media Council of Kenya
NMG	Nation Media Group
SG	Standard Group PLC
RoI	Return on Investment
SAPM	Subscription and Access Policy Management
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
UI	User Interface

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

In discussing how news content can be used as a source of revenue Benson (2019) and Weiyue (2022), assert that media houses are turning to readers to increase earnings. Pattabhiramaiah, Sriram & Manchanda (2018) confirm that publishers monetize online content through paywalls. Okoth (2020; 2021) posits that paywalls complement print advertising revenues.

However, in what Weiyue (2022) views as the availability of free content online, it is imperative to understand internet users' attitudes towards newspaper paywalls, which are ostensibly selling what would otherwise be free.

Pattabhiramaiah, Sriram & Manchanda (2018) further argue that other unforeseen effects could arise in the process of putting up paywalls including reduced online engagement, loss of audience evidenced by low pageviews, which is corroborated by Ho, Rio & Youngsoo (2020) and the likelihood of readers switching back to print (Ananda, 2016).

Internet users watch free videos on YouTube and Vimeo, listen to music and podcasts on Boomplay, Deezer, and Spotify; share pictures on Instagram, read online news for free on news aggregation sites, and enjoy free online gaming activities. Content on the internet has long been considered free (Benson, 2014) so much so that when media houses built news websites, content is available at no fee.

News and information, rank among the most sought commodities online by internet users (Consoli, 1997; Okoth, 2021; SIMElab, 2021). Carlos & Raquel (2009) reason that most searches online are for news, entertainment and it is done as a habit. This has seen an increase in the uptake of online newspapers.

Nielsen (2003) affirms that news sites and digital newspapers are the most visited sites on the web. Kaye & Johnson (2004) conclude that approximately 83 percent of web visits are to consume phenomenal breaking news. This has signaled an increase in the supply of online news, morphing into paywalls for revenue (Okoth, 2021).

In the United States, over 75 percent of the top 100 newspapers had paywalls as of 2015 (Williams, 2016) and this has increased to 78 percent (Simon & Graves, 2019b). Across Europe, over half of the major newspapers in Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and the UK had paywalls as of 2017, and the rate has increased (Cornia, Sehl, Simon & Nielsen, 2017).

In Africa, South Africa's *News24*, gained 20,000 subscribers in the first three months of erecting a paywall (Media Update, 2021) and the sale of content across the world started in early 2009 (Glenda, 2013). In West Africa, Wole (2019) observes that Nigerians tend to consume free social media news and rarely pay for news. Nevertheless, Nigeria's *Business Day* erected a paywall in 2020 (Olumuyiwa, 2020; Taremwa, 2022).

In East Africa, efforts to supplement earnings have seen several media houses, including Nation Media Group (NMG) erect paywalls (Internews, 2021; MCK, 2021). In essence, the cost of running newsrooms has been rolled to the reader (Benson, 2019). Having staggered in Nigeria, particularly on willingness to pay (Oduh & Oduh, 2012; Olumuyiwa, 2020) for what is available for free on social media, it will be interesting to explore how this scenario plays out in the Kenyan context. It is worth noting that the exponential growth of Kenyan media and internet uptake has seen Kenyan become the most vibrant in sub-Saharan Africa in the media spheres (Owilla, 2021).

A greater understanding of people's attitude formation process concerning these issues can help media stakeholders plan and implement effective policies that evoke positive responses among the public. From a theoretical point, with this in mind, this study will gather empirical data to provide a foundation for further discussions of a paid news content system and the attitude therein.

Attitude is expressed as an evaluation in form of preference for, or against the attitude object (Albarracín, Johnson & Zanna, 2005; Wood, 2000). It is also expressed as prefer, like, dislike, hate, and love (Johnson & Zanna, 2005).

Makhitha (2014) and Vijayasarathy (2004) define attitude as an individual's belief that a product, service, or concept is a good idea. It can also manifest as having positive or negative feelings towards the object (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). When expressed, attitude is seen as a form of relationship, either positive or negative, between self and an attitude object (Wood, 2000).

Attitudes can be inherent (Olson et al., 2001) or can be acquired as a result of both direct and indirect experiences with the attitude object (De Houwer, Thomas & Baeyens, 2001), from friends (Poteat, 2007) and through the media (Levina, et al., 2000).

Fundamentally, this study explores the attitude acquired by interacting with the paywall as presumed by De Houwer, Thomas & Baeyens (2001).

In Kenya, newspaper circulation is on the decline. The number of English and Kiswahili daily newspapers circulated in the last five years dropped to 77.9 million and 3.9 million copies respectively (KNBS, 2021). Weekly publications have suffered the same fate as Kiswahili papers reduced from 1,169 copies per day in 2015 to 935 copies per day in 2019 (KNBS, 2020).

Interestingly, the number of internet users who particularly seek news online, and interact on social media rose by 48 percent from 1.5 million visits per day in 2015 to 2.9 million visits per day in 2019 (KNBS, 2020; SIMElab, 2019). Of this online traffic, 85 percent are motivated to use social media in search of news (31 percent), entertainment and pleasure (28 percent), and social interactions (at 24 percent) (SIMElab, 2019). Others visit social media and the internet for commercial purposes, hence the spike in e-commerce, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. It can therefore be argued from this data that the Kenyan audience is tremendously shifting online and consuming more news.

Despite this significant traffic, it remains critical to examine the attitudes internet users in Kenya have towards fee-to-access as opposed to a free-to-access model they have been accustomed to. While it may be difficult to measure attitudes in direct form, the antecedents assigned to such attitudes would be picked from the behavioral dispositions internet users will accord paywalls (Luna et al., 2002; Richard & Chandra, 2005; Stevenson et al., 2000).

The success or failure of a product, including paywalls, depends on the attitudes of customers towards that product and awareness of such a product, as reasoned by Davis (1989) in the technology acceptance model.

As per this model, attitude as a variable is shown as a clear precursor of the behavior and the final decisions individuals would take when presented with a new technology or idea. The adoption of

paywalls in Kenya would be weighed against the perceived usefulness, data privacy concerns, cost, and ease of use among other parameters.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The quest for media sustainability in the face of digital disruption has been pulled back by internet users' attitudes among other issues. Over time, researchers have investigated the cost and willingness of internet users to pay for news (Chyi, 2005, 2012; Picard, 2014) as is the case of Nigeria (Wole, 2019). Carson (2015), Myllylahti (2014), Masnick (2016) and Adithya et al. (2018) examined paywall revenues in addition to cost factors in the United States.

Brandstetter & Schmalhofer (2014), Kvalheim (2014) and Sjøvaag (2015) have examined news values of content behind paywalls. They found that hard news and opinions are the most paywalled news items.

Brandstetter & Schmalhofer (2014) examined whether news behind paywalls can be found elsewhere. On this, they found that content behind paywalls is found at no fee in news aggregation sites and search engines. Equally, while discussing content behind paywalls, Sjøvaag (2015) avers that political news and economy are sub themes majorly placed behind paywalls and are perceived as most resource-demanding to publishers. Seen this way, newspaper paywalls are deemed as mechanisms to protect editorial investments.

Ho, Rio & Youngsoo (2020), examined the effect of a paywall on news websites' pageviews; they conclude that paywalls reduce newspapers' pageviews by nearly 30 percent. The drop was more pronounced among newspapers producing technology and lifestyle content.

Brandstetter & Schmalhofer (2014), based on the uses and gratifications theory, explored the value readers gain from content behind a paywall upon payment. Anada (2016), on the other hand, examined the spillover effect resulting from paywalls and concluded that the paywalls serve as either complementaries or substitutes for print versions.

Further, on this subject, Adithya, Eric & Lizhen (2021), find that digital subscriptions improve reader retention, translating to revenue increase. Equally, Adithya (2017) concludes that paywalls tend to have a positive effect on print version consumption as a form of spillover.

Evens & Van-Damme (2016) while discussing data privacy, found that publishers harvest internet users' data. Mai (2016b), agrees that after such data is collected, and in the guise of providing more personalized news, it is done at the expense of internet users' privacy.

Acquisti, Taylor & Wagman (2016), found that personal data can be traded among firms. This trade is set to increase in the future (Lee, 2016). Stone (2014) explains that the *Huffington Post* has a data analytics team to specifically connect the right content to the right people.

While subscription, data privacy concerns, impact on print uptake, and purpose for use of content behind paywalls are key in understanding paywalls, the available literature has limited coverage on attitudes of internet users.

Newspaper paywalls for Kenya's news media is a new revenue model. While Kenya has an internet penetration rate of 74 percent (CAK, 2021), digital services adoption lags and so the uptake of paywalls could be inhibited too.

### **1.3 Objectives**

#### **1.3.1 Main objective**

The main aim of this study was to critically examine internet users' attitudes towards newspaper paywalls.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

1. To determine internet users' levels of awareness of newspaper paywalls
2. To identify the factors affecting the uptake of newspapers paywalls among internet users
3. To assess the attitude of internet users towards newspaper paywalls

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of newspaper paywalls among internet users?
2. What are the factors affecting the uptake of newspaper paywalls?
3. What are the attitudes of internet users towards newspaper paywalls?

## **1.5 Justification of the study**

To remain profitable, media houses in Kenya are adopting a myriad of strategies, the latest being paywalls. Paywall for local news media is a new model, despite their emergence dating back to the 1990s. With the paywall already in place, this approach to media sustainability has not been devoid of the already-existing willingness to pay debate, among other challenges.

Local media paywalls have sparked a conversation characterized by a backlash. Its uptake or lack of it continues to be greeted with mixed reactions. There is a growing state of uncertainty resulting from lack of awareness and negative attitude disposition from internet users. This is even as paywalls are becoming a source of revenue for media, at a time print revenue is increasingly lessening (Okoth, 2021). In essence, news, previously freely accessed and shared, has been commoditized and is on sale (Patrick, 2009).

The resulting impact has been a host of complaints from internet users. This twin problem of the domiciled idea of free-to-access content online and attitude is seemingly threatening to downscale the success of paywalls in Kenya.

It would equally be important to weigh the level of awareness of the paywall as well as explore the data privacy concerns to understand what the media sustainability conversation in the Kenyan space would be like. This problem is not only significant to scholars but more specifically to media houses that are contemplating online revenue streams.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

Based on the purpose of this study, this research limits itself to the perspectives of the research questions. Since the researcher recognizes that there exist numerous studies on paywalls, strict observance is accorded to the idea of attitudes.

Further, the boundary of this study is restricted to Nairobi City County where the researcher targeted a population size of 2,100,763 internet users (KNBS, 2020), from which a sample size was drawn. It is worth noting that there are chances of unavailability of data regarding specific readers of local newspapers from the respective publishers who have paywalls.



## 1.7 Significance of the study

To date, the main body of paywall research in Europe, the United States, Asia, Australasia and Latin America, has concentrated on different subscription models, paywall revenue, and content behind the paywalls. This research centered its objectives on understanding attitudes. The contributions of this study are not only in academia but also in media sustainability.

In the field of academia, researchers may use the findings of this study to contribute to knowledge on attitudes, and further dialogue on media sustainability in the face of diminishing traditional advertising. This is in addition to understanding inherent challenges in the digital news space.

Equally, journalists who inform internet users may gain a better understanding of news and consumer preferences. This is critical for the packaging of information to retain readers. The knowledge levels of internet users regarding paywalls and factors which influence the uptake of paywalls will also help journalists tailor content.

## 1.8 Definition of terms

**Paywall:** a system in which access to all or part of website content is restricted to paid subscribers. Paywalls can be hard or soft (see Chapter two on types of paywalls). It is a “a system that prevents Internet users from accessing certain Web content without a paid subscription” (Mirriam-Webstar, n.d.)

**Attitude:** Is a form of relationship, either positive or negative, between the self (internet user) and an attitude object (paywall); Also as argued by Makhitha (2014) and Vijayasathy (2004), attitude is an individual’s belief that a product, service or concept is a good idea.

**Internet user:** People or person(s) who use the internet from any location. This study is restricted to users who are in Nairobi and such users are deemed to be consumers of online news.

**Media sustainability:** The ability of a media enterprise to enjoy financial wellness and editorial independence and remain afloat despite emerging turbulence.

## 1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the overview of the concept of paywalls and the contribution it has in harnessing revenue for news media enterprises. It has drawn from a global perspective to the

regional perspective and ultimately, the experiences in the Kenyan context, where the study is based. It has also in detail expounded on what problem the study is set to solve. While several studies around paywalls, ranging from revenue, implementation matrix, enforcement mechanisms and the spillover effect, it becomes necessary to equally study paywalls from the perspective of attitudes, since attitudes are important in the uptake of new technology of services. The chapter has further outlined both the research objectives and the questions which guided the research. The chapter ends by presenting some of the keywords and their operational definitions in the study.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Chapter introduction

The purpose of this literature review was to provide a detailed understanding of paywalls, factors for uptake and contextualize attitudes in the context of the use of paywalls. More news media enterprises are turning to paywalls as avenues to boost revenue, and the need to study them concerning attitudes, cannot be understated. In this chapter, therefore, literature on paywalls awareness, factors for uptake (or lack of) and the antecedents of attitude predispositions on newspapers paywalls in the interest of the objectives of this study were reviewed. The chapter starts by giving a view of how the media business is adjusting in the face of digital disruption, then later explains the theoretical framework used in the study.

#### 2.2 Media business in the new environment

World over, news media enterprises are in search of or are already trying out new business revenue models (Cagé, 2016; Pickard, 2019). Devoid of these models, media entities are looking into the decline of news, which is the business (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2020) and public good (Picard, 2019).

Pickard & Wiliam (2014) expressed reservations about whether selling news through paywalls and subscriptions can salvage diminishing media revenues. Preferably, the internet and content therein have been free (Keen, 2015). Prior (2005), however, note that the chances of internet users paying for online services, including news, depends on whether it offers desired entertainment.

On the other hand, mobile telephones with internet access capabilities usage are on the rise (Evens & Van-Damme, 2016). The result of this over time has been increasing access to information, including news. Even so, free and readily available information has the downside of constantly failing the test of credibility and accuracy (Melissa & Kembrew, 2020).

Lately, misinformation, disinformation and fake news jargon in dispensing of journalism products are resulting in unprecedented levels of investment (Lee, 2016) by news media enterprises to have trusted news, which can equally be commercialized. Alexander, Owers, Hollifield, et al. (2004), argue that media enterprises are allocating more resources to the creation of trustworthy content.

At a time when media companies want to remain sustainable amid revenue decline, they are turning to readers for funding (Newman, 2018). This has resulted in an unprecedented loss of trust in journalistic content (Lewis, 2018). Newman et al. (2018) further affirm that trust in news media is not equal across, and is declining.

In the United States, trust in the media is politically polarized and only less than half of the population believes the media (Newman, 2018), even with paywalls. The trust decline has had an impact on the traditional advertiser-funding-media model, and media is shifting toward the digital space for revenue (Okumu, 2021).

Traditionally, commercial news media financed their operations by selling advertising space to corporations that wanted large audiences (Pettegree, 2014). Simon & Umar (2015) clarify that this traditional model is centered on the ability of the media house to balance consumers' versus advertisers' interests. Over time, this model has been upset, thanks to digital transformation (Frode, Frode & Timothy, 2019). The traditional advertising model is represented in Figure 2.2.1.

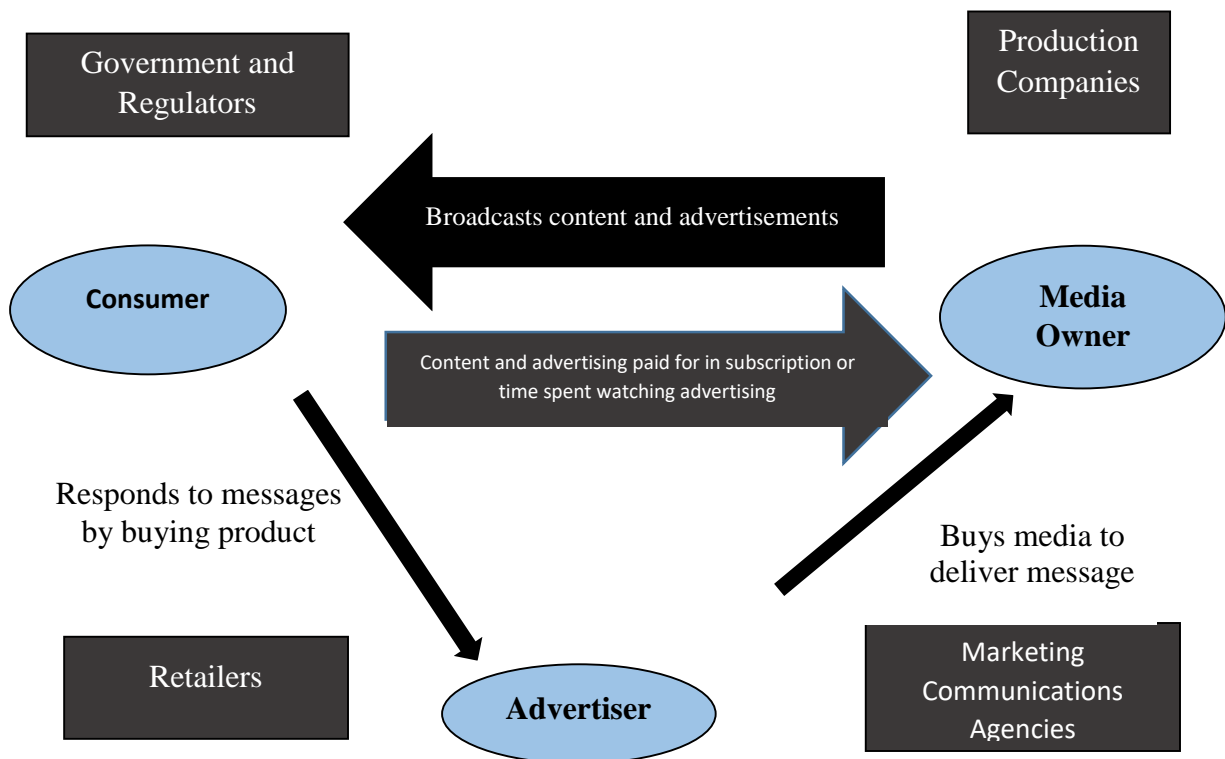


Figure 2.2.1: Traditional media advertising model (Frode, Frode & Timothy, 2019).

Traditionally, publishers depended on circulation to set advertising rates (Chappell, 2015), and newspapers with wider circulation charge more (Krumsvik, 2012; Picard, 2011), but a similar approach may not suffice in the digital space.

The new media environment in which media is operating is characterized by a decline in newspaper circulation and increased internet visits, yet news media enterprises struggle to develop corresponding revenue models (Berman, Battino & Feldman, 2011; Jens, 2021). Interestingly, Frode, Frode & Timothy (2019) observe that introducing a paywall is not a guarantee for revenue; it can also signal a decline of the same (Doctor, 2014).

Micaeli (2019) departs from the traditional model by providing new business models harnessing business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C) relations as new revenue streams for media.

Figure 2.2.2 presents a new model of revenue streams for media according to Micaeli (2019).

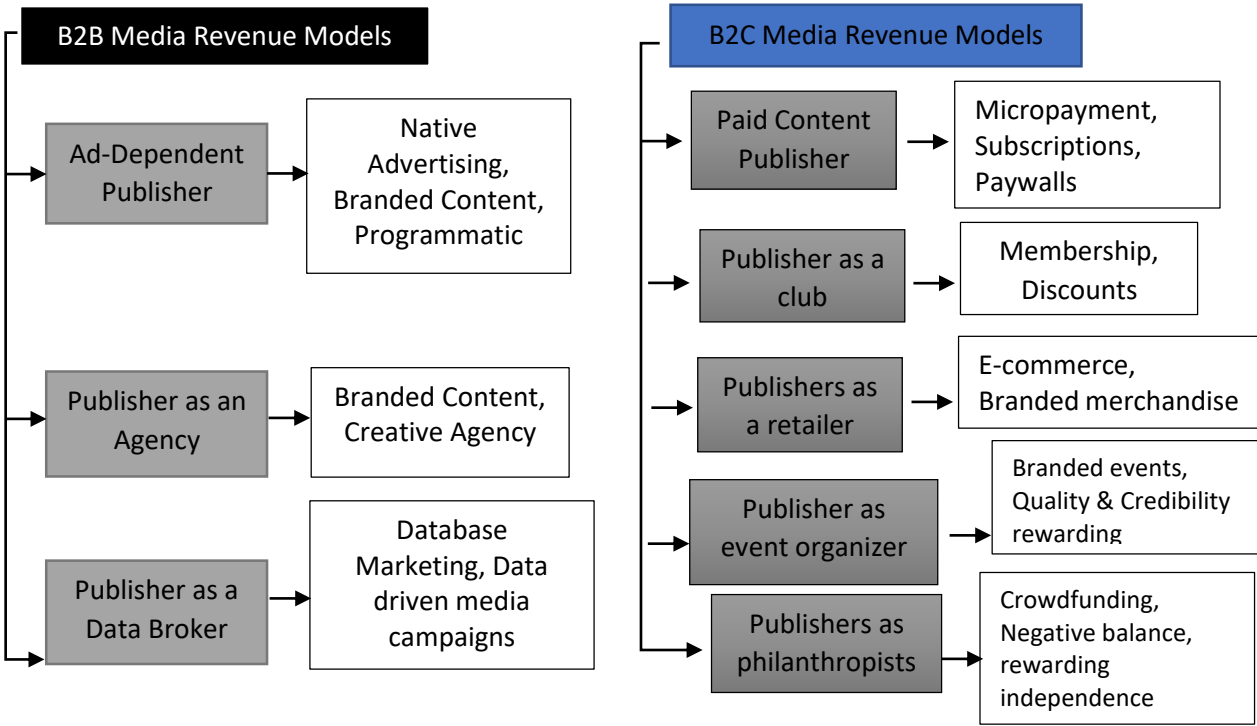


Figure 2.2.2: New media revenue models as presented by Micaeli (2019).

Overall, newspaper circulation across the globe is continually falling (Sparks et al., 2016). In the US, this fall has signaled increased adoption of subscription-based revenue models, which Kaye & Quinn (2010) observes;

*There is no evidence that large numbers of consumers will ever pay for commoditized news that is freely available elsewhere.* (Kaye & Quinn, 2010; p.117).

Interestingly, Picard (2014) reasons that news is commercially unviable; while Sebastian (2015) adds that any meaningful sale of news would be weighed against its values. Doctor (2014), corroborates this, affirming that little success has been realized from either selling news, or erecting paywalls.

### **2.3 Newspaper paywalls and the new media environment**

Advertising revenue is quickly shrinking (Bleyer-Simon, 2022) and media organisations are responding to this distress. Chyi (2012), observes the most immediate impact of digital disruption in the newsroom, has been the publishers' resolve to turn readers into revenue sources.

This means that instead of striving to increase traffic, publishers want to attract and retain a few page visitors who pay for news (Ragnhild & Mona, 2018). This is not devoid of challenges; Robert et al. (2020), affirm that the process of establishing a viable revenue model for online content is complex.

Similarly, a standard paywall does not exist (Robert et al., 2020). Tong (2022), while discussing the news business dilemmas, confirms that readers' little experience with paywalls, has impacted their success. As a result, low levels of awareness by internet users slow down uptake, save for the complex nature of the paywalls themselves (Myllylahti, 2016).

### **2.4 Types and technical functionality of paywalls**

Paywalls are either content-based or frequency-based (Chiou & Tucker, 2013; Lee, Han & Cho, 2022). Some newspapers charge for specific types of content (Halbheer et al., 2013), while others charge based on the volume of content accessed (Halbheer et al., 2013). This sets the stage for two major categories of paywalls; either the reader chooses which content to sample or the publisher chooses the amount of content to allow (Halbheer et al., 2013).

Picard (2014) presents four prototypes of paywalls, rooting from these two types, that is; open sites, mixed approach, soft paywalls and hard paywalls. Hard paywalls charges for all content on the site (Pickard & Williams, 2014); metered (or mixed) models in which content is free to a limited number of articles and allow social media redistribution (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013).

On the other hand, a premium model allows users to access low-end content freely, but pay for resources-driven content (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo 2013). These culminate into two major types, namely hard and soft paywalls as seen below;

### ***2.6.1 Hard paywalls***

A hard paywall is a digital subscription model which blocks all content until an internet user pays to access it (Myllylahti, 2019). Hard paywalls are usually deployed by publishers who dominate their market in specific themes of news (Tong, 2022) and who can provide added value to their content (Myllylahti, 2019).

### ***2.6.2 Soft paywalls***

A soft or metered paywall limits the number of articles an internet user can read before being asked to pay a fee (Myllylahti, 2019; O'Brien, Wellbrock & Kleer, 2020; Tong, 2020). Soft paywalls use free articles as a showcase to allow consumers to decide whether they like the content which then necessitates payment or not (Kim, Wang & Malthouse, 2022).

A soft paywall is enforced by either measuring the volume of articles users have read, that is view-based, or by the amount of time the internet user spends online browsing, that is, time-based. A freemium paywall is also a soft paywall as it allows users to access some content for free (Taremwa, 2022).

## **2.5 Technical functionality of paywalls**

Paywalls are set up on either a website or an application, and it mediates the reader and the content. They are designed to track the frequency of the internet user's engagement with content (Taremwa, 2022). This is determined in three forms based on the time users spend online, the number of articles read and the number of times one visits the website or application (Panagiotis et al., 2020).

To cater for these three, the architecture of an online publishing system is hinged on three key components; a content management system (CMS) to input news content; a customer relationship management (CRM) system that documents user’s page visit historical data and finally, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that has integrated media sales information to consolidate customers’ transactional data ( Panagiotis et al., 2020).

Internet users then interact with outputs of the consolidated three in form of videos, graphics, links and text using either a website or an application on preferred networked devices such as mobile phones, tablets, or computers. To charge for content, the publisher introduces another protocol, which is the paywall system that comprises another set of three components which are shown in Figure 2.5.1.

- i) Access Control Management (ACM),
- ii) Subscription and Access Policy Management (SAPM), and
- iii) User Interface (UI).

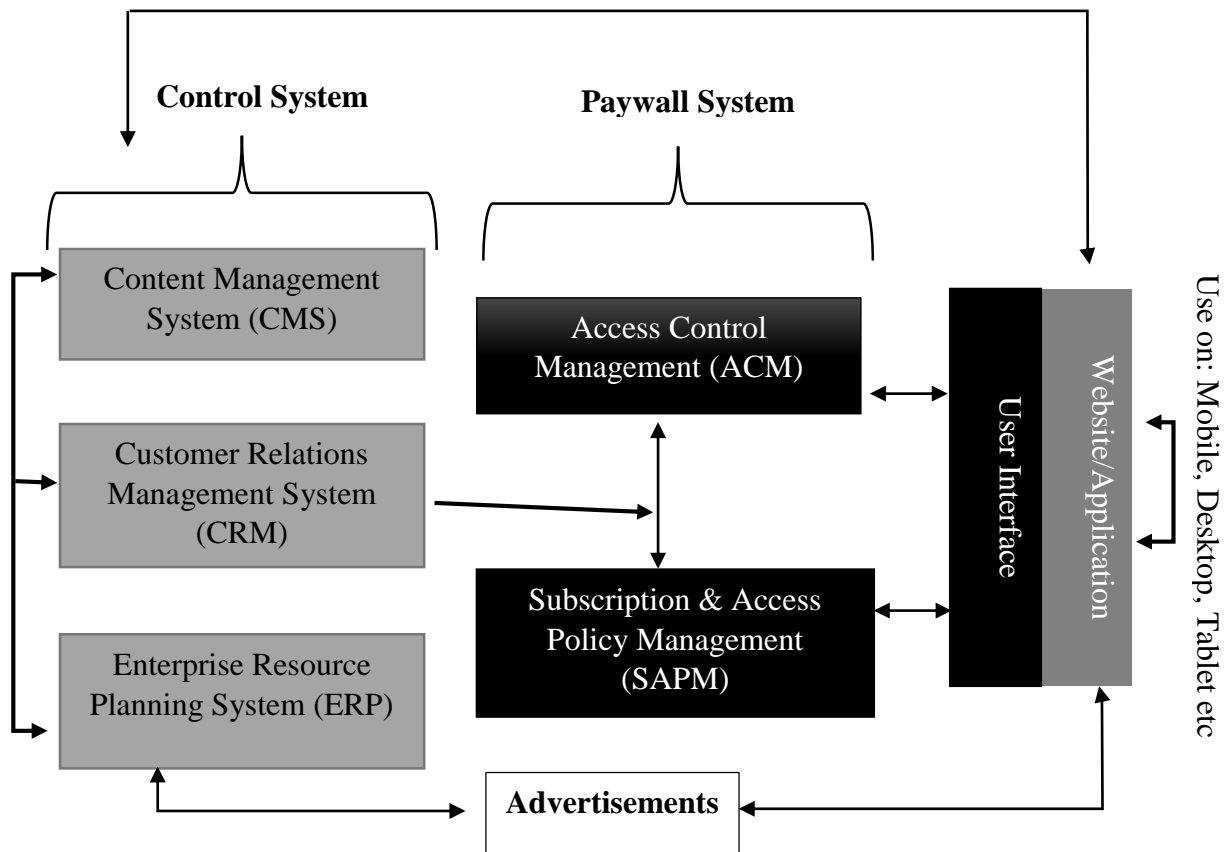


Figure 2.5.1: Content management system with a paywall (Panagiotis, 2020)



## 2.6 Paywall enforcement mechanisms

Panagiotis et al. (2020) and Robert, R et al. (2020) propose three mechanisms to enforce paywalls:

- i) Truncating article text using a subscription page redirect;
- ii) Obfuscating or concealing the whole article with payment page popups, and;
- iii) Redirecting users to a subscription page.

## 2.7 Attitudes in the context of paywall uptake

Quality of content, packaging mechanism and unfair prices by publishers remain the biggest turn-offs for online users in paying for news (Taremwa, 2020). Consumption of paid news is hampered by the complexity of paywalls, ostensibly predisposing a negative attitude (Myllylahti, 2019).

Since the introduction of paywalls in the 1990s (Chyi, 2005), they have been greeted with varied opinions and attitudes. In early attempts to explain attitude, Eagly & Chaiken (1993; p.1) define attitude as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor”.

What is clear in this definition, is that attitude is an evaluative judgment. As such, attitude reporting encompasses making a decision of liking versus disliking, approving versus disapproving, and favoring versus disfavoring an object.

Petty, Wegener & Fabrigar (1997), appreciate the view that evaluation is critical in defining attitude, hence concluding that “at the core of defining attitude is the notion of evaluation” (p. 611). Similarly, Crano & Prislin (2006; p.347) merged various characteristics revealing attitudes and suggested;

*Attitudes are the evaluative judgments that integrate and summarize cognitive/affective reactions...*

Crano & Prislin (2006), further hints that attitude can be picked by analyzing the components in which they manifest, that is, affective, cognitive and behavioral. Rosenberg & Hovland (1960), opine that the affective component is widely used to describe the positive or negative feelings that one holds towards the attitude object.

The cognition aspect, on the other hand, is used to describe the beliefs which one holds regarding the attitude object, while behavior describes possible actions and responses that individuals could accord to attitude objects (Breckler, 1984; Geoffrey & Gregory, 2021; Kothandapan, 1971). These three are discussed hereunder.

### ***2.7.1 Affective component of attitude***

The affective component of attitude refers to feelings or emotions associated with an attitude object (Geoffrey & Gregory, 2021). Affective responses are expressed as a result of the exposure of individuals to the attitude object. This component is the most readily accessible of all the other components (Verplanken, Hofstee & Janssen, 1998).

Feelings influence attitude in different ways; first, by use of classical conditioning and subliminal priming paradigms (Olson & Fazio, 2001) and secondly exposure to stimuli can ultimately influence the attitude outcome (Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980; Murphy & Zajonc, 1993).

### ***2.7.2 Cognitive component of attitude***

The cognitive component of attitude is centered on beliefs, thoughts and attributes one holds regarding a particular object (Geoffrey & Gregory, 2021). The researcher presents a view that the attitudes formed about paywalls will be purely based on the inherent characteristics of the paywall itself by consciously considering the positives and negatives (Esses, Haddock & Zanna, 1993; Kawakami, Dion & Dovidio, 1998). Geoffrey & Gregory (2021) contents that attitudes are derived from more elementary cognitions of the attitude object.

### ***2.7.3 Behavioral component of attitude***

Bem (1972) in the self-perception theory, which states that one becomes aware of certain attitudes by observing one's own behavior, discusses that individuals do not always have access to their opinions about different objects. That is only likely when a person's attitude towards an object is primarily weak (Bem, 1972; Nisbett & Wilson (1977).

Further, Chaiken & Baldwin (1989), concluded that the more people exhibit their positive behaviors, the more favorable attitudes they carry with them. There also exist possibilities that individuals may change their attitudes towards an object, to be consistent with their behaviors

(Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Festinger, 1954), or in favor of what the environment around them dictates.

## **2.8 Factors influencing uptake of paywalls**

### ***2.8.1 Content-related motivators***

Ho, Reo & Youngsoo (2020), finds that political news, business and economics, sports and general social news stories tend to have more subscribers. On the other hand, Ho, Reo & Youngsoo (2020), concluded that newspapers with articles on technology, science, lifestyle and entertainment tend to have a slower uptake of paywalls with lesser subscribers. Additionally, Chen & Thorson (2019) argue that people are more likely to pay for entertainment content.

Further, Ho, Reo & Youngsoo (2020), concluded that newspapers with more unique content tend to have a higher uptake of paywalls among their readers. However, paywalls have been rendered alternatives as search engines, social media and content aggregators have become commonplace for specific news (Pew Research Center, 2017).

### ***2.8.2 Brand related motivators***

Fombrun (1996) and Fombrun Gardberg (2000) agree that the reputation of a company is critical in its products' uptake. Paywalls are viewed as investments by companies, and therefore great reputation is considered essential (Barney, 1991; Deephouse, 2000). Aaker (1991), Agarwal & Rao (1996) and Sethuraman (2000) argue that a product whose brand equity in the market is high influences its uptake and dominance over competitors (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

In essence, newspapers with a large reader base can also benefit from high demand from advertisers (Armstrong, 2006; Chen, Thorson, & Lacy, 2005) and it is reasonable to argue that article quality also affects the choice of online newspapers when online papers introduce a paywall.

Newspapers with a larger print circulation volume may experience a smaller decrease in pageviews as a result of its paywall introduction. Large newspapers tend to have more subscribers online, perhaps because newspaper size is related to the newspaper's reputation and prominence as well as the quality of news articles.

## **2.9 Challenges and barriers to paywall uptake**

### ***2.9.1 Cost related barriers***

In the US the median cost per annum for a single subscription is \$108 and higher in German (Panagiotis et al., 2020). Further, Marju & Ragne (2015), argue that the willingness to pay for content is not only based on the accrued surplus value users attach to the content, but is also dependent on the fact that internet users are accustomed to free content online as;

*Information can easily be accessed free of charge via online search engines, and therefore, the referred or aggregated content from other news outlasts lowers the value of information (Marju & Ragne, 2015, p. 113).*

### ***2.9.2 Restriction related barriers***

While some paywalls allow redistribution or sharing of content online, particularly on social media, some publishers restrict this incredible value (Gillespie, 2018). Another dissatisfaction, unlike video streaming sites such as Netflix, where one account (user), can have various devices in use, it remains unclear if such is possible with paywalls (Hutchins & Rowe, 2019). Some paywalls, it was found, limit readers to one device, and cannot be accessed on multiple devices in different locations (Gillespie, 2018; Morel et al., 2022).

### ***2.9.3 Data privacy and security barriers***

Portilla (2018) explains that whenever internet users visit a website they leave a digital history that can be gathered and analyzed. Such data can be used for commercial purposes (Evens & Van-Damme, 2016; Gómez & Feijóo, 2013). McStay (2017), Lee (2016) and Nelson & Webster (2016) found that news media enterprises have in the past used data to monetize content; this makes it possible to exchange data between firms too (Lee, 2016).

Over time, studies including that by Evens & Van-Damme (2016) point to conclusions that the value of information tends to increase with the inclusion of personal data. While sharing personalized data tends to give the audience more personalized services (Dughera & Giraud, 2021), such is done at the expense of audiences' online privacy (Mai, 2016b). Acquisti, Taylor &

Wagman (2016), found that personal data can be traded among firms. To Lee (2016) and Stone (2014), this trade will increase in the future.

## 2.10 Theoretical framework

This study will be guided by Davis' (1989) technology acceptance model (TAM) as illustrated in Figure 2.10.1. The technology acceptance model (TAM) helps to predict how people admit and utilize new technologies such as paywalls. The model focuses on factors determining behavioural intention to use new technologies from the end user's perspective. It comprises core variables of user motivation as perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitudes toward technology (Davis, 1989).

Based on this model, perceived usefulness (U) would be denoted by whether paywall subscriptions guarantee internet users that such content paid for is not found elsewhere and has value for money; while perceived ease of use (EoU), that is, whether such paywalls are complex or not. An intervening factor constituted the data privacy aspect, which in addition to the two, makes a three-pronged influence on the ultimate decision of the internet user to pay for news. This is presented in Figure 2.10.2.

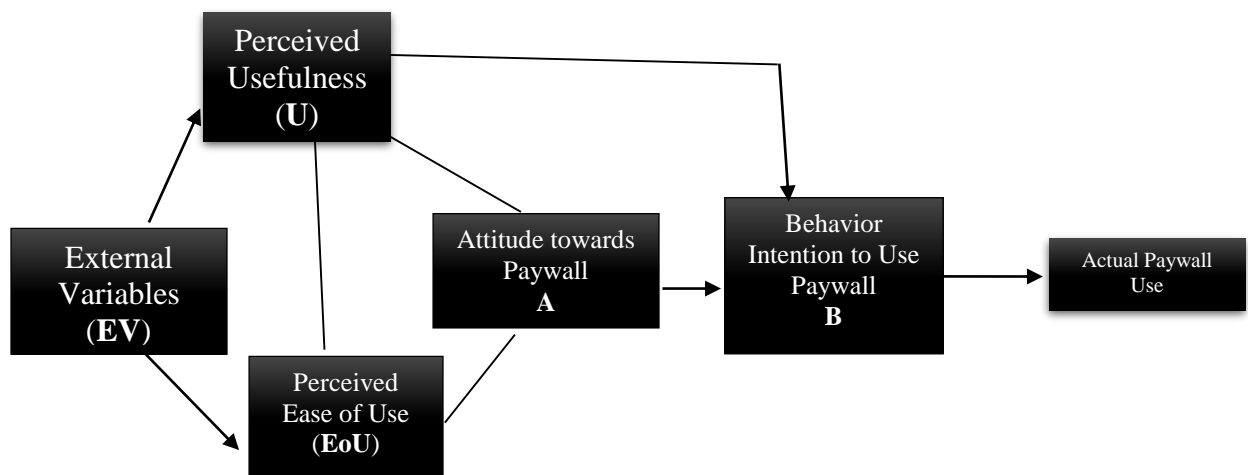
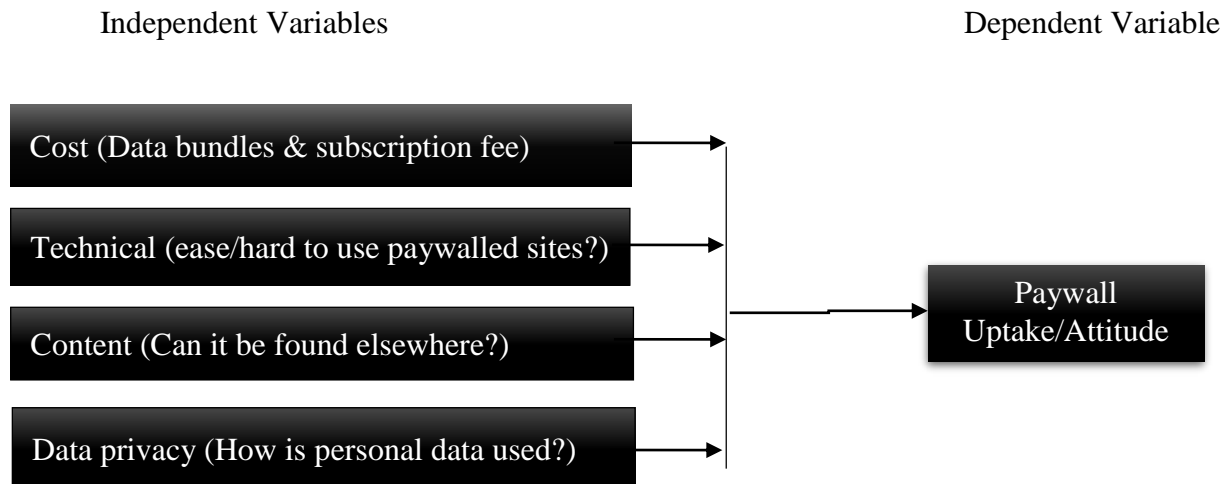


Figure 2.10.2: The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989).

## 2.11 Conceptual framework

This portrays the relationship between variables. The dependent variable was attitudes to paywall uptake, while independent variables included the cost of data and subscription fee, the content behind the paywall, data privacy and the technical functionality of the paywall.

These four key issues are shown in Figure 2.11.1.



*Figure 2.11.1: Conceptual framework showing independent and dependent variables.*

## 2.12 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a global view of paywalls as a new model of revenue for media organisations, factors for uptake and the new media business in the disruptive digital space. It is worth noting that while more news media enterprises are turning to the paywall, their overall success is continually hampered by the cost of subscription, attitude, the technicality of the systems used and the presence of locked content freely elsewhere. The chapter has also explored the common types of paywalls – hard and soft paywalls – with varying enforcement mechanisms. The literature reviewed points to an environment in which the uptake of paywalls can be boosted if publishers pay attention to content quality, data privacy concerns by readers and varying subscription costs. The chapter ends by presenting the technology acceptance model which is key in adopting paywalls which are viewed as a new technology in both news consumption and revenue for media enterprises.

## **Chapter 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Chapter introduction**

This chapter describes the study site and the demographic characteristics of the population. It also states and briefly describes the research design and approach. It builds upon the study site and explains the target population on whom the study is conducted. It has details relating to data collection instruments, procedures, data analysis and presentation, operationalization of variables, and ethical issues observed during the research process.

#### **3.2 Study site**

The study site is Nairobi City County has a population of 4,397,073 which is 9.2 percent of Kenya's total population. Out of this, 2.1 million are male, 2.4 million are female with 2.1 million internet users, most of whom are men (KNBS, 2021).

Despite being the most populous in Kenya, Nairobi's household averages 2.9, compared to a high of 6.9 in Mandera. The age group of the population when segmented gives; 0-14 years (1,336,249 people), 15-64 years (3,002,314 people) and 65+ years (58,122 people).

On specific age brackets, those aged 20-29 are the most (at 1,146,567); aged 30-39 are slightly over 800,000 and ages 40-49, stands at over 400,000 (KNBS, 2021).

#### **3.3 Research design**

Kumar (2011) and Creswell (2018) define research design as a structural outline that shows how research analyses the problem and responds to research questions. Malhotra (2004) defines it as a framework or blueprint for addressing the research questions. Creswell & Plano (2007) defines it as "procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data" (p. 58).

This study uses the descriptive approach, given the positivist realms of mixed methods approach, otherwise pragmatism (Brady & Collier, 2004) to achieve a more generalized response (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2005).

### 3.4 Sampling frame

The primary respondents included non-media professionals and students, businesspeople (randomly selected from Nairobi City, manual laborers and media professionals (selected from the Media Council of Kenya database) who were within Nairobi City County at the time of data collection. This sample size is derived from 260 individuals targeted by this study and the characteristics of such are summarized as shown in the sampling frame Table 3.4.1.

Table 3.4.1 presents the sampling frame in the study area.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Non-media professionals	90
Businesspeople	46
Manual laborers	17
Media professionals	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>

*Table 3.4.1: Study sampling frame*

### 3.5 Sample size

Creswell (2014), defines a sample as a subset of a population selected to participate in the study. It is a true representative of the entire population to be studied (Oribu et al., 2014; Leary, 2001).

Kothari (2004) advocates for a good sample as being a true representative of the population and such would result in lesser errors, is viable, economical and systematic. 158 participants to this end, will respond to open and closed-ended questionnaires. The sample size to be studied was arrived at using Kothari's (2004) formula thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size to be studied



N=Population size (260)

e = margin of error (.05)

Hence the Kothari (2004) formula gives;

$$n = \frac{260}{1 + 260(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{260}{1.65}$$

$$n = 157.575757575757$$

The estimated sample size would therefore be 158.

### 3.6 Data collection tools and procedures

A questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire had a Likert Scale to measure attitude antecedents. The questions were based on the independent variables and assisted in achieving the research's specific objectives. The researcher selected questionnaires to allow for a bigger sample population. In addition, interviews were conducted with media industry players and this allowed for the collection of in-depth qualitative data.

The questionnaires had five sections as explained hereunder;

- a) **Section (I)** sought the demographic characteristics of the respondent. Respondents were asked to state their gender, age group, frequency of access to the internet, level of income as well as the data access plans and devices used to access the internet.
- b) **Section (II)** examined the population's understanding of paywalls that is, affective. They also scored their frequency of interacting with paywalls; and as well examined if they were able to successfully subscribe among other technical issues around paywalls.
- c) **Section (III)** of the questionnaire sought to collect data on reasons for uptake or lack of it. The rating scale was made to address parameters that included cost, content behind paywalls, technicality of paywalls and data privacy. This was intended to gather data that would address the second research objective on the factors for the uptake of paywalls.

- d) **Section (IV)** evaluated the attitude antecedents for the respondents based on cost, content, data privacy and security as well as the technical aspects therein; lastly,
- e) **Section (V)** sought the population's overall opinion on paywalls on local news websites.

### **3.7 Validity and reliability of the research instruments**

Mohajan (2017; p.1) defines validity as that “which concerns what an instrument measures, and how well it does so while reliability concerns the faith that one can have in the data obtained from the use of an instrument, that is, the degree to which any measuring tool controls for random error.” Altheide & Johnson (1994) observes that reliability is the stability of findings, whereas validity is represented by the truthfulness of findings.

Blumberg et al. (2005), define reliability as a measurement that supplies consistent results with equal values. It is concerned with assessing the consistency, precision, repeatability, and trustworthiness of a research process or research tool (Chakrabarty, 2013).

Questionnaires were thoroughly checked to eliminate ambiguous words, leading questions, insensitive or unreasonable questions and biased questions e.g. gender-biased questions. Such questions tend to reduce research validity because the research instruments yield different results when administered to different research respondents.

### **3.8 Data analysis and presentation**

Collected data was examined, cleaned, checked for completeness and clarity then entered in the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to facilitate the generation of percentiles, frequency distributions, pie charts and graphs. Notes from interviews were also analysed and results presented in form of descriptions and quotes.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

The researcher sought informed consent by asking research participants to be part of the study. This was done by preparing participants and explaining to them what was required and what was expected of them and leaving them to decide whether to participate or not. In the end, the researcher specifically addressed three resulting issues around consent;

- i) The researcher ensured that the participants were given sufficient details about the nature of the research and the procedures involved. It highlighted study objectives, potential risks and benefits that were abound.
- ii) Participants were made aware that their consent was to be freely given and that they were at liberty to withdraw any time. There was no undue influence on the population.
- iii) In view of voluntary participation, participants were allowed to make informed choices. Equally, with this, the researcher assumed that the respondents gave accurate information.

The researcher similarly sought to protect the identity of the participants. The tool of data collection, that is a questionnaire, did not allow collection of personal data, and as such the respondents remained anonymous. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms which did not require pre-filled emails. The question of anonymity also stretched into three domains, thus as:

- i) The confidentiality of the information supplied the participants and the anonymity of respondents. The researcher informed potential participants how the collected data was to be used,
- ii) Anonymisation – no visible identifiers were found on the filled questionnaires. Participants were consequently treated as anonymous.
- iii) Confidentiality - The researcher embraced the duty of care in delianating personal information or data such as phone numbers, emails among other identifiers.

Additionally, the principle of beneficence imposes a duty to benefit others and, in research, a duty to maximize net benefits. Care was taken to ensure that the research only intended to generate new knowledge that will produce benefits for participants themselves, other individuals, or society as a whole and that it was not for financial gain.

To avoid fabrication or falsification of data and plagiarism, care was adhered to in administering the research tools and the use of data generated as a result of the process. Further, the researcher also undertook additional measures such as;

- i) Separated collected data from identifiable individuals.
- ii) Income and business strategy queries presented as variables with generalised findings.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter has described Nairobi City County, as the study site. It has explored the demographic characteristics of the population which is under study. It has further presented the research design and method, settling on the mixed method, which will bank on an exploratory approach. The chapter has also discussed the target population, its characteristics and the population sample, as well as the sampling frame. The sampling frame included businessmen, non-media practitioners and a few media managers for purposes of interviews. The sample size has been explained, a data collection tool (questionnaire) was tested to streamline the actual data collection and the data collection procedure has also been discussed. The chapter concludes by explaining the ethical considerations the researcher observed while conducting this study.

## Chapter 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents research findings, analysis and interpretation. The chapter gives a detailed account of what the demographic characteristics of the population mean. Further, it presents the findings around the first, second and third objectives of this study. It also has findings on the level of awareness of newspaper paywalls by internet users, factors for the uptake of newspaper paywalls, and ultimately, the attitudes of internet users towards the paywalls. The findings are presented in descriptive tables using percentages and descriptions (with quotes) from notes developed during key informant interview sessions.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

Out of the 158 questionnaires distributed, 117 were duly completed and returned (Table 4.2.1). This amounts to 74.06 percent response rate. Mugenda & Mugenda (2008), consider any response rate above 50 percent to be ideal whereas Saunders et al. (2009) explain that a 50 percent response rate is adequate, 60 percent is good and above 70% rated very good.

This means the 74 percent response rate for this research is very good, as contemplated by Mugenda & Mugenda (2008) and Saunders et al., (2009). This rate is presented as shown in Table 4.2.1.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Response	117	74.06%
Not returned	41	25.94%
Total	<b>158</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 4.2.1: Response rate*

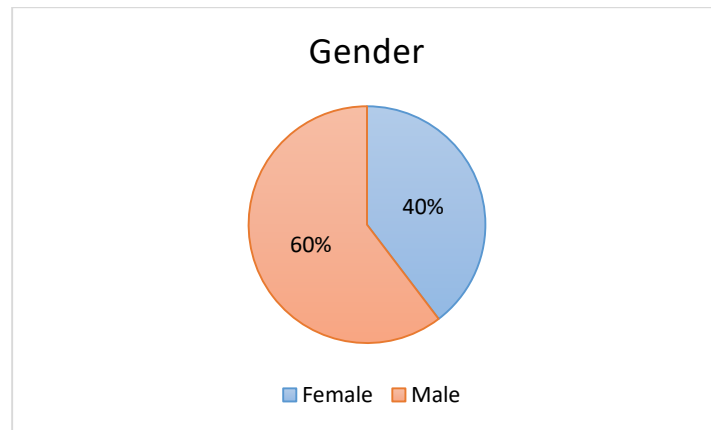
#### 4.3 Demographic profile

The demographic profile of the respondents was picked based on their gender, age group, income level, level of education, devices used to access the internet and the frequency of internet access.

In line with the fact that more men than women use the internet in Nairobi City County (KNBS, 2021), the findings show that 60 percent of those who filled out and returned questionnaires were men, while 40 percent were women.

Based on the age group, the response rate was high among persons aged 30-34 years at 38.8 percent, followed by ages 35-39 at 25 percent; 21 percent are drawn from an age group of 25-29 (Table 4.3.2).

The gender distribution is presented in Figure 4.3.1.



*Figure 4.3.1: Distribution of respondents by gender.*

Most of the respondents are university graduates (67.52 percent) followed by college graduates at 27 percent. Others have tertiary-level education, and another group of the population with 0.9 percent drawn from primary and secondary schools.

This shows that the majority of respondents are university graduates, which is a reflection of the majority composition of the Nairobi population, where literacy levels are high (KNBS, 2021).

Based on the income levels 24.9 percent (Table 4.3.2) of the population have incomes of over Sh100,000 yet another 19 percent, registered earnings of between Sh40,000 and Sh50,000. This signals that most of the respondents in Nairobi have purchasing power, given the subscription rates for newspaper paywalls.

The age group of respondents is represented in Table 4.3.1.

Age	Percent
<24	5.2
>60	0.9
25-29	21.6
30-34	38.8
35-39	25
40-44	6
50-54	0.9
55-59	1.7

*Table 4.3.2: Age group of the respondents.*

From data, 44.4 percent of respondents access the internet through mobile data plans. This is important since it means that most internet users are on mobile, which is critical when setting up paywalls for news sites; 15.5 percent use all, or one of mobile data plans, home Wi-Fi and Office Wi-Fi. Less than a percentage point, at 0.9 percent, use public Wi-Fi.

The internet access plans are represented in Table 4.3.2.

<b>Data Plan</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Home Wi-Fi	20.7
Mobile Data	41.4
Mobile Data, Home Wi-Fi	8.6
Mobile Data, Home Wi-Fi, Office Wi-Fi	15.5
Mobile Data, Home Wi-Fi, Office Wi-Fi, Public Wi-Fi	.9
Mobile Data, Office Wi-Fi	6.9
Office Wi-Fi	5.2
Public Wi-Fi	.9
Total	100.0

*Table 4.3.3: Data plans and access*

Based on income levels, over 24 percent responded in the affirmative of earning over Sh100,000, with just 4.3 percent earning between Sh20,000 and Sh29,000.

This points to a high purchasing potential since most both Nation.Africa and standardmedia.co.ke paywalls which are the most active, charge up to Sh1800 per year to read premium content behind paywalls.

This is summarized in Figure 4.3.2.

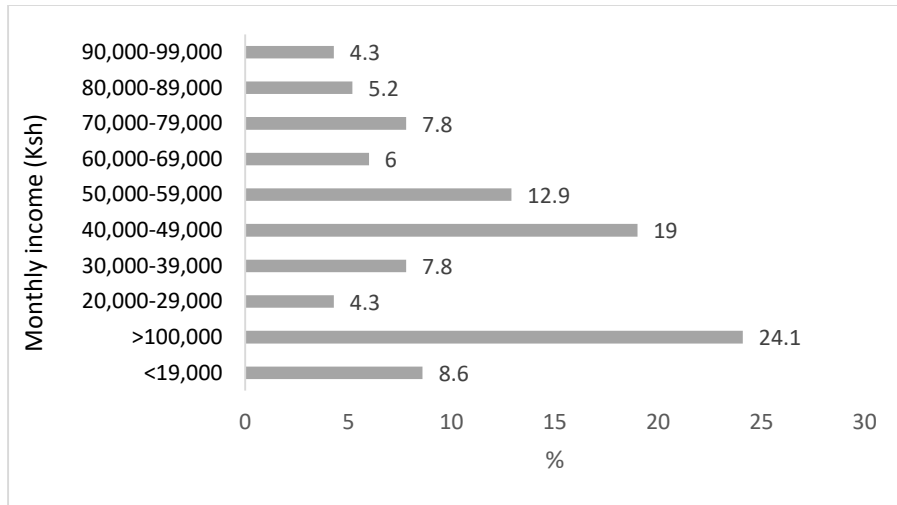


Figure 4.3.2: Level of earnings of the studied population

From the analysis, 42.2 percent of the population use mobile phones to access the internet, further confirming the increasing penetration of mobile telephony (KNBS, 2021); while 23.3 percent either use mobile phones, office computers, or home computers to access the internet.

This means that when news aggregators and publishers engage in the business of publishing news, they should endeavor to focus on mobile devices.

Figure 4.3.3 presents the devices the population used in accessing paywalls.

	Percent
Home Computer	2.6
Mobile	42.2
Mobile, Home Computer	9.5
Mobile, Office Computer	8.6
Mobile, Office Computer, Home Computer	23.3
Mobile, personal laptop	.9
Mobile, Tablet	3.4
Mobile, Tablet, Home Computer	1.7
Mobile, Tablet, Office Computer	.9
Mobile, Tablet, Office Computer, Home Computer	4.3
Office Computer	.9
Tablet	.9
Tablet, Home Computer	.9
Total	100.0

Figure 4.3.4: Listed devices the population used in accessing paywalls



The frequency of access to the internet is most concentrated on ‘several times a day’ signaling a trend of increased online visits, as contemplated by CAK that Kenyans visit online doubled from 1.5 million visits per day in 2018 to 2.9 million visits per day in 2021 (CAK, 2021).

Another set of population, mostly above the youth age bracket, recorded visiting news sites at least once per week (19.8 percent), while the populations aged 60 years and above (3.4 percent) either visited news sites either once per year or at least once a week or a month at 0.9 percent. This shows that publishers may want to re-evaluate the content strategy, with the age factor in mind.

Further, 56.9 percent of the population visit news websites several times per day, 19.8 percent access the internet at least once per week; and 15.5 percent access news sites several times per month (Table 4.3.3).

Table 4.3.3 presents the frequency of internet users’ access to online news sources.

	Percent
At Least Once a Week	19.8
At Least Once a Week, Several Times per month	.9
Once Per Year	3.4
Several Times per Day	56.9
Several Times per Day, At Least Once a Week	2.6
Several Times per Day, Several Times per month	.9
Several Times per month	15.5
Total	100.0

*Table 4.3.4: Frequency of internet users' access online*

#### **4.4 Internet users’ level of awareness of paywalls**

The first objective of this study was to understand the level of awareness of internet users towards paywalls. The researcher listed several local media paywalls - Nation.Africa, standardmedia.co.ke, The Star and Viusasa – and the population had a condescending choice on Nation.Africa and standardmedia.co.ke at 12.9 percent (Table 4.4.1 on level of awareness).

Equally, data collected revealed a pattern in which 15 percent of the population indicated they have interacted with the paywalls – including Nation.Africa, Standardmedia.co.ke, The Star and Viusasa.

Despite a large population comprising youth with those aged 25-29 (21.6 percent) and those aged 30-34 standing at 38.8 percent, with higher earning potential of over Sh100,000 per month (24.1 percent of the population; Figure 4.4.1 ), the level of knowledge of paywalls still staggers at 15 percent (Table 4.4.2).

Table 4.4.3 presents the level of awareness of paywalls among the population studied.

	Percent
Nation. Africa	8.6
Nation.Africa, standardmedia.co.ke	12.1
Nation.Africa, standardmedia.co.ke, The Star	12.9
Nation.Africa, standardmedia.co.ke, The Star, Viusasa	15.5
Nation.Africa, standardmedia.co.ke, Viusasa	3.4
Nation.Africa, The Star	.9
Nation.Africa, The Star, Viusasa	.9
Nation.Africa, Viusasa	3.4
Never used paywall	.9
none	.9
standardmedia.co.ke	11.2
standardmedia.co.ke, The Star	.9
standardmedia.co.ke, The Star, Viusasa	1.7
standardmedia.co.ke, Viusasa	2.6
The Star	3.4
The Star, Viusasa	2.6
Viusasa	17.2
Viusasa, Netflix	.9
Total	100.0

*Table 4.4.4: Percentages of levels of awareness on paywalls among the population.*

This spells a huge impact on the uptake of paywalls as most reported that they would not subscribe again, should the current package expire (at 31.9 percent; Table 4.4.5). Just 17 percent, which is the highest on the awareness front, have a condescending affiliation to Viusasa, and Netflix, which they say have never paid for, after all (at 31 percent; Table 4.4.6).

Viusasa has been frequently advertised on radio and television resulting in its awareness at 45.7 percent. This informs the notion that advertising has a positive impact on product awareness. This is followed by 26 percent of the population who strongly agree that they have indeed heard or seen paywalls ads.

Others identified all the listed paywalls (at 15.5 percent) and interestingly, some listed a new paywall that was not part of the intended list as Netflix with 0.9 percent (Table 4.4.7).

Netflix, a video-on-demand platform that streams movies, has a paywall. It is equally safe to argue that most of the population consumes video content rather than text on newspaper websites, but this does not preclude the fact that newspapers are widely read online. A further 0.9 percent of the respondents denied having any knowledge of the listed paywalls. Another 0.9 percent said they have never used a paywall (Table 4.4.8).

The majority, however, identified more positively with the standardmedia.co.ke paywall, since it was the most active paywall at the time of conducting this study (at 11.2 percent). However, for news this is low, considering Viusasa is more known.

Nation.Africa (with 8.6 percent identifying with it), in the interest of covering the August 2022 general election, had temporarily pulled down the paywall at the time of collecting data. Other respondents identified with Viusasa (17 percent; Table 6), a video-on-demand platform launched in Kenya in 2016.

Additionally, the details of how the population learned about paywalls, whether they have ever paid for news, and if they imagined renewing can be summarized in Table 4.4.9, which has corresponding levels of percentages per response from the population.

Overall, familiarity with paywalls ranks high at over 38.8 percent of the population affirming their familiarity with paywalls. And as much as 25 percent of the population report having used paywalls in the last year, 31 per of the same population do not have plans to renew subscriptions, or at least sign up should the existing subscription end.

The dilemma lies in the fact that 29 percent of the population exhibit a neutral stand on bypassing paywalls to read news. However, another set of respondents (25.9 percent) of the population agree to have used paywalls with 24.1 percent strongly agreeing to the same.

Most of the respondents affirm their ability to use paywalls comfortably (30.2 percent; Table 4.4.1), signaling the ease of use of the system, thus eliminating technicality fears. Nevertheless, another set of respondents at 20.7 percent disagree, signaling that they experience difficulties while using newspaper paywalls.

On the issue of paying for news, a high of 31 percent who deny any payment, weighs down on 27.6 percent who agree to have at least paid for news in the last year. A year is, however, a long time and could equally mean that content consumption after the erection of the paywall resulted in a dip in pageviews, thanks to the restrictions (Ho, Rio & Youngsoo, 2020).

Table 4.4.11 presents the cumulative percentiles of responses on awareness.

<b>Paywall awareness</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>SD</b>
I'm familiar with news websites paywalls	38.8%	4.3%	10.3%	37.9%	8.6%
I've heard of paywalls in TV, online, print & radio ads	<b>45.7%</b>	7.8%	10.3%	26.7%	9.5%
I've used a paywall within the last year	25.9%	16.4%	17.2%	24.1%	16.4%
I can comfortably use paywall on a website	30.2%	12.9%	23.3%	12.9%	20.7%
I've paid for news online in the last 12 months	27.6%	18.1%	7.8%	15.5%	31.0%
I'd renew my paywall subscription on expiry	20.7%	19.0%	22.4%	6.0%	<b>31.9%</b>
I've been bypassing paywall to read news	21.6%	15.5%	29.3%	22.4%	11.2%

*Table 4.4.10: Paywall awareness among internet users.*

*Key: [SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree]*

Interviews with media managers and publishers seeking to determine the internet users' level of awareness of newspaper paywalls resulted in responses of increased expenditure by media enterprises on advertisements for TV, radio, print, social media, billboards and AdSense (Google Inc. interactive advertising service) to influence internet users into paying for news.

The view that there has been a steady increase in online visits in the last five years (KNBS, 2021) would translate into revenue, featured prominently. However, the presence of free social media content highly consumed by the youthful audiences who are the majority online poses a challenge to paywalls in Kenya. Media managers express reservations about their (youthful audience) willingness of Kenyans to pay for news, despite a rise in the level of awareness of newspaper paywalls.

A media manager described awareness and willingness to pay thus;

*To a higher degree, given the advertising around paywalls on our print and broadcast subsidiaries, I am confident people know about it. We are however*

*looking at whether the massive audience we have online can translate into revenue. Most of our readers are youthful and are used to free social media content. So, it will be interesting to see how they adjust from that to the premium journalism products that we have. So first, we have to deal with the long-time culture of free content and sensitize internet users on the need for paid-for content.* – Media Manager 001.

Based on this, it is worth noting that demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income levels and general interest in news influence greatly the willingness of consumers to pay for news (Chyi & Lee, 2013; Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017; Goyanes, 2015). Although Geidner & D’Arcy (2015) found that young people are more likely to pay for news, this study presents a contradictory finding. It finds that approximately 40.5 percent of the population (Table 4.6.1), majorly youthful, want free content online.

#### **4.5 Drivers for paywall uptake**

The second objective of this study was to identify the factors for the uptake of paywalls among newspaper readers. In this regard, the responses collected have been grouped into the nature of the content (availability of free content elsewhere), cost (data bundles and subscription fee), data privacy concerns (harvesting of personal data) and the complexity of paywalls.

##### ***4.5.1 Exclusivity of content***

The findings point to approximately 29.3 percent of the population agreeing that content behind paywalls is available freely elsewhere, especially on social media and other search engines, with 28.4 percent of the respondent having a strong conviction that such news is free on social media (Table 4.5.1). This is synonymous with the findings of Brandstetter & Schmalhofer (2014), who while examining successful newspaper paywalls models in Germany, found that content behind paywalls is equally free on search engines.

Despite this, interviews with online publishers who have paywalls, express certainty that content behind paywalls is mostly exclusive to the paywalled portal. However, analysis of paywalled newspapers and affiliate television and radio channels found to air the same content, at no fee.

Nevertheless, multiple sources interviewed are confident that since such content is majorly acquired using company resources, they would not be distributed freely on social media, as the return on investment (RoI) has to be realized.

*Our decision to erect a paywall would be weighed against whether the monthly or annual fee to the system provider can be neutralized by the revenue. At the moment, media enterprises are slicing expenses, including downsizing staff. We are uncertain if the paywall can serve to reverse this trend. We want to do more native advertising and collaborative content production. – Online Publisher 001.*

The population, however, remains unpredictable on whether they switched back to print or social media for similar news. 28.4 percent, remain neutral on this, even as over 45 percent strongly agree and agree to the fact that data costs as well as subscription costs are too high.

Table 4.5.1 presents drivers for the uptake of paywalls.

<b>Paywall uptake</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>SD</b>
Content behind the paywall is free elsewhere	29.3%	12.1%	22.4%	28.4%	7.8%
Data bundles & subscription fees are high to maintain	37.1%	5.2%	17.2%	35.3%	5.2%
Private data could be harvested and re-shared	31.9%	12.1%	30.2%	16.4%	9.5%
The paywall is too complex to navigate on my device	22.4%	24.1%	27.6%	10.3%	15.5%
I've switched to print and social media	24.1%	18.8%	28.4%	19.0%	10.3%

*Table 4.5.2: Drivers for uptake of (or lack of) paywalls*

*Key: [SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree]*

#### **4.5.2 Data privacy concerns**

Data privacy concerns nearly split the population into half, with 31.9 percent agreeing that their data could be misused, yet another 30.2 percent are neutral on data privacy concerns. There is also a concern about data privacy and where it ends, with 31 percent of the population expressing fear for their private data.

Personal data access by third parties is yet another concern for the population with 31 percent affirming this, yet 27.6 percent are neutral, even as approximately 28.4 percent of the population agree that their information could be misused in the event they subscribe.

Over 28.4 percent of the population report receiving updates outside their initial subscriptions, confirming the worst fears of data misuse in the event the population subscribes.

#### ***4.5.3 Subscription and data costs***

The studied population presents a controversial viewpoint regarding the costing factor. Approximately 40.5 percent of the population strongly agreed that news online should be free of charge. Interviews conducted on readers revealed that the internet users have a feeling that such news is equally available for free on television, search engines and news agencies.

Away from the subscription fee, approximately, 33.6 percent (Table 4.6.1) of the respondents expressed a view that one of the two - either data bundles or news itself should be free - indicating a desire that one should augment the other. A high response of 36 percent of the respondents expressed a view that the subscription fee was too high (Table 4.5.3).

This could be as a result of tough economic times given that at the time of collecting data, inflation was at a high of 9.6 percent up from 9.2 percent in September (Central Bank of Kenya, 2022). This may have shifted priorities on spending.

#### ***4.5.4 Complexity of paywalls***

From the findings, 28.4 percent of the population is neutral on whether paywalled websites are hard to navigate. However, this is not a good sign, as another 25 percent have a feeling that indeed paywalled websites are hard to navigate.

From Section 2.6 on paywall enforcement mechanisms (see Chapter 2), this research finds that both Nation.Africa and standardmedia.co.ke use soft paywalls, and users are redirected to the payment page for all content which are marked as ‘premium’.

Based on this, website response rate tends to slow down as an internet user concurrently loads two websites – a news site and the paywall system (for payment) – and this could slow down devices as 24.1 percent who are neutral and 25 percent of the population agreed to slowed devices (Table 4.6.1).

Additionally, interviews with media managers showed a growing need by subscribers to be allowed access to one account using several devices. For example, Netflix, an entertainment paywalled service provider, allows users to have multiple devices accessing the same account at

the same time in different locations. This study, in fact, finds that 33 percent of the population cannot enjoy such added advantages. Another 25 percent have reservations, probably because they have not been using paywalls, or back the fact that it is not possible to access multiple devices using one subscription account. This gives publishers a head start to chatter means of availing content on several devices, but using one subscription account as long as login details can be achieved successfully (see Figure 2.5.1).

It is worth noting, that beyond costs, interviews equally point to more interesting parameters internet users may want to evaluate before paying for news. These parameters have mostly been listed as brand recognition, the exclusiveness of stories and even journalists who publish such stories.

A similar argument is presented by Goyanes, Artero & Zaparta (2018), who explain that some internet users may pay to read content from a specific journalist. They argued that the more prestigious a journalist is, the higher the likelihood for the audience to pay.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that content quality (where the population seeks fresh content never found elsewhere), desire for a lessened subscription fee, data privacy concerns and complexity of paywalls, uniquely affect the uptake of paywalls and extends to a negative attitude towards newspaper paywalls in Kenya.

#### **4.6 Internet users' attitudes towards paywalls**

The third and final question of this study sought to provide evidence in discussing the attitude antecedent newspapers readers, or internet users have towards newspaper paywalls. This section of the questions, interrogated summarily; attitudes based on cost, content, technical and data privacy vis a vis security concerns.

##### ***4.6.1 Attitudes based on cost***

Approximately 33.6 percent of the respondents expressed a view that either data bundles or news should be free, signaling a desire that one should augment the other. Additionally, 36.2 percent of the respondents expressed concerns about the subscription fee, terming it high (Table 4.6.1).

The researcher also found that 40.5 percent (Table 4.6.2) of the respondents want content free online. News is available at no fee on search engines and social media. 31 percent of the population



affirm they have not paid for news in the last year (Table 4.6.3) for it is available for free on social media.

The study finds that internet users (32.8 percent; Table 4.6.1) have a condition that if news has to be paid for, data bundles should be available for free. This, however, would be an additional cost to news media enterprises, which by having paywalls, are seeking revenue.

Interviews with media managers paint a picture of uncertainty on how to leverage increasing online visits to make additional revenue. Another aspect that cropped up was the fee of maintaining the paywall by publishers. This explains why Nation Media Group (NMG) listed paywall as a non-revenue item in the 2020/2021 financial year brief (NMG, 2022) despite registering an increase in digital subscriptions. Assessed based on the cost, it can be inferred that the overall attitude the internet users have towards paywalls is disfavor.

#### ***4.6.2 Attitudes based on content***

Closely related to the cost of data and subscription is content behind paywalls. Approximately 37.9 percent of the respondents hold a position that news behind paywalls is, in fact, free on social media. This conflicts with the previous expression on whether such newspaper readers switched back to print or social media, to which the majority percentage of the respondents expressed a neutral position (33.6 percent; Table 4.6.4).

Studies by Keen (2015), Melissa & Kembrew (2020) and Brandstetter & Schmalhofer (2014) find that it is not entirely possible to have content behind a paywall, without it being on social media, search engines, and news agencies or news aggregation sites. This study equally corroborates these studies, as 31 percent (Table 4.6.1) of the population found news on social media.

With this understanding, internet users may be shying away from paywalled content, with a view that such content is readily available through a simple online search. This equally means that publishers should place content behind paywalls that have a quality that it cannot be found elsewhere to have the trust of readers. The disposition of attitude on newspaper paywalls based on this aspect is negative.

### ***4.6.3 Attitudes based on paywall complexity***

To fully understand the affective attitudes internet users have towards newspaper paywalls, the researcher sought to use parameters such as ease of paywalled website navigation, behavior of devices used to access websites (phones, tablets, computers etc.) and possibilities of using one account to access several devices in different locations.

Conclusively, it can be inferred that for two reasons - 31 percent (Table 4.4.2) have not subscribed and another 28 percent remain neutral (Table 4.6.1) – internet users have disfavor newspaper paywalls. Neutrality on the technical issues (25 percent vis a vis 20.7 percent; Table 4.6.1) related to paywalls could equally be reflected in the level of awareness, which is still low (see Section 4.4 on level of awareness).

Another interesting perspective on newspaper paywall technical aspects related to whether such paywalls could allow multiple access in different locations using the same subscription account to which 24 percent remain neutral (Table 4.6.1), and because of lack of this feature, 36 percent are hesitant to pay for news.

It is therefore safe to argue that the overall attitude antecedent accorded paywalls when viewed based on a technicality is inhibitive to its uptake since a large section of the population has not subscribed. This could equally mean disapproval. It is, however, worth noting that the neutrality (at 24 percent; Table 4.6.1) on this aspect could be a pointer to a more rebellious interaction with paywalls.

Nearly all media managers (approximately 80 percent), when interviewed, expressed opinions that the paywall systems tend to redirect readers, thus increasing website bounce rate<sup>1</sup>.

### ***4.6.4 Attitudes based on data privacy***

There is also a concern about data privacy and where data such as emails and phone numbers (mostly used to pay via MPESA) end, with 31 percent of the population expressing fear for their private data. Data privacy remains potentially a big inhibiting factor to the uptake of paywalls in Kenya, now doubt the attitude resulting from this antecedent is strongly in disfavor.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stuker.com/wp-content/uploads/import/i-2731fa96a2de23f5b57b1471f450b9d0-WAA-Standards-Analytics-Definitions-Volume-I-20070816.pdf>.

Personal data access by third parties is yet another concern for the population with 31 percent affirming this, yet 27.6 percent are neutral, even as approximately 28.4 percent of the population agree that their information could be misused in the event they subscribe.

Over 28.4 percent of the population report receiving updates outside their initial subscriptions, confirming the worst fears of data misuse in the event the population subscribes.

Table 4.6.5 presents attitude antecedents' responses.

<b>Attitude antecedents</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>SD</b>
Online news needs to be free for readers	26.7%	10.3%	12.1%	40.5%	10.3%
To pay for news, data should be free	32.8%	10.3%	15.5%	33.6%	7.8%
Paywall subscription rates are high for me	36.2%	6.9%	28.4%	25.0%	3.4%
News sites with paywalls are hard to navigate	25.0%	20.7%	28.4%	19.0%	6.9%
Paywalls could slow down my device (s)	25.0%	25.9%	24.1%	12.1%	12.9%
I'm not sure if I can access news on multiple devices	33.6%	16.4%	25.0%	12.9%	12.1%
News content behind paywalls is free on social media	37.9%	9.5%	25.0%	21.6%	6.0%
The locked content is available fully on TV and radio	36.2%	11.2%	23.3%	20.7%	8.6%
Subscribing to news gives third parties my data	31.0%	10.3%	27.6%	17.2%	13.9%
My private data could be misused	28.4%	16.4%	25.9%	21.6%	7.8%
I've been receiving updates outside the initial subscription	28.4%	13.8%	27.6%	21.6%	8.6%

Table 4.6.6: Attitude antecedents dispositions.

Key: [SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree]

#### 4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the study. Data gathered showed that many internet users visit news sites several times a day. Nevertheless, while there is a steady increase in online visits, and mostly among the youth aged 25-29 (21.6 percent) and those aged 30-34 standing at 38.8 percent, even with high incomes, knowledge of newspaper paywalls staggered at 15 percent. Regarding newspaper paywalls, only 11 percent identified with standardmedia.co.ke paywall which was active at the time of data collection. This is low. On paying for news, the attitude

accorded is more negative than positive as over 31 percent of the population have never paid, and had no plans to buy news content. It was also found that the population could not be predicted on whether they switched back to print, in the view of spillover effect, or not as over 28.4 percent expressed a neutral position, even as 45 percent strongly agree that data costs are high. Another issue that strongly came out in the data is personal data access by third parties. 31 percent of the population is concerned about data leakage to third parties, even as 27.6 percent are neutral.

## **Chapter 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Chapter introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the findings while drawing the implications of the findings that lead to the drawing of research conclusions. The purpose of the study was to evaluate internet users' attitudes towards newspaper paywalls. The problem of the statement was well stated as well as the problem under investigation. The objectives to guide the study were; to determine the level of awareness of newspaper paywalls among internet users, to identify the factors affecting the uptake of newspaper paywalls and subsequently assess their attitude towards newspaper paywalls. The findings of these objectives were guided by three research questions; one being; what is the level of awareness of the paywall among internet users? It also interrogated the factors that affect their uptake of such newspaper paywalls. Summarily, chapter three gives the methodology used in the study, while chapter four presents a reasoned interpretation of the data gathered. Based on the conclusions arrived at, this study's recommendations are drawn specifically to respondents of the study, but can equally be applied to the general public who consume online news in Kenya.

#### **5.2 Summary and discussion of findings**

A Media Council of Kenya (2021) survey conducted when Standard Group PLC and Nation Media Group erected paywalls, found that 58 percent of Kenyans still watched television, down from 74 percent in 2020, most of whom watch news (80 percent). This position is evidenced when respondents of this study affirmed that indeed the paywalled content is available freely on television and radio.

The MCK study also found that 74 percent of Kenyans on a typical day listen to radio maintaining a similar trend in the previous year; of this, 93 percent listen to radio for news and 96 percent listen for entertainment reasons, all at no fee. The rate of trust in Kenyan media remains solid (MCK, 2021), as opposed to what is happening in the US where trust is on a steady decline (Newman, 2018).

Despite the increase in online news sources, the readership of newspapers was slightly strong, maintaining a 25 percent value of those who were polled, which is the same as in the previous year. Meanwhile, just a handful of respondents in this research took a neutral stand on switching back to print after the erection of paywalls. This signals that some may be paying for news, anyway.

An interview with media owners showed that some pay for news, albeit, for example, when they see a story they are interested in, just for that day. Payment is also meant to compare the content versus what the media they run has.

An interview with a digital editor yielded this;

*“Sometimes we make daily subscriptions worth Sh10 to read investigative stories, after which we can re-evaluate and tailor our subsequent story ideas. So that becomes payment for just that day because most of the content behind paywalls are those which we also have from press conferences or even media press releases. So, paying for what you have is not agreeable.”* – Digital Editor 003.

Interestingly, 46 percent of Kenyans purchase print copies, but there is an increase in the interest and uptake of online subscriptions at 27 percent, signaling that probably the debate of willingness to pay for news is neither here nor there. Nevertheless, the trend of offline dominance continued online with two papers of national circulation – Daily Nation and The Standard – as the most-read online papers at 59 percent and 28 percent respectively (MCK, 2021).

On revenue and sustainability, Internews (2019) notes that Kenyan media houses have been collaborating on specific theme stories through grants and other subsidies extended to journalists. Internews, the Media Council of Kenya, and Journalists for Human Rights (JHR), among others collaborate to produce content that can be distributed elsewhere.

Interviews with media owners found that newspaper paywalls are not seen as the ultimate solution to the financial crisis being experienced by news media enterprises. This corroborates a study by Myllylahti (2014) that examined the hype and realities surrounding paywalls which established that paywalls are not accounting for substantial revenue by news media enterprises. One media manager held a view that running a paywall itself adds to the expenses since it is not an in-house product, but made by third parties.

*Sometimes there are inconveniences. The paywall is not an in-house system. You are at the mercy of a third party. Nevertheless, we have plans to have it fully operated here. But we have costs to pay at the end of every month. The challenge is whether this cost will be canceled out by revenue that comes out of it because the uptake is slow. – Media Manager 002.*

Additionally, interviewees remained uneasy to disclose financial accruals from paywalls but reported substantial investment including servicing the paywall technology providers, with lesser revenues accrued. Myllylahti (2014, 2016) explains that there was no substantial revenue accrued as a result of the paywall erection. He holds the view that most news media enterprises guard such information against the public. This amounts to negative attitude antecedents on paywalls.

Interestingly, free online news publications have witnessed a spike in pageviews, pointing to a possibility that internet users have resorted to avoiding paywalled news websites. Alexa (n.d.), a web metrics website, lists several blogs, news aggregation sites (Google.com as 1<sup>st</sup>), and social media sites - Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram - as 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> most visited sites respectively; while paywalled standardmedia.co.ke and Nation.Africa websites are ranked 26<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> respectively, the lowest ever.

A senior editor at one of the free-to-access digital publishers reported a spike in pageviews on political and sports stories which are mostly locked behind paywalls by Nation.Africa and standardmedia.co.ke. The notes from the interview are thus;

*There has been a rise in pageviews, maybe because market leaders have paywalls. We used to have fewer than 5 million pageviews monthly, but we are doing over 6 million pageviews. Ours is free. We also have increased traffic on our website, especially on political, sports and crime stories. – Digital Editor 002*

Both tuko.co.ke (30<sup>th</sup>) and kenyans.co.ke (31<sup>st</sup>), free-to-access news sites tumble Nation.Africa. NMG's print product Daily Nation, whose content is posted online on Nation.Africa (paywalled), is the most-read newspaper in Kenya (KNBS, 2021). Lesley & Catherine (2012), while discussing

the demand for news in the digital age, find that in occasions where newspaper paywalls are erected, approximately 51 percent of youthful readers are lost.

Reviewed Nation Media Group's (NMG) financial statements between 2020 and 2021, confirmed a steady decline in website users from a high of 9.9 million users in 2020 to 8.1 million users in 2021 (Nation Media Group, 2020; 2021) representing an 18 percent dip. During this period, NMG had just erected a paywall, and the financial implication of this move is not captured (NMG, 2021).

In as much as NMG reported a 20 percent increase in digital revenue, it is not clear about the sources – whether paywall or subscriptions for e-paper – since a paywall is listed as a non-revenue in the financial statements (NMG, 2021). Paywalls, nevertheless, contribute some revenue to media company publications and circulation portfolios (Myllylahti, 2014).

The conclusive findings and the attitudes have been explained as summarized in the following subsections.

### ***5.2.1 Cost of data and subscription to paywalls***

The cost aspect was viewed from the cost of accessing the internet and the cost of subscribing to newspaper paywalls. The researcher finds that 40.5 percent (Table 5.2.1) of the respondents strongly favor making online news free. This impacts the willingness to pay, just like the situation in Nigeria (Wole, 2019), where readers depend on social media for news.

Reading news on social media instead of subscribing to paywalls is corroborated by 31 percent of the population, who affirm they have not paid for news in the last year (Table 5.2.2), yet the paywall on local newspaper websites was erected slightly two years ago.

This implies that neither the publishers are reaping from the paywall nor the readers feel the content behind the paywall is unique. 29.3 percent (Table 5.2.3) agree while 28.4 percent (Table 5.2.4) strongly agree with a statement that content behind the paywall is free elsewhere.

Nevertheless, 29.3 percent (Table 5.2.5) of the population remains neutral on whether they have been bypassing the reacted paywall to read news. First, this can be attributed to a person feeling guilty of unethical access to information, or the system being so porous that it allows access to content.



It can also mean the population was either not decided or not ready to respond with honesty to this question. It is worth noting that the standardmedia.co.ke which was most active at the time of conducting this research, has a soft paywall, meaning not all content is locked. It, however, cannot be established based on the collected data, whether indeed there have been breaches.

The population presents a condition that if news has to be paid for, data bundles should be made free. This is an uphill for media houses and could be an opportunity to partner with Internet Service Providers (ISP) on this front. This touches on the core business of paywalls – encouraging subscriptions to increase revenue. This is challenged by 32.8 percent (Table 5.2.6) of the population who suggest that when data bundles are available, they could subscribe to news.

This in essence signals a possibility that when data bundles are provided, probably, the 36.2 percent (Table 5.2.7) who hold a view that the subscription rates are high to maintain, could be subdued. A paltry 3.4 percent (Table 5.2.8) claim that cost is not a problem in subscribing to news. This is way low for meaningful revenue.

From this, it can be inferred that the overall attitude the internet users have towards paywalls when viewed from the cost vintage point is disfavor. Either, the cost of data bundles or the cost of subscription has to come down; alternatively, media organisations have an option of entering a partnership with ISPs to provide internet to those who pay for news at a subsidized rate to boost uptake.

### ***5.2.2 Technical features of paywalls***

Under this section, the researcher sought to understand how the complexity of paywalls on the websites could affect uptake, and the ultimate decision to subscribe to news. This was gauged based on ease of navigation, how devices behave (phones, tablets and computers) when logged onto a paywall system and whether one account could allow multiple access on multiple devices at the same time.

It can be inferred that either because a large population has not subscribed (at 31 percent; Table 5.2.9) or they do not understand how paywalls work, a high of 28 percent (Table 5.2.10), are neutral on the ease of use of paywalls. Respondents are equally split on this as 25 percent affirm that indeed navigating paywalls is hard, yet 20.7 percent disagree with this (Table 5.2.11).

Additionally, a 0.9 percentage difference separates those who identify with the fact that paywalls slow down their devices and those who don't. Interestingly, 24 percent (Table 5.2.12) of the population remains neutral. This is equally associated with the possibilities that they have not subscribed and have no adequate experience to fully respond.

Equally, 36 percent of the population has a feeling that they are not guaranteed that having an account could give one the freedom to access news on any other device upon logging in. For example, Netflix, which was identified (Table 5.2.13) allows multiple accounts to be set up using one subscription model.

In this sense, one can tailor content based on age, among other characteristics. In the event of erecting paywalls, could the login details, for example, separate accounts for different genres of content. It is not clear whether media organisations have these features.

Overall, the attitude antecedent accorded paywalls when viewed based on a technicality is inhibited since a large section of the population has not subscribed. This could equally mean disapproval. It is, however, worth noting that the neutrality (at 24 percent; Table 5.2.14) on this aspect could be a pointer to a more rebellious interaction with paywalls. A large number, 36 percent, are not sure whether paywalls can allow them to access news on several devices, using one subscription account.

### ***5.2.3 Content features of paywalls***

The affirmation that news on social media is what they see locked behind paywalls is cemented in Table 4.6.1, in which 37.9 percent agree and 21.6 percent strongly agree. This is in line with Brandstetter & Schmalhofer (2014) who found in a survey that news behind paywalls is free on search engines and social media.

As argued by Sjøvaag (2015), political and economic news is mostly the ones locked behind paywalls. An evaluation of Nation.Africa affiliate Business Daily finds that the website has no paywall – all the content is accessed freely.

Equally, standardmedia.co.ke Business News section has lesser content locked, compared to political news. This gives social media a more appealing look for news readers since most of the published news on these paywalled websites is sourced from the social media channels of

prominent politicians (Okoth, 2021). This challenges the fact that paywalls are editorial investments as argued by Kvalheim (2014).

Nation Media Group and Standard Group PLC which run Nation.Africa and standardmedia.co.ke websites with paywalls respectively, also have dedicated radio and television news channels mostly broadcasting the same content which is behind paywalls on free-to-air terrestrial television receivers.

This makes it hard to pay for news on the websites as affirmed by 36.2 percent (Table 5.2.15) of the population who avers that they find the locked content freely on radio and television. An additional 20.7 percent strongly agree with this.

This means that the cross-sharing of content on television and radio and online may not be growing the uptake of paywalls. The audience already knows what is contained in the paywalled content, thanks to television and radio broadcasts.

It is therefore safe to infer from this data that as long television and radio broadcast the same content which is paywalled, the urgency to pay for news, which they can find at home on TV and radio cannot be understated.

Further, since these broadcast segments are shared on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as exclusive investigative packages, readers then prefer broadcast to paywalled news. The attitude deposited on this aspect, therefore, is that which is in disfavor of paywalls.

#### ***5.2.4 Data privacy concerns***

Most paywalls are operated by third parties, which means the users of paywalls may not have control over the type of personal data and information collected from subscribers.

In the view that personal data can be harvested when one visits a website (Lee, 2016; Stone, 2014) this study sought to understand the severity of this on the uptake of paywalls and how it affects attitudes.

This research finds that 31 percent of the population, 17.2 percent and 27.6 percent (Table 5.2.16) agree, strongly agree and are neutral to a fear that their data could land in third-party hands. The ultimate inference is the downside on the expected uptake of paywalls.

A further 28.4 percent affirm that their worst fear is the harvesting of personal data, which is corroborated by another 28.4 percent who clarify that they have been receiving third-party marketing messages, pointing to what Lee (2016) described as data exchange between corporations. This is, even as 27.6 percent of the population is neutral to whether they have ever received updates from third parties resulting from subscribing.

It is equally safe to conclude that 28.4 percent (agreeing) and 21.6 percent (strongly agreeing), which makes it over 50 percent, have ever received updates from third parties outside the subscription agreement.

This means that the publishers are not careful with subscriber personal data, especially emails. This has an impact on the uptake of paywalls since it is seen as a trap to have third parties sending in marketing emails, outside the initial quest for news instead.

### **5.3 Conclusions of the study**

Media is facing a twin challenge of the quality of content and sustainability. The ongoing digital disruption is taking a toll on traditional media even as social media giants, including Meta (Facebook, Instagram), news aggregators as well as search engines reap more from advertising.

Traditional advertising is sharply reducing and efforts to cushion the media, including the erection of paywalls, seem to be stagnating. Since their inception in the late 1990s, paywalls still face the challenge of willingness to pay and the content therein. Most respondents from the foregoing, hold a view that content that is to be put behind a paywall should be unmatched.

On the contrary, the very subscribers hint that they at least can find the same content on other platforms, including television and radio (traditional media), outside the supposed digital platforms. It is also worth noting that the respondents, who are mostly youthful and well-educated (mostly at the university level, drawing from data in Chapter 4), remain cagey on whether they can pay for news, further exacerbating the challenge of success of paywalls as a source of revenue for Kenyan media.

Most of the responses on this issue are neutral and asked whether they can pay for news, or renew their subscription, they strongly disagree with such a plan. This hands the media owners a challenge to re-evaluate the strategies in the news business. As raised in this research, the most

useful issues internet users are concerned about should be addressed by media owners, should they contemplate paywalls as sources of revenue.

First, is personal data privacy. The information collected by news media enterprises while encouraging subscription is doubted that can be exchanged with third parties, despite a caveat on the same. Interviews conducted reveal that more and more respondents are now concerned with the data collected by websites, including phone numbers and the worry of financial losses is high, given in Kenya, phone numbers are critical in the financial management avenues for millions of individuals.

In summary, therefore, it is safe to argue that internet users disapprove of newspaper paywalls. Their concerns range from the cost of subscription as well as the cost of data bundles, bearing in mind Kenya's data costs are high in the region. This is viewed as a reap-off, if someone has to pay for data bundles, then 'buy news'. This does not, however, mean that the Kenyan audience switched to print, as KNBS (2021), reports a sharp decline in newspaper circulation. It is in the considered view of this study that media organisations and publishers reevaluated the cost, reviewed the data privacy policy, and made the navigation for paywalls as simple as possible, to boost the uptake of paywalls which has great potential, although the initial attitude towards it is wanting.

#### **5.4 Recommendations of the study**

In view of the foregoing conclusion, this research makes the following recommendations;

1. Media houses can partner with internet service providers to first boost access and awareness regarding paywalls. In this sense, publishers can collaborate with, among others, telecommunications companies, which are providers of mobile data bundles. This would allow new users of the internet, for example, at a subsidized data cost, access news that they cannot find elsewhere, but through such platforms. A small fee when charged would be used to service their data plans as well as content. That said, there should be one cost – a subscription fee, or a data plan – not two as is the case.
2. Simplify the process of accessing news on the paywalled websites. When for example, a phone number is a gateway to the paid-for-news, it should be so much so that at an entry of a phone number, the system can check and validate readers who have a data plan (or

subscription plan) as explained in recommendation one above. This way, the much data, which in most cases is personal, that is collected about internet users is cut down and this could boost confidence in the readers to, in fact, pay for news (or data), which either way should give readers news.

3. Inherently, media organisations should produce content for paywalls that cannot be found elsewhere. While previous research shows that such content could be expensive to acquire, it is also necessary to give value for money. Most internet users are informed. This research found that over half of the respondents have attained a university education. This poses a challenge to the journalists to produce high-quality content, which can sway such intellectuals off their normal duties to read or watch news. This will not only increase trust levels in the media but will also assure media houses of sustainability.

### **5.5 Suggestions for future research**

As explained in the introductory parts of this research, resource constraints hampered the full exploration of this construct of studying attitude. This research, therefore, approves further interrogation on this particular matter. It is not lost that being in the trial stages for local news websites, paywalls have a great potential to succeed. It is therefore in the considered opinion of this research that more elaborate research would be conducted not only to interrogate attitudes but also to develop more knowledge on the issues of data privacy concerns, which has self-added to the list of hurdles of newspaper paywalls as sources of revenue.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX (I): LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Respondent,

I am Chrispinus Juma, a Master of Arts in Communication Studies student at the University of Nairobi. I am conducting research as part of the course requirement on: '**Examining Nairobi internet users' attitudes towards newspaper paywalls in Kenya**' and I would like to know about your experience.

Please complete this 5-minute survey and hereto note that;

- Your responses are anonymous; private information including emails, location, IP address, social media details, financial or phone numbers or any other details will NOT be collected.
- The information collected is strictly for use in this research and won't be shared elsewhere, nor it would be used for other purposes outside this study.
- Be advised that there will be no compensation of any form whether financial, gifts, incentives, or otherwise. Participation is purely voluntary. To this end, should you be having any reservations to participate, kindly feel free to exit.

Thank you for your participation.

Yours faithfully,

Chrispinus Juma.

**APPENDIX (II): QUESTIONNAIRE**

**SECTION I: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

In each of the following statements, pick what applies to you

**1. What is your gender**

Male [ ] Female [ ]

**2. What is your age group?**

<24	25- 29	30- 34	35- 39	40- 44	45- 49	50- 54	55- 59	>60

**3. What is your highest level of education?**

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	College	University	None

**4. What is your level of income (Sh)?**

- |               |     |               |     |
|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| <19,000       | [ ] | 20,000-29,000 | [ ] |
| 30,000-39,000 | [ ] | 40,000-49,000 | [ ] |
| 50,000-59,000 | [ ] | 60,000-69,000 | [ ] |
| 70,000-79,000 | [ ] | 80,000-89,000 | [ ] |
| 90,000-99,000 | [ ] | >100,000      | [ ] |

**5. What device (s) do you use to access the internet?**

Mobile [ ] Female [ ]

Tablet [ ] Female [ ]

Other(s)(Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What is your source of data?**

Mobile [ ] Office Wi-Fi [ ]

Home Wi-Fi [ ] Public Wi-Fi [ ]

**SECTION II: LEVEL OF PAYWALL AWARENESS**

Reader's paywall awareness level is the degree of knowledge and depth of understanding of paywalls.

*Fill in the box which best describes each of the situations listed below;*

[SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree]

**7. Which of the following paywalls have you interacted with?**

- Nation.Africa [ ]                      Standard [ ]
- The Star [ ]                              Viusasa [ ]
- Other (s) (*Specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Which of these best describes the frequency with which you visit news sites?**

- Severally per day [ ]                      Once a week [ ]
- Several times a month [ ]                      Once a year [ ]

**To which degree do you agree or disagree with these statements?**

[SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree]

	SD	D	N	A	SA
9. I'm familiar with news websites paywalls					
10. I've heard of paywalls in TV, online, print & radio ads					
11. I've used a paywall within the last year					
12. I can comfortably use a paywall on a website					
13. I've paid for news online in the last 12 months					
14. I'd renew my paywall subscription on expiry					
15. I've been bypassing the paywall to read news					

### SECTION III: FACTORS FOR UPTAKE OF PAYWALLS

*To which degree do you agree or disagree with these statements?*

[SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree]

	SD	D	N	A	SA
16. Content behind paywall is free elsewhere					
17. Data bundles & subscription fee costs are high to maintain					
18. Private data could be harvested and re-shared when I subscribe					
19. The erected paywall is too complex to navigate on my device					
20. I switched to print and social media after the paywall was erected					

### SECTION IV: ATTITUDE ANTECEDENTS' DISPOSITIONS

*To which degree do you agree or disagree with these statements?*

[SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree]

	SD	D	N	A	SA
21. Online news needs to be free for readers					
22. To pay for news, data should be free					
23. Paywall subscription rates are high for me					
24. News sites with paywalls are hard to navigate					
25. Paywalls could slow down my device (s)					
26. I'm not sure if I can access news on multiple devices					
27. News content behind paywalls is free on social media					
28. The locked content is available fully on TV and radio					
29. Subscribing to news gives third parties my data					
30. My private data could be misused in the event of subscribing					
31. I've been receiving updates outside the initial subscription					

**SECTION V: YOUR OPINION**

Pick what suits your opinion among the listed responses.

**32. What is your general view on the erection of news paywalls among local media outlets?**

- |                |     |                |     |
|----------------|-----|----------------|-----|
| Good Idea      | [ ] | Best Idea      | [ ] |
| Satisfactorily | [ ] | Excellent Idea | [ ] |

## **APPENDIX (III): INTERVIEW GUIDES**

### **APPENDIX III(a): Research Objective 1**

**Objective 1:** To determine internet users' levels of awareness of newspaper paywalls.

- i) Do you run adverts to sensitize your readers about paywalls?
- ii) Would you think the increased online visits have an impact on paywall usage?
- iii) How do you describe the culture of free content and its impact on paywalls?
- iv) To what degree would you agree/disagree that many Kenyans know of paywalls?

### **Appendix III (b): Research Objective 2**

**Objective 2:** To identify the factors affecting the uptake of newspaper paywalls among internet users.

- i) Are there any costs associated with running a paywall system?
- ii) How do you compare the cost of running a paywall system with revenue?
- iii) Do you think the paywall system used in Kenya is easy to use for internet users?
- iv) What is your general comment on data privacy and paywalls?
- v) Would you assure that content behind paywalls is not elsewhere at all?

### **Appendix III(c): Research Objective 3**

**Objective 3:** To assess the attitude of Internet users towards newspaper paywalls

- i) How do you think the costs associated with paywalls influence attitudes?
- ii) How do you rate the liking/or dislike of content locked behind paywalls?
- iii) Do you think paywalls are complex, and online readers could avoid them on such grounds?