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TOPIC:

JOURNALISTS VS BLOGGERS: COMPETITORS OR COLLABORATORS?

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DECLARATION

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This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any university.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family.

ABSTRACT

Blogging has become a channel through which people share ideas, news, advice and analyses on different happenings in the society. The practice has turned out to be journalistic, with a good number of bloggers running authoritative and influential blogs, where thousands of people flock for information.

In Kenya, blogs are now a permanent fixture in the media environment as their popularity grows, with bloggers holding influence on political and social discourses. Their growing influence has made bloggers share audiences with traditional media.

This study sought to find out how blogging is affecting journalism and how journalists respond to and perceive the new threat. The study was guided by the following questions: (i) Do bloggers consider themselves journalists? (ii) How do journalists perceive bloggers? (iii) What roles do bloggers play? (iv) Do journalists collaborate or compete with bloggers to inform public?

The research sampled 30 journalists in mainly two national media houses in Kenya, namely Standard Group and Nation Media Group, 15 bloggers and three online media editors. The findings reveal that most journalists read blogs because they find information on the sites useful and they are now getting ideas for their stories from the sites.

Further results show that bloggers do not think they should be trained as journalists and lastly, the study concluded that bloggers and journalists do not compete to inform the public, however, they collaborate.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the background of the study and the problem statement, which indicates the existing gap that is being explored. Research objectives and questions, limitation and scope of the study and its significance are also highlighted in this section. Lastly, the operational definitions of various terms as used in the study are listed.

1.1 Background of the study

There were no blogs or bloggers in Kenya until about five years ago. The major source of information for the public was journalists in the mainstream media, including on the internet. But after blogs sprouted about five years ago, the Kenyan media landscape has greatly changed. There are now tens of blogs and bloggers offering varied information to the public that include general news and articles on topics like food, gossip, real estate, technology, fashion, politics, beauty, society and humour.

The bloggers have become a permanent fixture in the media scene that Kenyans frequent the sites regularly in search of information. The blogs have certainly taken part of the space newspapers, TV and radio occupied as sources of information, particularly on the internet. Google Internet Zeitgeist report (2013) on Kenyans online searches points to this fact. In 2013, the Google report showed that *Daily Nation* (mainstream media) topped the list of most-searched news websites in Kenya.

However, following closely were *Daily Post* and *Goal.com*, which are blogs that offer general and sports news, respectively. The blogs beat several mainstream media outlets that include *The Standard*, *People Daily* and *The Star* as most-searched news sites. The leading sites, according to Google, were picked after a compilation of trending searches, which have the highest amount of web traffic over a certain period.

This is an indication that while mainstream media may dominate dissemination of news outside the internet, blogs have become popular forms of online communication as the number of people who read news via the internet increases. Communication Authority of Kenya (2014) puts the number of Kenyans who have access to the internet as at March 2014 at 21.6 million.

The warm reception of blogs and bloggers by audiences is an indication that the sites have added diversity to news reporting, freedom of expression and have expanded the practice of citizen journalism, which initially was limited to use of mobile phones to pass breaking news to journalists in mainstream media houses.

Kenyan weblogs include *Daily Post*, *Jackal News*, *Nairobi Exposed*, *HardTalk*, *Nairobi Wire*, *Niaje*, *KahawaTungu*, *Mpasho.co.ke*, *Goal.com*, *Ghafla* and *TechMtaa*. The blogs play a significant role in dissemination of information that includes gossip, general news, and exposés to an increasingly digital public. A look at the sites reveals how popular some of them are. Stories published on the blogs generate hundreds of comments from audiences. Ironically, the same stories may not have huge feedback when posted on mainstream media news sites.

The mass media has changed tremendously from early 20th century's one-way, one-directional and undifferentiated flow to undifferentiated mass (McQuail, 2010). According to McQuail, what has led to this revolution is technology, which is characterised by interactive complex networks of communication. The technological advancement has given risen to 'new media', where blogs fall. The new media has entered into the sphere of mass communication and empowered citizens to be journalists, thus, having consequences on traditional media.

The obvious consequence is that proliferation of the citizen journalists (bloggers) leads to a brand of journalism and journalists without accountability, who have no regards to journalistic tenets like fairness, accuracy and truth, therefore, undermining the quality of the profession (Campbell, 2010). According to Knight (2007), journalists have professional system of reporting with identified sources; stated codes of ethics; they

check facts and benefit from professional editing to produce credible news. But bloggers do not follow most of the systems in journalism. One person reports, selects, edits and prioritise what goes out to the public.

Yet studies have indicated that despite these inadequacies, audiences still rate some bloggers highly. In a study on credibility of online newspapers vs blogs in US, Johnson and Kaye (2004), after sampling 3,747 respondents found that only 42.7% thought online newspapers were very credible. On the other hand, 73.6% believed bloggers were very credible. A paltry 3.5% thought bloggers were not credible.

On the Kenyan blogosphere, blogger Robert Alai, who runs *KahawaTungu* is among those who offer information to the public on the blog and micro-blogging site *Twitter*. Most of his followers on *Twitter* seek confirmation from him, particularly, on breaking news stories, some which have first been reported by journalists in mainstream media.

This was evident during Westgate Mall terror attack on September 21, 2013 when the blogger updated his followers on news and information that journalists did not have, leaving them to vindicate him hours later when they reported the same information on TV, radio and newspapers.

A case in point is the shooting of a Recce Squad General Service Unit officer by military personnel leading to withdrawal of the squad from the mall. The blogger was the first to report the incident. His work during the attack made international media houses to turn him into one of their sources as they recognised his efforts in keeping the public informed (*Epoch Times*, 2013).

It is imperative to note, therefore, that bloggers and blogs are reducing the influence traditional media used to have on agenda setting, educating, entertaining and informing the public (McCombs, 1999). To adapt to the new media environment, according to US *The State of the News Media* (2005) report;

“Journalists must aspire in the new media landscape to be the one source that can best help citizens discover what to believe and what to disbelieve

- a shift from the role of gatekeeper to that of authenticator or referee. And to do that, news organisations have to make some significant changes; rather than merely monitoring the official corridors of power, news organisations may need to monitor the new alternative means of public discussion as well.”

1.2 Statement of the problem

Bloggers have become a key feature in today’s media environment, growing in number and influence in communication and (mass) media discourse (Baresch et al, 2011). Audiences are increasingly turning to blogs for news and information, with some bloggers outshining established media houses in breaking stories and allowing users to interact with them freely.

This is because most blogs represent a collaborative news product that hosts both the journalist and her audience in a sharing platform for deliberation (Dimitrakopoulou, 2010). The bloggers rising influence has made them be acknowledged as key participants in providing news and information in the changing media environment, where the internet is becoming the main tool of communication.

“What is notable is that a small number of web bloggers have become highly influential within the blogosphere, a phenomenon commonly referred to as inter-media agenda-setting.” (Dimitrakopoulou, 2010).

Kenya’s bloggers and blogs are a still a new phenomena but their rising popularity cannot be gainsaid. The bloggers run gossip, general news and investigative sites, which have become great sources of information, including for print and electronic media journalists. But as their influence spreads, there is growing concern on the role of the bloggers in dissemination of information. This is particularly because most of them are not trained journalists, they operate outside many laws that govern journalistic practice, for instance, the one’s covering right to privacy and defamation and most of the time they offer information that is not verified.

1.3 Research objectives

The study explored how blogging is affecting journalism and how journalists are responding to arising challenges. In studying the relationship between the two, the research was guided by the following objectives:

To:

- i) Establish whether bloggers consider themselves journalists.
- ii) Investigate how journalists perceive news bloggers.
- iii) Examine the roles bloggers play.
- iv) Explore whether journalists and bloggers collaborate or compete to inform the public.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives stated above, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- i) Do bloggers consider themselves journalists?
- ii) How do journalists perceive bloggers?
- iii) What roles do bloggers play?
- iv) Do journalists collaborate or compete with bloggers to inform public?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study provides information that would help to understand the relationship between bloggers and journalists. It sheds light on perceptions of journalists towards bloggers, who are seemingly taking over their work, what motivates Kenyan bloggers, their roles in the changing media environment, how they perceive their roles and their views about mainstream journalists. Its findings will hopefully generate debate on the work of bloggers and journalists in this era of rising internet use and stimulate further research on the subject. More importantly, the research will provide and add knowledge in the area under study.

1.6 Scope and delimitation of the study

In attempt to investigate whether journalists and bloggers are competitors or collaborators, this study mainly focused on journalists from two leading multi-media houses in Kenya, namely Standard Group and Nation Media Group, both which own radio, TV, newspapers and online platforms. The two organisations utilise the same journalists across most of their platforms, that is, a reporter will write a story that will appear in the newspaper and online site.

The study did not differentiate whether the bloggers are collaborating or competing with TV, radio or newspapers, but journalists in general. The media organisations also have bloggers, the research explored why the outlets have the writers, some who are not journalists and what are the perceived benefits in relations to the challenge they are facing from independent bloggers.

1.7 Assumptions of the study

The study was based on the following assumptions:

- (a) Bloggers consider themselves journalists.
- (b) Journalists believe bloggers are a threat to their profession.
- (c) Bloggers need journalistic training.
- (d) Journalists compete and sometimes collaborate with bloggers.

1.8 Definition of significant terms

Blogs—Blogs in this study meant online sites that allow individuals to regularly share ideas, news, commentaries, gossip, and analyses on various topics. The study did not narrow down on any types of blogs specifically, but looked at them in general.

Blogger— A blogger was considered as a person who runs a blog. While on some blogs anyone can post information, the blogger engages in the overall running of the page and sometimes he is the one who started it.

Blogging - Blogging in the study refers to the production of material for the blogs and updating them regularly with the sole purpose of reaching the public.

Journalist –A journalist in the study refers to a trained news worker who works independently or is employed by newspapers to gather and compile material for news stories. Columnists were not regarded as journalists.

Citizen journalism – News or news articles written by any person, who is not a journalist, but has access to internet and seeks to promote a product, story or certain course.

Blogosphere– This means the world of blogs. It is the World Wide Web environment where bloggers communicate with audiences.

New media –Internet platforms used for dissemination of information to the masses.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews pertinent literature on blogging, which represents new media, and journalism, as practised in traditional media that include newspaper, radio and TV. It also discusses different studies done on blogs, bloggers and mainstream media in the changing environment, where technology plays crucial role in dissemination and reception of news. The chapter also analyses new media and public sphere theories, which were utilised in the study.

2.2 Journalism

Journalism is described as the profession of collecting, editing, and publishing news reports for newspapers, magazines, television, or radio to educate, entertain and inform (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2013). The role of journalism in the entire communication process in any society cannot be overstated. Journalism is an integral part of human life and society as it helps to network people through collection and transmission of information (McLuhan, 1964).

Journalism and journalists have wielded great power in different societies on what people know and how they know it by, for instance, breaking stories on scandals in government, new diseases and fashion trends. According to Deuze (2005);

“The basis of what a journalist does is telling stories. He is an information provider. He gathers news based on facts rather than on opinions in an objective way. This means he is giving a balanced report between all the parties involved without any judgement.”

Deuze identifies the following values that should be practised by journalists. (i) Public interest: Journalists being the watchdog of the society must gather and disseminate news in the interest of the public. (ii) Accuracy, fairness and objectivity: Journalists must be accurate, fair and neutral, that is telling the story and getting facts right without being biased or partial. All parties involved in a story must be given a chance to comment on issues raised. (iii) Autonomy: Independence must be upheld for one to get unbiased information and work without undue influence. (iv) Ethics: Journalists must follow a code of conduct that guides the profession and day-to-day operations. These rules are developed by regulating bodies and media houses they work for, but others are based on the nature of their work, for instance, accuracy and independence.

Turow (2011) identifies information provider as the top function of a journalist: A journalist collects and presents to the public information that is truthful, accurate and shapes consensus. In this case, the journalist uses the media as a platform for the public to know what is happening in the world.

A journalist serves democracy and is a watchdog of society (Deuze, 2005). In serving democracy, the journalists provides to the public information they need to help enhance democratic systems. On the other hand, as watchdog, he alerts the public of the happenings in society, challenges public institutions by asking them penetrating questions and he has to clarify complex issues.

Another important function of a journalist is agenda setting (McQuail, 1993.) This is a consequence of journalism. By reporting and acting as an intermediary between the government and the people, a journalist will set the agenda for both. His report can provide attention on a particular subject and let the public talk about it, which is known as agenda setting. In this case, the media tells the public what to think about.

Over time, however, particularly with the entrance of bloggers, journalism has become hotly-contested topic with many questioning whether it is a profession, a craft, an industry or an activity as anyone, not necessarily a trained journalist, can inform and set the agenda to the public, particularly online.

And as blogging grows, journalists are increasingly becoming an uneasy lot. The bloggers, however, lack the basic traits historically associated with journalists, such as covering beats, reporting with objectivity, and double-checking information (Baresch et al, 2011).

2.3 Blogging

Blood (2003) defines blogging as the creation of web pages with regularly updated information and commentaries, with links to information and commentary on other websites. In this definition, we can pick things that make blogging the subject of this study in relation to journalism. These are ‘creation of web pages’ and ‘regularly updated information’. This means that like journalism, blogging involves dissemination of information to the public, with the intent being to inform, educate and entertain.

2.3.1 History of blogging

The term blog gained widespread use in 1999. The person who came up with the word is unknown, though it is attributed to Jorn Barger on his *Robot Wisdom* website, which he created in 1997 and came up with the term web log (Djajalie, 2010). The word web log was later shortened to blog to mean a form of online diary, which allows users to share ideas via the internet with millions of people.

The early usage of blogs shaped their evolution to what they have transformed to be today. In 2001, according to Djajalie (2010), after the September 11 terror attack, people across the world, but particularly in the US, wanted to express their thoughts on the act. Many thus turned to blogging, which helped them ventilate their anger.

In 2003, Djajalie notes the buying of *Blogger* by Google, which was run by Pyra Labs and was hosting several weblogs, helped to redefine the blogging experience on the internet across the world. The move, coupled with other major events across the world like the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, which saw journalists anonymously blog their experiences in the battlefield, raised the profile of blogs and led to the wide adoption and their evolution from diaries.

The blogs have now ceased to be diaries and evolved into platforms where news, commentaries, gossip, among other information, is disseminated. According to publishers of Merriam Webster, blog was "word of the year" in 2004. The term was the most-searched on its internet sites that year. In Kenya, blogging started as a personal or professional diary with bloggers posting their thoughts and articles on the sites. However, the bloggers have turned out to be disseminators of news, including gossip and exposes, some that cannot be published in mainstream media due to legal reasons.

2.3.2 Reasons for blogging

Blogging unlike journalism is not considered an occupation or a profession (Lowrey and Mackay, 2008). This is because most bloggers do not do the work for a living and neither do they seek to draw audiences to their blogs to attract advertisers as traditional media does. Many bloggers, Kramer (2004), notes perceive their work as service to the community as they try to fill the gaps left by the mainstream media in informing, educating and entertaining the public. This, therefore, leads to the question, why do bloggers blog?

Motivation always arises from unfulfilled needs or wants (Baresch et al, 2011). The need to resolve existing deficiencies leads to formation of goals that result into action. One, therefore, identifies something he desires and makes it his goal to obtain it, which becomes his motivation.

Blogging, thus, to bloggers allows them to generate 'a virtual space where they strategically construct their desired identities' (Jung et al, 2007). The purpose of their blogs is what motivates them to write the content and update it regularly and sometimes break stories. Jung et al identify five main motives for blogging. Bloggers seek to inform, provide commentary, participate in community forums, to document daily life, and to express themselves.

2.3.3 Types of blogs

Blogs are categorised according to the content they carry (Zhao and Spaziani, 2010). A blog that deals with health issues will be categorised as a health blog. On the other hand, a blog that highlights celebrity gossip will fall under entertainment. A blog offering insights on politics will be a categorised as political blog. Other categories include educational, business, technology, travel, fashion, research and personal, which is a form of a diary about the activities of bloggers.

2.3.4 Blogs' credibility

In many cases, blogs are not trusted as credible sources of information (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). This is because, unlike traditional media, blogs do not have clear sources of news and gate keeping processes for production of the information. In the cases of news bloggers, they source the information, edit and publish it without following processes strictly observed in traditional media.

Two major components determine credibility on blogs. These are trustworthiness and expertise (Rubin and Liddy, 2010). Trustworthiness arises from the morality of the blogger, in that the source can be described as unbiased, well-meaning and honest. On the other hand, a blogger will only be viewed as credible if he is well-informed of the topic, reputable and competent to comment on what he is talking about. According to Rubbin and Liddy (2010), readers normally evaluate a blogger's trustworthiness and expertise depending on whether information offered is complete, accurate and balanced.

To build their credibility, bloggers normally disclose their lives as they offer perspective on topical issues (Rak, 2005). It is important to reveal aspects of one's identity to gain trust and attract readers. Another way bloggers strive to build credibility is by discrediting traditional media and offering blogs as a viable alternative (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). They present themselves as trustworthy, not controlled by advertisers or the ruling class and do not have biases.

2.3.5 Regulating blogs

With the advent of the internet, anyone can be a journalist. All one needs is a computer, a source or a topic to comment on and the internet. In Kenya, the reality that anyone can become a journalist due to the power of new media, in particular blogs, has come under scrutiny, with Media Council of Kenya (2013) asking all those performing the functions of journalists, but are not trained to seek training.

However, bloggers have shrugged off attempts to make them get Diplomas in Journalism to gain accreditation. Attempts by the Media Council to accredit and regulate the bloggers have failed yet they remain some of the most popular sources of information (Google Internet Zeitgeist, 2013). But in trying to rein on bloggers, the government through the Ministry of Information and Communication broadened the definition of "journalist" in the Media Council of Kenya Bill of 2013.

The Bill defines a journalist as, "Any person who engages in the practice of journalism," while "journalism" is "the collecting, writing, editing and presenting of news or news articles in newspapers and magazines, radio and television broadcasts, on the internet or any other manner as may be prescribed." Publication, in the Bill, is defined as, "The dissemination to the public of any written, audio or video material, and includes materials disseminated through the internet."

The new law is a great departure from the Media Act of 2007, which defined a journalist as a person "who holds a diploma or a degree in mass communication from a recognised institution of higher learning and is recognised as such by the Media Council of Kenya," or "Any other person who was practising as a journalist immediately before the commencement by the council, and earns a living from the practice of journalism, or any person who habitually engages in the practice of journalism and is recognised as such by the council."

Under the new law that is yet to come into force, bloggers, as journalists in mainstream media, will be regulated by the government and other authorities, including courts, in the case of defamation and libel. The Media Council Bill (2013) creates a tribunal that will

have powers to fine media houses up to Sh2 million and journalists up to Sh500,000 in case they engage in misconducts. Until this law, bloggers operated in a 'grey area', with the law of defamation, for instance, only focusing on traditional media.

The Defamation Act defines a newspaper as a "Paper containing public news or observations thereon, or consisting wholly or mainly of advertisements, which is printed for sale, and which is published in Kenya either periodically or in parts or numbers at intervals not exceeding 36." This clause does not capture blogs, some which have turned to be online newspapers.

2.4 Kenya's changing media landscape

To understand the emergence and growth of bloggers in Kenya, it is crucial that we discuss the country's media landscape. Kenya's media industry dates back to the pre-colonial period, when Rev Albert Stegal of the Church Missionary Society published the *Taveta Chronicle* in 1895 after installing the first press in the country (Oriare et al, 2010).

This development was followed by the setting up of a regional paper, the *East African Standard* by Asian trader Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee in 1901. The paper served white settlers' interests as it rarely reported things affecting indigenous people. The clamour for independence from mid 1920s to 1960s led to proliferation of several indigenous language publications, which spread liberation gospel. After independence in 1963, Kenya media shifted from liberation gospel to challenges that were bedevilling the new nation namely illiteracy, diseases and poverty (Oriare et al, 2010).

However, the changeover of leadership saw the control of the media shift from the colonialists to subsequent governments led by presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi. Their regimes came up with various laws that curtailed press freedoms, limited citizen participation in national debates and free flow of information. Nonetheless, over the years, freedom of expression in Kenyan media has been enhanced by the adoption of new communication technologies (Stiftung, 2010). The technology, particularly the

internet, has encouraged development of citizen journalism, enabling ordinary people to become disseminators of information.

Statistics from Communications Authority of Kenya (2014) point to this fact. As at March 2014, there were 13.3 million internet subscribers in Kenya. Internet usage, according to the authority, has been on the rise due to wide adoption and use of social media that include Twitter, Facebook and blogs. The blogs are among the most popular news sites in Kenya (Google Internet Zeitgeist survey, 2013). The report listed *Daily Post* and *Goal.com*, blogs that offer general and sports news respectively as some of the most popular sites on the internet in Kenya. On these sites, there is free flow of information. Citizens proactively collect and disseminate information independently without involving media houses as was the case in the past (Oriare et al, 2010).

2.5 Impact of new media on journalism

Mark (2012) conjures journalism as an occupation whose practitioners have an exclusive role and statuses in society, where they determine what people read, listen and hear on media. While this remains true to some extent to date, new media has helped to challenge the traditional role of journalists in society and the way they operate. To begin with, new media has enhanced interactivity between journalists and their audiences. Journalists get feedback from their audiences as soon as they publish their stories both on the internet and traditional media. These contributions, which come as rectifications and feedback open room for more discussions.

Public contributions are useful for a more complete coverage of a certain topic. A journalist no longer solely remains an information provider as proposed in Magic Bullet Theory (Severin and Tankard, 2001). One of the platforms that have made public contributions faster and easier is the internet. It has enhanced interaction between journalists and the public.

However, it has also brought threats (Boczkowski, 2004). Among the perceived threats are bloggers. The blogging phenomenon has risen with the growth of the internet usage. Bloggers provide a diverse marketplace of information and opinion as journalists do. As

audiences shift to the internet and bloggers' influence grows as readers find blog content credible, their influence on journalism is expected to rise. Boczkowski points out four main areas where bloggers would influence journalism greatly. These are: (i) Freedom of expression (ii) Advertising (iii) Politics (v) Mass communication.

In Kenya, while bloggers' impact may not be greatly felt as much in advertising, mass communication and politics, their influence in freedom of expression is evident. Kenya's mainstream media is highly regulated with laws governing it including The Media Act, 2007; The Communication Authority of Kenya Act of 1998: The Defamation Act, Cap 36 and the Books and Newspapers Act, Cap 111 (Oriare et al, 2010), however, blogs are bypassed by these laws as they were made before the advent of blogging. For instance, while someone needs Sh1 million deposit to start a newspaper and register it under the Books and Newspapers Act, bloggers do not to register with anyone before starting their operation and their publish any content, some that mainstream newspapers cannot touch.

2.7 Theory

The study was guided by two theories, namely New Media and Public Sphere. The New Media theory helped the study examine the relationship between blogs and mainstream media as well as bloggers and journalists. In particularly, it looked at how the new media has influenced traditional media in dissemination of news and interaction with audiences. On the other hand, Public Sphere Theory guided the study in understanding how the blog is a public space as postulated by Jürgen Habermas (1989).

2.7.1 New Media Theory

There has been an unparalleled growth of global media due to technological advancement. These technologies, which are referred to as new media, include satellite, the internet and other forms of digital communication (Williams, 2003). McQuail (2010), describes new media as a “disparate set of communication technology that share certain features, apart from being new, made possible by digitisation and being widely available for personal use as communication devices”.

According to the theory, the new media has influenced the way traditional media operates. For instance, audiences can now consume news on internet platforms like websites and blogs. The technologies are breaking down the distinction between mass communication and other forms of communication. They extend the possibility of enhancing personal communication in the modern world and as a result shifting the focus away from the 'mass', which has been the emphasis in the study of the media (Williams, 2003). Some of the ways the new media have influenced traditional media is that they have led to convergence of traditional media forms namely radio, TV and newspapers, in terms of their organisation and distribution of information.

However, McQuail (2010) notes that traditional media continues to survive, albeit with greater changes. He points out several differences between the two. First, the new media are as much as institution of private as of public communication and are mainly not regulated unlike traditional media. Second, the new media operation is not typically professional or bureaucratically organised as mass media.

Third, new media are not clearly defined as traditional media in terms of ownership nor is access monopolised so that the content and free flow of information is controlled. This is the case with blogs, which are the subject of the study. Anyone can write and post materials on a blog and reach millions of audiences regardless of whether the information adheres to journalistic ethics or not.

McQuail observes that the new media are effective in binding followers and fans to media sources and in providing feedback that can be help to target finely segmented sub groups. The interaction between new and traditional media is optimistic as it frees audiences from the constraints of the latter. Due to the new media, journalists in traditional media cannot 'colonise' audiences and feed them on what they want depending on the political economy they operate in. What they cannot get on traditional media, they will find it on new media like blogs.

However, he faults new media noting that while platforms like blogs open access to information, lack of professionalism means low standards and problems of trust and

reliability. This theory helped the study understand the relationship between new and traditional media, in particular journalists and bloggers whether they are competitors or collaborators.

Through the theory, the researcher understood the extent to which bloggers have influenced online dissemination of news. Bloggers are now publishing exposes, some that the media picks, thoroughly investigates and later publishes. And due to rising influence of blogs, media houses are now incorporating social media editors to manage their Twitter and Facebook pages and bloggers, some who do not work for them and are not journalists. This is to counter the influence of bloggers.

2.7.2 The Public Sphere Theory

The concept of public sphere was started by Jürgen Habermas (1989). The public sphere as exemplified by Habermas is, “neither an institution nor an organisation, but is best seen as a network for communicating information and opinions (Crider, 2012).

Habermas defines public sphere as a forum where individuals can debate public affairs, criticise the authority of the state and call on those in power to justify their positions before an informed and reasoning public. According to the theory, public sphere is created because of basic rights that include freedom of the press. The rights help to encourage and maintain diversity of opinions. Habermas posits that the media (newspapers, TV and radio) as a public sphere acts as a forum that mediates between state and society. Central to the operation of the media as a public sphere is the free flow of information and communication.

These qualities are exhibited by the traditional media and blogs, the subject of the study. Bloggers publish issues of public interest, with their platforms acting as forums where citizens criticise those in authority and seek accountability from them and interrogate and debate issues of concern to the public. The free flow of information on blogs enables the public to comment on various issues and topics unhindered, with most of their thoughts being published unedited.

Most of the articles published on blogs and traditional media become the subject of discussion by the public. This is often demonstrated in mainstream media by the flood of letters and responses from which the editor selects what to publish each day or week. Habermas, who came up with the term public sphere and analysed the media as a public space, observed that correspondents from the public in the 17 century formed dialogue in the press.

Majority of the articles written during the period by the public focused on schools for the poor, improvement of education, pleas for civilised forms of conduct, polemics against vices of gambling and fanaticism and censored bad morals and eccentricity of the learned. Little has changed since then. On blogs and traditional media, the above topics still form the bulk of discussions by the public, with the internet playing a crucial role in enhancing debates.

Crider (2012) notes the spread of the internet and other computer-mediated communications has helped to embolden public discourses as they circumvent attempts by dictatorial regimes to crush public opinion as seen during the Arab Spring that swept Egypt and Tunisia. The theory is relevant to the study because it helps in understanding why blogs are growing in popularity and having a huge impact on public discourses and the development of public spheres. For instance, while traditional media might censure comments from the public, most bloggers do not filter out public discourses.

2.8 A review of related studies

As the popularity of blogs rises across the world, several scholars have conducted studies on the platforms' influence on journalism. Marley and Kim (2004) in their study on the impact of blogs on traditional news media and politics found out that bloggers believe what they do is an important social function, with implications on the media that reports on them.

In the study conducted in the US, the researchers note that bloggers believe their work helps to “check out the Fourth Estate since traditional media models are inadequate to cover news in the 21st century”. The bloggers considered themselves ‘open source

journalists'. Additionally, the study showed that mainstream journalists are having difficulties taming the influence of bloggers as consumption of news shifts to the internet. While they did not consider them as competitors, journalists in the study showed concern that bloggers popularity was rising at their expense.

In their study on journalism and blogging in the US, Lowrey and Mackay (2008) note increased blogging has led to mainstream media incorporating the activity in their operations. The news organisations are committing resources to make blogging as part of their content to counter independent bloggers. They write; "Commitment to blogging content is especially strong at larger papers, which have more resources and are able to differentiate tasks more efficiently. Smaller papers are less likely to publish blogs because they are already relatively open to community voices, through letters, guest columns."

Their findings suggest that blogging has had an impact in the way journalists practice the profession. The impact was noted in three stages that include 'reporting and decisions about newsworthiness'. In newspapers where journalists regard blogging about newspapers content, according to Lowrey and Mackay, reporters were using blogs as news sources, and their planning meetings included talks on what was discussed on blogs.

Most bloggers, Baresch et al (2011), in their study on perception and motivation to blog, note bloggers perceive themselves as journalists and their work as journalism. They feel motivated to influence, inform and set the agenda for the public – including the mainstream media.

What makes them perceive themselves as journalists is that they engage in journalistic behaviour that includes quoting sources, checking facts, and posting corrections when necessary. The belief has always been that blogging is influencing journalists most, but their findings show the role of journalism in blogging. Overall, however, their study shows that most blogs are strong on opinion, which is not the case in mainstream media.

Park (2009) explored how bloggers gain authority and popularity over journalism and journalists. He reveals that most bloggers assert their authority through opposing themselves to journalism. He notes, “They are authorised, they seem to say, precisely because they are not journalists, and this independence is played off as if it makes them closer to the authentic needs of the audience.”

Their opposition to what and how mainstream media presents news professionally is construed by the audience to demonstrate their authority, desire to tell truth and serve audience with utmost faith. This is evident in the Kenyan blogosphere, where while the mainstream media often shies away from publishing some content for fear of backlash, blogs publish, thus emerging to the audience as bold and authoritative.

In Kenya, studies indicate that citizens are increasingly turning to alternative media (Facebook, Twitter and blogs) to communicate and for information, particularly when they feel the mainstream media is not giving them what they want (Makinnen and Kuiru, 2008). This affirms the assertion that alternative media thrives when the mainstream media appears to falter, especially due to fear of repression.

However, in cases where a nation is experiencing a crisis as happened in Kenya in 2007, blogs can worsen a conflict (Lindroos, 2011). While traditional media can be controlled and strive to remain professional, bloggers operate freely and the fact that they do not adhere to any code of conduct, in the case of Kenya, make them open to tribalism, hate speech and manipulation, which did not help the nation during the period.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers research design, study population, population sample, sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection and data analysis. The section further elaborates on the study participants and how they were involved as well as the ethical considerations of the research work.

3.1 Research design

The study, which was qualitative in nature, took a descriptive research design in analysing the relation between bloggers and journalists. Descriptive research design was considered appropriate because of two reasons. First, it helps elicit most complete responses from a sample of individuals presumed to have experienced the phenomena under study, and second, it relies on individual self-report of their knowledge and attitude.

3.2 Target population

The target population was mainly journalists in mainstream media and bloggers who write on different topics. In particular, the study targeted a population of 30 journalists in the mainstream media, 15 bloggers and three online editors. While there are four major media houses in Kenya, namely Nation Media Group, Standard Group, Radio Africa Group and Media Max, the study focused on the first two media houses as they are the largest in the country, run some of the country's vibrant online news sites and have included bloggers on the websites. The two companies also have the largest population of traditional and online journalists, including editors.

3.3 Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedures

The study employed purposive sampling method to identify bloggers and journalists. The bloggers were selected based on what they blog about, for instance, politics, gossip and general news. The researcher also looked at how regularly the blogs were updated and at the number of comments their articles attracted to gauge their popularity. However, the author also considered the fact that some of the blogs published a cocktail of information for their readers, just like traditional media houses. In this case, the author selected the blogs based on the bulk of the information they published, for instance gossip or news.

On the other hand, the journalists were sampled from Standard Group and Nation Media Group. The researcher selected journalists from TV, radio and newspapers. Standard Group has about 100 journalists while Nation Media Group 200 in their Nairobi offices. A sample size of between 10% and 20% of the population suffices in survey studies (Babbie, 2005). Therefore, the sample to be adopted by this study was 10% of the population in each media house.

3.4 Data collection instruments and procedures

The study used interview/interview guide and questionnaires. Questionnaires were emailed and dropped to journalists. On the other hand, the bloggers were contacted through emails, mobile phones and social media sites, specifically, Twitter and Facebook, where the researcher posted the questionnaire to reach respondents. The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with key informants namely online editors at Standard Media Group and Nation Media Group. The editors were able to give insights on the subject of the study and why the media houses have their own independent bloggers on their news sites.

3.4.1 Reliability and validity of research Instruments

The validity of a research instrument refers to an extent to which it does measure what it is supposed to measure while reliability is the ability of a research instrument to yield

consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The research instrument was validated for content and face validity. To ascertain content validity, the researcher consulted the supervisor who reviewed the instruments.

3.5 Data analysis

The study employed qualitative data analysis procedures. In particular, the data from interviews was coded and categorised into various themes arising from the questionnaires to reflect views from respondents. The themes included competition, story ideas, impact and training. Each theme was coded, for instance, competitors was coded 1 and then analysed.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The researcher upheld all ethical obligations expected in the design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of the entire study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and asked for their consent prior to the participation. Adequate measures were also taken to protect participants' confidentiality.

3.7 Limitation and challenges of study

Most blogs are run by anonymous people. This posed a challenge to the researcher as a good number of questionnaires sent by addresses offered on their sites were not returned.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the study findings from questionnaires administered separately to journalists and bloggers and in-depth interviews by key informants (online editors). The study sought to examine whether journalists and bloggers compete or collaborate as they seek to inform, educate and entertain the public.

4.2 Presentation and Discussion of the Findings: Journalists

4.2.1 Demographic information

The study considered the gender of the respondents who were drawn mainly from *Nation Media Group and Standard Media Group*. There were as many male (14) as female (16) journalists interviewed. This shows there was gender representation of the respondents, indicating that the research considered views of both male and female journalists.

4.2.2. Readership of blogs

Blogs have gained popularity in the recent past, attracting both the public and journalists. The researcher sought to find out if journalists read blogs. The results show that 26 of the respondents read blogs, while 4 said they do not read them. The reasons for reading or not reading were varied. Those journalists who read blogs said they found them analytical (7), informative (5), humorous (4), had good writing style (1) and offered juicy gossip (9).

“I love reading blogs because I get a mix of politics and entertainment news as well as the new way of writing blogs by use of memes and GIF,” a journalist who reads blogs noted.

(Research data, July, 2014)

Those who do not read found blogs too opinionated (3) and not interesting (1).

“Blogs are too opinionated. They are so personalised and information is tilted to fit personal leanings and preferences,” said a respondent. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

This observation agrees with that of Baresch et al. (2011), who in his research on blogs found out that the distinctive characteristic of blogs is that they give more importance to opinions and personal interpretation of public affairs.

4.2.3 The importance of information on blogs

The study asked journalists whether they find information in blogs useful. Of the 30 journalists interviewed, 28 indicated that most information in blogs is useful, including some who do not read the blogs. Only 2 of journalists thought information on blogs was not useful.

“I find information useful because bloggers are bold to publish what the mainstream media may be reluctant to touch and they also offer information that mainstream media may not consider worthy and of course because they are not bound by any principles, their style is also different,” a respondent who finds information useful said. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

Another who believed information on blogs was not useful noted:

“Most of the information isn’t useful because it is usually written from the blogger’s day-to-day encounters rather than introspection. While you may not always learn from it, sometimes it is comforting and entertaining,” said a journalist. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

This finding of the research that shows information on blogs is useful concurs with Kang (2010), who in his study on blogs credibility in the US indicated that audiences find the content of the blogs informative and insightful. This further agrees with Habermas (1998) public sphere theory, which guided the study. He defines a public sphere as a forum where people can debate issues as happens on blogs. They have become an important public sphere.

4.2.4 The work of bloggers vs journalists

The study sought to find out if journalists believe bloggers are stealing the limelight from them. Like journalists, bloggers too inform, entertain and educate their audiences. With most people in Kenya, 21.6 million, having access to internet (Communication Authority of Kenya, 2014), bloggers influence is growing. The results indicate that 27 respondents thought that bloggers were not doing the work of journalists. Only 3 believed bloggers were doing journalists' work.

“They are not doing our work. Bloggers have their own way of doing things without regard to any rules or code of conduct, while journalists follow certain principles and a code of conduct. And they do not give any regard to balancing opinions and checking facts, which is the work of journalists,” noted a respondent who said bloggers are not doing journalists work. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

A respondent who believed bloggers are doing the work of journalists said:

“They are doing my work because there are many instances where we jostle to break stories to the public.” **(Research data, July, 2014)**

On the other hand, 19 of the 30 journalists believed that bloggers were not stealing the limelight from them.

“Despite being popular, blogs are not stealing limelight from journalists because most of the information is sensational and unreliable, full of personal opinions,” said a respondent. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

However, 11 believed bloggers were stealing the limelight from them, and this were some of their views:

“If recent research is anything to go by, then blogs are stealing the limelight from us, particularly online. This is because people have less

time to read long serious articles and prefer soft content like gossip, so they turn to blogs,” said a journalist. (Research data, July, 2014)

Added another: “Yes because they are first to break the stories, which was a preserve of journalists in the traditional journalism.” (Research data, July, 2014)

Most of the journalists, 27, said bloggers are not professional because they do not confirm facts, write balanced stories and are not objective.

“There is a lot of sloppiness among bloggers because, unlike with the mainstream media, their laws are either vague or non-existence. Some bloggers just present false information knowingly because of such loopholes. That is not professionalism,” said a journalist. (Research data, July, 2014)

This result correspondent with the findings of Lowrey and Mackay (2008), who note that journalists have traditionally viewed online journalism as being less than professional. According to McQuail’s New Media Theory (2010), which guided the study, new media platforms like blogs are characterised by lack of professionalism and problems of trust and reliability, qualities that bloggers lack.

4.2.5 Impact of blogs on journalism

The study sought to find out from journalists if they believe blogs and bloggers have any impact on their profession. The results show that most of the journalists who participated in the study, 27, agreed that blogs have major impact on the journalism since journalists now report what has already been blogged about.

“Journalists now have to think of Day Two journalism because they cannot publish breaking news the next day since bloggers would have done that previous day,” observed a journalist. (Research data, July, 2014)

This result is in agreement with Lowrey and Mackay (2008), who found out that blogs in US have an impact on the way journalists practice their profession. The impact was evident in all three stages of the professional process, but particularly in the inference stage, which includes reporting and decisions about newsworthiness. McQuail (2010) observes in the New Media Theory that new media has changed the way traditional media functions as journalists no longer have influence on what audiences read as blogs publish information in advance.

The impact, however, goes further than competing to publish stories as attested by the results of the study. Most journalists, 23 of those interviewed, are now getting ideas for their stories from blogs. The blogs are also eating into online advertisement revenue streams.

“Journalists sometimes get tips from blogs and then dig deeper for stories. Bloggers sometimes challenge journalists to get the information and bring it to the mainstream,” noted a journalist. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

“Online, they now compete for advertisement, the major lifeblood for journalism, by attracting more numbers. Advertisers go for platforms with more spaces. In turn, mainstream news sites are forced either to buy out blogs or go with the same standards of news,” said another respondent. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

The journalists who said bloggers have not affected journalism identified the limited reach of the internet as the main reason. With low internet penetration, journalists still hold the sway on what the public talk about and thus backed by the massive resources of their companies, they still have great influence on dissemination information.

4.2.6 Breaking stories

Journalists who took part in the study were unanimous (30) that if their organisations do not break a story, certainly bloggers would, especially a story that comes with legal challenges since most bloggers are not constrained by such barriers. Journalists, therefore, strive to be the first to break stories. However, as they do this, they do not compete with bloggers.

“Bloggers would break stories that my organisation may consider a legal landmine. They would be happy because this gives them mileage as they appear to be authoritative,” said a journalist. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

“Mainstream news organisations have longer checks through which a breaking news item has to go through to be published. For journalists, accuracy delays breaking it; for example, the death of prominent personalities in Kenya is often ‘announced’ by bloggers before traditional news sites get it. This is because journalists try to wait for official communication from family or government to avoid embarrassing moments of having to apologise. Blogs on the other hand may publish right from rumours and that is how they may end up breaking news ahead of journalists,” observed a respondent. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

4.3 Presentation and Discussion of the Findings: Bloggers

4.3.1 Are bloggers journalists and roles blogs play?

Bloggers collect and inform, just the way journalists do. The research sought to find out if bloggers consider themselves journalists since there is little distinction from what the two do. The results show that 6 respondents said they were journalists because they educate, entertain, inform and set agenda for the public, which are some of the functions of journalists.

However, 9 of the bloggers interviewed did not consider themselves journalists. They did not think they were journalists because they do not follow any code of conduct, they publish their stories themselves and do not earn from the occupation. This result differ with that of Zúñiga et al (2011), who in their study in the US on blogging as a journalistic experience note that bloggers perceive their work as journalism, the reason they quote sources, check facts, and post corrections.

4.3.2 Role the bloggers play

As they blog, the results of the study showed that bloggers perform the following roles; educate, entertain and inform. Most of the bloggers said the role is to inform 9, educate 4 and entertain 2.

“My work as a blogger is to inform readers on stories that are not adequately addressed by mainstream journalists. I also teach bloggers on how to make their blogs more successful,” said a blogger. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

These roles agree with Dimitrakopoulou (2010) observation that weblogs are offering complementary information on news and current affairs.

4.3.3 Bloggers’ perceptions towards journalists

Of the bloggers interviewed, 12 believed that journalists are objective, factual and ethical, the key tenets of the profession. However, 3 of the respondents said journalists do not follow the tenets of their work.

“Sometimes journalists are objective and factual but many times they lose focus because of individual political inclinations. They are also bribed and given gifts thus losing objectivity in their news stories,” said a blogger. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

4.3.4 Sources of blog material

The study sought to find out where bloggers get the materials they publish. Blogs in this study mean online sites that allow individuals to constantly share ideas, news, commentaries, gossip, and analyses on various topics. This means bloggers in a sense work as the mainstream media since they give their audiences information regularly, be it daily or weekly. The sources of the material they publish are varied, and they are newspapers/environment (7), online, which includes other blogs and mainstream media news sites (7) and experts, who include news sources (1). Lowrey (2006) observes that bloggers depend on mainstream news media for reporting, which helps to strengthen the position of formal journalism.

4.3.4 Training of bloggers

Bloggers are collecting and disseminating information, just like journalists. It is for this reason that the government set to broaden the definition of journalists in the Media Act 2013 to include anyone who publishes information online regularly. However, while

journalists undergo training, bloggers don't. This study sought to find out if bloggers think that they should be trained as journalists.

The results indicate that most bloggers (9) do not want to be trained as journalists. They bloggers said blogging and journalism are different, the reason why training is not important for them. They noted that if they undergo training in journalism, they would lose their identity. This is despite the fact that a good number of bloggers consider themselves journalists.

“Hell No!!! We are not journalists! From the definition of a blog...it is a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer. Journalism is nothing closer to that. So why should we need high-level knowledge and skills even when writing personal comments. It's like saying for you to know first aid....you have to study medicine,” a respondent noted. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

This finding, however, differs with Chung et al (2007), who did a research on bloggers and training. He notes that bloggers recognise the importance of learning traditional news values, original reporting and the benefits of editing, so that they can be perceived as credible sources.

On the other hand, one of those who believed training would help noted:

“I think we should be trained as journalists. It will help us to be more relevant and trustworthy. We will also be more responsible when writing blog posts.” **(Research data, July, 2014)**

4.3.5 Motivation to run the blog

The researcher sought to find out what is the main thing that drives bloggers to do the work yet many, unlike journalists, do not get paid. The research indicates that 8 of respondents do the work out of passion or their love for writing. They want to get to the public their thoughts and feeling. Further, 4 do the work to get comments from readers and see how they think of what they write about and 3 write so that one day they would make money from the blogs by attracting traffic to the site and thus adverts. Kramer (2004) notes most bloggers perceive their work as service to the community as they try

to fill the gaps left by the mainstream media in informing, educating and entertaining the public.

4.3.6 Competition with journalists

With a good number of bloggers believing they are journalists and doing work similar to that of journalists, the study sought to find out if the two compete as they seek to educate, entertain and inform readers. The findings indicate that 12 of the respondents interviewed said they do not compete with journalists.

“Why should I?... They are after scoop and oddity in news items. I’m after public relations, to fulfil my hobby and getting hyperlinks, that is, people tagging my blog,” One respondent who does not compete with journalists said. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

On the other hand, a blogger who competes with journalists said:

“Many times, I always want to be the first one to unleash a new story to my audience before the headlines hit the mainstream media.” **(Research data, July, 2014)**

The finding agrees with Lowrey (2006) who says bloggers and journalists complement each other, intersect with each other and play off one another as they inform, entertain and educate the public.

4.4 Presentation and Discussion of the Findings: Online Editors

Online editors are crucial in running of blogs and websites in mainstream media houses. Their input in the study was crucial since they manage online platforms, which bloggers seemingly compete with in their quest to inform and educate. The study conducted in-depth interviews with three online editors.

4.4.1 Are bloggers informative and why are they popular?

Online editors agreed that bloggers are popular, but they noted that some of them are not informative. This is because some scandalise people or organisations without seeking

their views or comments on what they write about them. The reason why the blogs are popular is their language and topics, which is persuasive and resonate with readers. The result above show that the reasons why journalists read blogs is because they are analytical, informative, humorous, had good writing style and offer juicy gossip. Those who do not read blogs find them too opinionated and not interesting.

“They know their audience too well, especially those who run gossip sections and write to cater to their needs. They also know how to optimise their articles for search engines to pick them out,” said an online editor. **(Research data, July, 2014)**

They further noted that many people are turning to blogs because they believe they are not censored by government or advertisers like formal news sources. A public sphere must be open and allow free flow of information and discussion (Habermas, 1989). This characteristic lacks in traditional media where in some countries there is a lot of censorship. Blogs are one of the freest public spheres in Kenya, the reason they are very popular.

4.4.2 What media houses are doing to stay ahead of bloggers

Online editors admitted that some bloggers monitor news cycles as they seek to break stories. However, to stay ahead of them, journalists strive to find the what, why and so-what of the stories by talking to opinion makers and analysing the impact of the happenings. Noted one of the respondents:

“We have put a news gathering mechanism or network with infrastructure that no blogger can assemble. We have authority and we are in the story of breaking news.” **(Research data, July, 2014)**

These findings agree with the US *The State of the News Media* (2005), which recommended that journalists must aspire in the new media landscape to be the one source that can best help citizens discover what to believe and what to disbelieve, a shift from the role of gatekeeper to that of authenticator or referee.

4.4.3 Rationale for having bloggers on online news sites

Media houses have incorporated bloggers on their own sites, majority who are not journalists. Online editors noted that this is to help satisfy audience needs as part of segmentation. These are specialist writers like architect, lawyers and environmentalists whose writings draw audiences. Observed an editor:

“The online audience is diametrically different from the print audience. It is more discerning and has more exposure to compelling content of international standards. The bloggers we have are more elite. They are to cater for that niche audience that is not satisfied by the normal news content.” (Research data, July, 2014)

4.4.4 Competition with bloggers

The study asked online editors if they compete with bloggers to inform and educate the public. They said they do not compete but there is fear that if they do not break stories, bloggers would.

“Bloggers do not have the network and ability to compete with us. They only aid media houses in breaking the stories. I know of no blog whose work is to break news only. They have no capacity to follow up stories of bigger magnitude as they have no foot soldiers to facilitate the ground work,” said a respondent. *(Research data, July, 2014)*

This finding is consistent with Lowrey’s (2006), who notes that journalists benefit from media houses’ physical capital, including pay. On the other hand, most bloggers do the work for free, and thus they lack incentive to track down sources, and do other journalistic work, making it hard to compete with journalists. They thus collaborate with media houses by depending on them for news.

4.4.5 Why some journalists blog

An increasing number of journalists are turning to blogs to publish information, some that cannot be published in the mainstream media. Online editors note the journalists want to blog about issues they have no space to write in mainstream media. Thus, blogs

allow journalists to tell stories they want to tell, without being changed by the editors. Besides that, the digital platforms have bigger reach than mainstream media. Thus, this is to enable them tap a huge untapped audience.

“The blogs give them a chance to air their views independently without being restricted by rules from their media houses,” noted a respondent.

This finding agrees with Baresch et al (2011), where in his research on journalists who blog say they do so to express themselves creatively or to document personal experiences and share them. A journalism blog is very likely to function as a space for strong opinions.

4.5 Summary of the discussion

From the results presented above, we can conclude that most bloggers who were interviewed do not consider themselves journalists. The reason for this is that while journalists follow codes of conduct and have to take their stories for publishing in respective newspapers, bloggers operate liberally and publish their stories themselves. Second, journalists believe bloggers are not doing their work, thus, they are not stealing the limelight from them. Besides, most journalists find bloggers unprofessional. Third, bloggers help to educate, entertain and inform and lastly, bloggers and journalists do not compete but collaborate to serve the public.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, recommendations and finally the researcher gives a conclusion.

5.2 Summary of the findings

This study set out to assess how blogging is affecting journalism and how journalists are responding to arising challenges. The research was guided by the following questions:

- a) Do bloggers consider themselves journalists?
- b) How do journalists perceive bloggers?
- c) What roles do bloggers play?
- d) Do journalists collaborate or compete with bloggers?

To answer these questions, descriptive research design was used and data collected from 30 journalists, 15 bloggers and three online editors using questionnaires (See Appendix 1). The following are the findings of the study.

a) Do bloggers consider themselves journalists?

Most of the bloggers surveyed said they do not consider themselves journalists despite educating, entertaining, informing and setting agenda for the public. The reason for this is that while journalists are trained, follow a code of conduct and ethics and have to take their stories for publishing in respective newspapers, TV and radio, bloggers operate liberally and publish their stories themselves. This finding implies that bloggers want to their occupation to remain distinct from journalism.

Majority of bloggers surveyed noted that journalists are objective, factual and ethical. Those who believe otherwise said journalists are influenced by advertisers and their

sources thus they are not ethical. This finding shows that some of the bloggers started the forums to offer audiences an alternative to what the mainstream media publishes.

Most of the bloggers sampled said they should not be trained as journalists because blogging and journalism are different. And that if they undergo training in journalism, they would lose their identity. This is an indication that bloggers want to be independent and chart their own part to remain relevant in the competitive media environment.

b) How do journalists perceive bloggers?

Journalists believe bloggers are not outshining them and are not doing their work. This is because unlike bloggers who operate on their own with minimal resources, journalists work with well-known institutions. From this finding, one can denote that journalists believe bloggers are not a threat to their profession.

Journalists find bloggers unprofessional because the latter do not confirm facts, write balanced stories and are not objective. This is what has made mainstream media continue to have grip on audiences because they offer reliable information. Most information that is reported on blogs is picked from mainstream media, which means some bloggers are riding on traditional media in search of credible stories and to remain believable.

c) What roles do bloggers play?

Most of the bloggers said their role is to inform, educate, analyse, entertain and also set the agenda for the nation. Among those who bloggers serve are journalists, with majority of those surveyed saying they read blogs because they find stories on the sites analytical, informative, humorous, have good writing style and offer juicy gossip. Those who do not read them find them too opinionated and not interesting. The massive readership of blogs by journalists is an indication of the huge impact blogs have on mainstream media, including acting as source of ideas.

Journalists were unanimous that if they do not break stories, bloggers certainly would. Therefore, many of them keep this in mind as they look out for stories from various sources. This brings out an important role bloggers play, which is breaking news. With the advent of blogs, the time when journalists would suppress information for one reason or another is long gone. The bloggers surveyed further said they are motivated by three things, namely passion to write and get their thoughts out, desire to get readers' comments and make money.

d) Do journalists and bloggers collaborate or compete?

Blogs have great impact on journalism. Many journalists are now getting ideas for their stories from the sites and while writing their pieces, they now have to think of Day Two journalism, which mainly focuses on the 'so-what' of a story. On the other hand, mainstream media is the leading sources of ideas for bloggers, with others being fellow bloggers, online sites and experts, who are the news sources. This implies that as the media environment in Kenya rapidly changes, bloggers and journalists can no longer ignore each other as they seek to inform the public.

The study found out that journalists and bloggers do not compete as they seek to inform, educate and set agenda for the public. However, they collaborate as both get ideas from each other, with some entertainment writers in mainstream media picking what has been reported on blogs and publishing them. However, this collaboration is not conspicuous as both bloggers and journalists strive to maintain their independence and remain relevant to their audiences.

5.3 Conclusion

One of the key findings of this study is that journalists worry that if they do not break a story, bloggers would. This shows bloggers, who have become a permanent fixture in Kenya's media environment, have great influence and it is rapidly growing as many people turn to the internet to consume news and seek for information. The bloggers are now regularly setting the agenda for the public, a role that was initially a preserve of the mainstream media. While this has raised concern in the past since some of their reports

are perceived not to be factual, blogs have earned space in the changing media environment.

According to the New Media Theory, technologies like blogs have broken down the distinction between mass communication and other forms of communication and have enhanced consumption of information in the modern world (Williams, 2003). Some of the ways blogs have influenced journalists in Kenya is that the latter now have to scout for story ideas on the sites, think of Day Two journalism and dig deeper into what has been reported by blogs to get more information.

Besides, we have seen some bloggers focusing on the conduct of journalists and some of the stories they write, keeping journalists on their toes. Bloggers and journalists, therefore, have to work hand-in-hand and strive to offer their audiences balanced and objective stories as they seek to educate, entertain and inform the public.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends the following to enhance the work of both journalists and bloggers in Kenya's changing media landscape, where audiences are turning to online platforms for consumption of news and information.

i) **To policy makers:** There is need for some regulation to enable bloggers streamline their operations. Currently, bloggers operate in a grey area since they are not journalists yet their work is not different from the latter. They need to be regulated to make them responsible and accountable, just like journalists.

ii) **To bloggers:** Bloggers need internal mechanisms to help them regulate themselves. This can be achieved through formation of an association where members register, formulate their code of conduct and adhere to it. Those who do not follow these rules must be punished. The group will help them check facts, be objective and make their stories and opinion pieces balanced.

iii) **To journalists:** Journalists must strive to be sources that can help their audiences discover what to believe and what to disbelieve. This, thus, requires digging deeper into a claim or piece of information to find truth and talking to experts, things bloggers cannot engage in because of minimal resources.

iv) **To academics:** Most of the bloggers sampled said they do not need training in journalism. However, going by their growing influence on audiences, bloggers need to be trained so that they can perform their roles better. Learning institutions need to come up with curriculum that would make their work worthwhile, rewarding and beneficial to society.

5.5 Suggestion for further research

In a study on credibility of online newspapers vs blogs in US, Johnson and Kaye (2004), found that only 42.7% of readers thought online newspapers were very credible. On the other hand, 73.6% believed bloggers were very credible. A paltry 3.5% thought bloggers were not credible. A study on blogs' credibility among readers in Kenya would help ascertain how the sites serve audiences and how people regard them. Further research on blogs should also tackle typology and conversations happening on the sites amongst audiences since they are currently one of the most open forums for readers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for journalists

I am a final year student at University of Nairobi School of Journalism pursuing a Masters of Arts in Communications Studies degree. As part of my course requirement, I'm undertaking a research titled "*Journalists vs Bloggers: Competitors or Collaborators?*" In this regard, you are kindly requested to support this research by responding to the questions below. Please note that your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. I, therefore, ask for your permission to proceed with the research question below:

SECTION A. Personal Information (Tick appropriate box)

Name (Optional).....

Gender Male [] Female []

SECTION B: INFORMATION ON BLOGGERS AND JOURNALISTS

- i) Do you read blogs? (Yes) (No)

- ii) If yes, mention some of the blogs you read and what attracts you to them?

- iii) If, no, what makes you ignore blogs?

- iv) Is information in blogs useful? Explain

- v) Blogs have become popular, do you think bloggers are stealing the limelight from journalists?

- vi) As a journalist, do you think bloggers are doing your work? Explain

- vii) In your opinion, are bloggers professional in their work?

- viii) Do blogs have any impact on journalism? Explain

- ix) Do you get story ideas from blogs? Explain

- x) Do you sometimes think if your organisation does not break a story, bloggers would?

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for bloggers

I am a final year student at University of Nairobi School of Journalism pursuing a Masters of Arts in Communications Studies degree. As part of my course requirement, I'm undertaking a research titled "*Journalists vs Bloggers: Competitors or Collaborators?*" In this regard, you are kindly requested to support this research by responding to the questions below. Please note that your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. I, therefore, ask for your permission to proceed with the research question below:

SECTION A. Personal Information (Tick appropriate box)

Name (Optional).....

Gender Male [] Female []

SECTION B: INFORMATION ON BLOGGERS AND JOURNALISTS

- i) Do you consider yourself a journalist?

- ii) What do you think of journalists? Are they objective, factual and ethical? Explain

- iii) What role does your blog play in information dissemination?

- iv) Where do you get your stories and ideas you write on? Explain

- v) Do you think bloggers should be trained as journalists? Explain

vi) What kind of information do you offer your audiences? Explain

vii) What motivates you to run the blog?

viii) Do you compete with journalists in any way in disseminating information?

Appendix 3: Questionnaire for online/social media editors

I am a final year student at University of Nairobi School of Journalism pursuing a Masters of Arts in Communications Studies degree. As part of my course requirement, I'm undertaking a research titled "*Journalists vs Bloggers: Competitors or Collaborators?*" In this regard, you are kindly requested to support this research by responding to the questions below. Please note that your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. I, therefore, ask for your permission to proceed with the research question below:

INFORMATION ON BLOGGERS AND JOURNALISTS

- i) Do you find bloggers informative?

- ii) Google's 2013 survey mentioned some blogs as very popular, what do you think makes them popular?

- iii) Are bloggers stealing the limelight from journalists, particularly online?

- iv) What are you doing to ensure you stay ahead of bloggers, online?

- v) You have your own bloggers (some are not journalists), what is the rationale behind this?

- vi) Why do you think many people are turning to blogs for information?

vii) Do you think bloggers observe any journalistic standards?

viii) Do bloggers you compete with bloggers in breaking stories?

ix) Why do some journalists blog yet they can publish their work in mainstream

media?