

## Hardcopy Newspaper's Quest For Survival In The Era Of Digital Disruption: The Case Of The Star Media Kenya

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**Abstract:** Newspapers play an important role in our daily lives. They are considered by many as the 'mirrors' of the world because they provide the masses with critical information on many issues. Despite playing this important role, these publications are now faced with a major challenge – that of being disrupted by the digital economy (Akesson & Thomsen, 2015).

**Materials and Methods** This study sought to find out the effect digital disruption has had on the Star Media Kenya Newspaper, while also looking at the strategies the publication has put in place to ensure its survival. The study was guided by the following: (a) The changes and challenges posed by digital disruption on the newspaper and how this has affected its operations, (b) The strategies employed by the newspaper to respond to disruption and (c) The effectiveness of these survival and growth strategies. The study was guided by two theories – Disruption Innovation Theory and Media Economics Theory. The researcher used a Qualitative Research Approach, with the research design being a case study. The researcher employed in-depth interviews as data collection methods. The respondents for this study were experienced journalists and editors, who shared their experiences, while in the newsroom on how the disruption manifested itself and how the newspaper adapted to it.

**Results:** The findings of the study were varied. Briefly, they include Star Media Kenya's intent on changing how they report their stories – with the main idea being coming up with exclusives and in-depth stories that consumers can pay for, the publication's focus on retraining key staff, including hiring individuals with key digital skills to navigate this new dispensation, encouraging skill development and hiring multi-skilled employees. From the findings, it is clear that the future of newspapers is going digital. The researcher recommends that Star Media Kenya, however, needs to further scale up the publication of more exclusive content. The publication should equally explore new ways of telling its stories as well as invest more in improving technology used to deliver its information. But this process should be gradual. From the study, it is clear that diversification of revenue sources is the way to go. Businesswise it sounds a great idea, but ethically, what should the media house do when one of the sponsoring organization is caught up in a scandal? This is an area future researchers should explore.

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### I. Introduction

Newspapers play an important role in our daily lives. They are considered by many as the 'mirrors' of the world because they provide the masses with critical information on many issues. Despite playing this important role, these publications are now faced with a major challenge – that of being disrupted by the digital economy (Akesson & Thomsen, 2015).

But what is disruption? The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (as cited by Hornby, 2005) defines the term as a process to make it difficult for something to operate the normal way. Digital disruption, on the other hand, has been defined as the use of technology, which has been brought about by the advent of the internet, to gain entry into markets and completely change the way things are done (Mcquive, 2013).

This digital disruption has, therefore, given birth to non-traditional sources of information, fueled by new technologies, thereby reshaping the way news is gathered, processed and distributed. The rise of the Internet, smartphones, and other mobile devices have, therefore, become an almost indispensable part of our everyday life, dramatically changing our news consumption patterns as well as how media companies operate.

This is because the majority of people, especially the youth, heavily rely on these devices to get their daily dose of information. The effect of this is that traditional channels of information have been grossly affected audiences preferring mobile devices. This is because of their availability as well as portability. Westlund (2013), rightly argues that online news uptake, especially by the youth, has led to a decline in readership but also affected the newspaper's business models to get information.

In Kenya, for instance, the media is under intense pressure due to this phenomenon. It is clear that the circulation figures of some of the top newspapers including The Star Media Kenya, the Business Daily, The East African, The Standard Newspaper, The Star as well as the People Daily, have suffered a major hit.

Indeed, a study conducted by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) revealed that the majority of Kenyans, – 73 percent, do not read the newspapers regularly, highlighting a major decline in the readership of these publications (MCK, 2019). Recent figures from the Kenya Audience Research Foundation (KARF) indicate that the one-month period between February and March 19, 2019, the circulation figures of the Standard Newspapers, for instance, declined from 459,389 to 457,891. The same applied to the Star newspapers, whose average reach also declined from 23,076 to 22,299 (KARF, 2019).

Audiences have equally shifted to Websites, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Google and Instagram amongst others, social media platforms, which were unheard of five to six years ago, to get information. And this has been made possible by the mobile phone. Statistics from the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) indicate that as of September 30, 2018, there were 46.6million active mobile phone users in the Country (CA, 2018).

This, according to the report, represented a 2.4 percent growth when compared to the number of subscriptions recorded in 2017, which stood at 45.5 million. The report further revealed that mobile phone penetration passed the 100 percent mark because the majority of Kenyans owned a Sim Card, not one, but two from different telephone service providers.

By the end of September 2018, the report adds, those having active internet in the country, increased from 41.1m subscriptions at the end of June 2018 to 42.2m, representing a 2.7 percent growth. The majority of these people accessed the internet through smartphones.

But why is it that audiences these days prefer to get information online? This is because online instantly update content regularly and many a time, for free. This has in effect taken away many readers away from consuming print media. The Star Media Kenya, the main subject of this study, has, not been spared by this situation.

The newspaper is part of the Star Media KenyaGroup (NMG) and is considered by many as one of the leading independent media houses in Central and East Africa. The media house prides itself on having operations in broadcast, digital media and print publications. Its audiences are mainly in Kenya, but the giant media house has branches in Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania as well. (Group, n.d.).

The impact of this disruption, in the newspaper, has therefore been profound. The media is currently under pressure to reinvent itself. This will, however, be discussed in depth in other sections of this study. But briefly, one major effect, identified following in-depth interviews with experienced journalists from the publication has been a major decline in both circulation as well as advertising revenue figures.

Indeed, recent statistics indicate that cumulatively, local dailies in Kenya recorded a 33 percent decline in circulation between 2013 and 2018 (KARF, 2019). The effect of this has been massive in the newspaper's operations. One, it led to job losses, both in the editorial and advertising departments, because the newspaper has been unable to meet its revenue collection targets.

But the job cuts also created an opportunity for the newspaper to restructure the newsroom in line with its new digital-first strategy - that integrates the use of various online and mobile platforms to deliver news to the reader as it happens. Sections of the Star Media KenyaNewsroom has been converged to support this digital department.

One of the major achievements of this disruption is the establishment of a digital division, headed by a Managing Editor, under whose direction the implementation of the new digital strategy falls. Under the Managing Editor's leadership, the newspaper has seen the Star Media KenyaNewspaper website revamped several times, with reporters on the beat being under instruction to first file their stories for this platform for any breaking news.

This disruption has equally opened doors for new-age journalists, armed with digital skills including search engine optimization techniques, social media, online content marketing as well as online news sourcing – to join the newsroom. Wainainah (2017), points out that the publication has equally had to scale up its edition model – tailoring its news to the different localities of its readers - to help it increase its circulation. With the demand for digital ads at an all-time high, advertisers, are being encouraged to take advantage of this. The publication has further come up with an e-paper, an online version of the actual newspaper, which can easily be accessed via mobile devices.

Indeed, advertising and editorial lines, have equally been blurred. Editors and reporters, are essentially, being encouraged to 'be salespeople' by venturing into business by cultivating good relations with news sources and explore avenues where the publication can make money. Newspapers, in short, have therefore no choice but to take advantage of the changing times, and alter the way they operate, come up with content that adequately caters for their consumers in this digital space. These are some of the issues that this study will delve into. To be, specific, the study sought to examine Star Media Kenya's digital-first strategy. It analyzed the

changes and challenges experienced by the paper as a result of the disruption and how the publication has responded to these challenges.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Newspapers in Kenya and other parts of the world as well are struggling to survive the digital era. The decline in readership numbers and Ads has resulted in the closure of several newspapers across the globe (Bauder & Lieb, 2019).

In the US, for instance, the Financial Times reports that more than 1,800 US newspapers had shut down in the last decade and a half as a result of this digital shift (Nicolaou, Fontanella-Khan & Fortado, 2019). Those that are still in circulation, they add, are what the report described as 'ghost newspaper,' which is a clear pale shadow of themselves.

The situation is, indeed, no different in Kenya. Latest Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) figures indicate that the circulation of daily English and Kiswahili hardcopy newspapers have equally continued to plummet, owing to the growth online readership of news content (KNBS, 2019).

The statistics contained in the 2019 Economic Survey Report indicate that last year, the circulation of Daily Newspapers, both English and Kiswahili reduced to 87.1 million and 3.7 million copies, respectively. All this has primarily been attributed to the advent of the internet (KNBS, 2019).

Online, which instantly updated content – and often for free – has taken away many readers of such publications from print media. The average number of online visitors per day continued to increase due to its high preference among many readers, particularly the youth. In 2018, online readers increased by 0.2 percent to 2,857.7 thousand compared to a 53.1 percent increase in 2017 (KNBS, 2019).

This has in effect resulted in the dwindling of newspaper circulation as more and more readers move online. Likewise, advertising revenue – considered by many as the lifeblood of these publications – has gone down significantly, as advertisers take advantage of the more widespread demand for digital Ads and spend significantly less on the print advertisement.

This study, therefore, explored how the Star Media Kenyanewspaper is responding to challenges posed by the digital disruption and the survival growth strategies it has put in place.

### 1.4 Objectives

#### 1.4.1 Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate the effect digital disruption has had on the Star Media KenyaNewspaper and strategies put in place to ensure its survival.

#### 1.4.2 Specific Objectives

Explore the changes and challenges posed by digital disruption on the Star Media Kenya

Assess the impact of the survival and growth strategies employed by the Star Media Kenyain dealing with Digital disruption.

### 1.5 Research Questions

What changes and challenges have been posed on the Star Media Kenyaby the digital disruption?

What is the future of newspapers in this fast-changing digital world?

#### Research Design and Approach

This study employed the Qualitative Research Approach

#### Target Population

The target population was editors, reporters and business executives who have been at the Star Media Kenya for at least 10 years. This is because they have been at the publication longer to have witnessed the digital disruption process, hence could easily share their experiences on the changes, challenges that have occurred, the strategies employed to counter the disruption process and how effective these strategies have been.

#### Data Collection Instruments

The researcher employed in-depth interviews as the main data collection technique. This data collection method granted me the opportunity to harvest as much information as is required.

#### Unit of Analysis

My unit of analysis was the Star Media KenyaNewspaper. This is because the newspaper is the flagship product of the Star Media KenyaGroup. It is the highest-circulating newspaper, not only in Kenya but in the East African region as well. This profile makes it an interesting unit of analysis.

#### Sampling Design in Qualitative Research

My research primarily utilized the purposive sampling technique design. Also known as judgment sampling, the researcher deliberately chose the individuals having the information due to the qualities they possess. Simply put, the researcher decides what he or she needs to know and identifies the individuals who can assist or rather are willing to provide it.

#### Sample Size

The sample size was 12 participants. These were senior editors, journalists as well as those working at Star Media Kenya's Commercial division. Even though there's still debate as to what is the recommended sample size, in qualitative research, this rarely determines the quality of the findings. The interviews conducted by the researcher were therefore done up to the point of saturation.

#### Data Processing Procedures and Analysis

Once all the interviews had been completed, they were transcribed. Everything that was said during the interview process was typed verbatim. The data therein was then sorted. This involves sieving what is relevant and is needed by the researcher to aid the study, and what is not.

This was done out of the realization that while processing data, researchers, many a time, have lots of irrelevant data, which may not be of use, and reduces the perfection of the information being sought.

The researcher then coded the data. This step usually involves putting the random data already collected by the researcher in a particular structure. This process was done via a web application known as Atlas.Ti. The researcher also used spreadsheets to code. The researcher used a thematic framework to analyze the data generated from the interviews. This procedure categorizes content into themes and is most of the time suitable to identify repeat or typical responses from the respondents.

## II. Results

Changes and Challenges posed by Digital Disruption on the Star Media Kenya.

All the respondents acknowledged that digital disruption is a reality at the Star Media Kenya. It has visibly affected how the newspaper operates - leading to a shift in the manner in which news is gathered, processed and distributed. To adapt to this reality, the respondents agreed that the publication has been compelled to make one key change –to remain relevant in this era – i.e. - establish and maintain a dynamic digital presence, which is responsive to its audience needs. This, according to the respondents, was done as follows:

#### Website Design

A section of the respondents was of the view that to reach the wider audiences, not only in Kenya but across the globe as well, coming up with a website [www.nation.co.ke](http://www.nation.co.ke) was key to realizing this goal. This, they argued, was out of the realization that the Star Media Kenya's hardcopy newspaper had a limited reach and could, therefore, not get to all their audiences. The predominantly computer-based website was later on customized for smartphones – enabling them to reach an even wider audience. This is what they had to say:

Digital presence is not enough if people are not consuming (information) using platforms they frequently use. We, therefore, had to come up with a website... the website for the mobile is different from the desktop website. This is a deliberate effort.

#### A Shift in Newsgathering, Processing and Dissemination Process

Respondents also noted that the digital disruption process equally precipitated a shift in the manner in which news is gathered, processed and distributed. They noted that these days, the work of journalists at the Star Media Kenya has been made easier because they have been allowed to source for and even file and disseminate their stories via some social media apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter. This, they argued, has speeded up the rate at which stories are filed especially breaking news. They noted:

Even before the news is brought for processing, how we have been doing it has changed. Right now, for instance, people are filing stories on WhatsApp. We have people filing photos and videos on WhatsApp. This has speeded up the process of filing stories.

Another respondent also pointed out a change in the tools in which journalists use to gather information. Initially, the respondent pointed out, journalists used pen and paper to write their notes. But this has now changed:

Yes, I have seen it all. I started as a pen and paper journalist. Every week I would think what story would I tell and how I would tell that story was first going for interviews, taking down notes and in the instances that I would record the interview, it would be for my reference, to ensure I get the quotes right...but seven years on, today I think about online publishing. So in between, I have transitioned from a newspaper reporter into a digital journalist.

#### Embracing Convergence

The respondents also noted a change in the mentality of journalists at the Star Media Kenya's Newsroom, especially in terms of filing stories. The interviewees noted that journalists at the publication are first required to send out news alerts, via their mobile phones on location, then filing stories online first before processing day two stories for the newspaper, in line with their digital-first policy. One respondent said:

Then after that, we came up with the digital-first approach two years ago. Meaning any content that is produced, must go to our digital platforms first. They include breaking news and any content that is not exclusive to us and can find space there, will be put there...

Another stated:

When I joined the Star Media Kenya, we didn't focus much on online publication. For example, you could come to the office and simply put down the story and send it to your editor who will then work on it and it is put in the newspaper to be published the next day. However, as time went by, things started changing. Nation launched the breaking news alert system, which is an SMS system where subscribers pay a certain fee to get breaking news alerts. With time the website became more and more active, reporters were routinely advised to be filing breaking stories for the online team and the website was being updated from time to time.

Another respondent added:

I started as a pen and paper journalist. Every week I would think what story would I tell and how I would tell that story was first going for interviews, taking down notes and in the instances that I would record the interview, it would be for my reference, to ensure I get the quotes right...but seven years on, today I think about online publishing. So in between, I have transitioned from a newspaper reporter into a digital journalist.

A New way of Telling Stories

The interviewees revealed that instead of relying on text and pictures as was the practice before, Star Media Kenyajournalists have now been practicing new storytelling techniques. One, they said, was the videos. And this, they revealed was easily done by their mobile smartphones. One respondent said:

The communication and information landscape today requires a different set of skills in the newsroom. It also demands a different pace and style of storytelling. Merely text or straight video does not cut it anymore. Newsrooms must, therefore, keep innovating.

Some respondents also revealed that instead of relying on 'diary or docket stories', which entails reporters being sent to functions that had been booked well in advance by news sources, investing in exclusive content was key. One interviewee stated:

The other way of dealing with disruption is investing in exclusive content.

Another argued that:

Editors are also moving away from 'he said, she said' kind of reporting, events or docket kind of journalism to exclusives. They prefer the stories that are not docketed for the day, to more analytical pieces and exclusives.

Talent Management

The digital disruption has opened up new employment opportunities for both journalists and non-journalists who, previously, would not have had an opportunity to work in media houses including those doing Web Analytics, Graphic Designers, and Audience Engagement Producers amongst others, the respondents say. The respondents further revealed that the Star Media Kenya had invested heavily in training its journalists so that they keep up with the demands of the shift to digital. This, some of them said, entails flying in experts from, for instance, Europe and the US to teach Star Media Kenyajournalists of the changing trends in digital journalism. One respondent said:

I have seen the digital division grown leaps and bounds. I have seen people who would not have been employed at the Nation, before 2012, now getting jobs. I am talking about people who do Web Analytics, there are more Video Editors. Before, it was just a simple unit for videos. But today we have video editors sitting in front of the news desk which was unheard of before...

Another interviewee added:

We have several people who have either gone back to school. We have several others who have left the country. There's in-house training – we have had experts flying in from Europe, the US and other areas to train people. There's a whole big plan to ensure those who want to continue working for the Nation has a feel of how digital works because that is where we are going as a company.

Another opined:

The other lessons are that when we are hiring, we may not have to look the traditional way. I am happy that HR has already adopted this. Most of the people getting jobs have some digital aspects.

Transformation of the Classic Journalist

Another palpable change is the transformation of the classic journalist, required to draft notes and reproduce and report on stories, to the current status where the journalists are required to develop in-depth stories suitable for publishing in digital spaces/platforms. Journalists who were required to work exclusively on DN are now reporting on digital platforms, the departmental boundaries that existed are fast closing down. Further, this is pushed by the demand for journalists to not only write for newspapers but to also generate digital content:

I started as a pen and paper journalist. Every week I would think what story would I tell and how I would tell that story was first going for interviews, taking down notes and in the instances that I would record the interview, it would be for my reference, to ensure I get the quotes right...but seven years on, today I think about online publishing. So in between, I have transitioned from a newspaper reporter into a digital journalist

Challenges

The respondents equally noted a myriad of challenges brought about by the digital disruption process. They enumerated them as follows:

#### Convergence

Some respondents revealed that despite being a noble idea, this concept has not been fully embraced by some journalists at the Star Media Kenya Group as a whole and the Star Media Kenya in particular. These respondents said asking a journalist, who was used to filing stories for newspapers alone, to also write for other online platforms proved a little difficult. One respondent said:

The main challenge has been inter-departmental convergence... What has, however, not worked out so well was getting TV people to do newspaper and vice versa. Looking back, we realize we may have been too ambitious because you look at these two platforms and you realize the skill set is very different. Even the way they work is very different. We may have to relook... do we want a TV journalist reporter to write an in-depth piece for the newspaper and the newspaper guy to go shooting videos for TV. They can do it using the mobile phone for the videos for social and others but TV standards are way ahead. It requires HD footage and stuff like that.

Another added;

First of all, as a reporter, you were suddenly being told that you should be a photographer, you should be able to edit some of the content before it is published... When something new comes in and you are being asked to do all those things then it means you... had to go back to class and maybe do some retraining.

#### Story Leaks

A section of respondents raised concerns that the new ways of filing stories – for instance – WhatsApp – exposed them to leaks to other media houses. This is because journalists in these groups, having ulterior motives could easily copy and send the information to rival media houses, without being noticed. One respondent opined:

Right now, for instance, people are filing stories on WhatsApp. We have people filing photos and videos on WhatsApp. This has speeded up the process of filing stories, however, it has also opened up that process to a lot of challenges. For instance, it is very easy for content to leak to external sources or competitors because we do not have control over who shares what is posted on the WhatsApp groups.

#### Fake News

There was also a concern by some respondents that several journalists were getting information from social media websites and publishing them without checking their veracity. This many a time, led to media houses publishing fake news merely because the information they obtained had gone viral. One respondent said:

Sometimes you find that some pieces of information go viral... many of them are unreliable pieces of propaganda. But many still find the believable. It has, therefore, become the duty of journalists to debunk that kind of story... It has become the duty of newsrooms to jump into such types of stories and clarifying them. Fact-checking has become a critical aspect of our journalism yet not all of us have recognized this to be the case.

#### Revenue

The respondents equally identified loss of revenue as another challenge that has been experienced by the newspaper as a result of the digital disruption. This, they added, has largely been attributed to reduced circulation and reduction in the number of advertisers, most of whom have gone online. One respondent said:

The main challenge has been revenues... money. Star Media Kenya Group and Star Media Kenya for that matter are commercial enterprises. It runs and survives on how much it generates in terms of sales and mainly, through advertising. With the coming of digital, Star Media Kenya suffered most in terms of disruption... with the coming of the Internet, the blogs, the Apps, Social Media, and influencers for that matter, then they started taking a share of what Nation has been subsisting on.

#### New Competition

According to a large section of these respondents, digital disruption has introduced new competitors who are competing for the same clientele, notably advertisers, who now have an option of digital influencers. The loss of this dependable revenue stream is a major cause for alarm. One respondent said:

Star Media Kenya suffered most in terms of disruption. This was in terms of its advertising model such that the display Ads and the Classified that we used to run – we had a huge monopoly – like every other advertiser would come to DN to advertise. But them with the coming of the Internet, the blogs, the Apps, Social Media, and influencers for that matter, then they started taking a share of what Nation has been subsisting on”

How the Changes and Challenges have Impacted the Newspaper's Operations

#### Newsroom Realignment

Digital disruption in the DN has prompted a realignment in the newsroom to cope with the technological shifts. A majority of the respondents acknowledged that digital disruption has forced the entire organization to relook at their journalistic approaches. The change is prompted by two notable factors; firstly,

the need to retain a grip on the readership and secondly the need to be efficient. This has led to the establishment of a digital division, this is solely charged with producing and presenting news to the digital audience. The digital audience has concise demands, demanding a fast circulation of news items and continuous updates.

#### Newspapers no Longer Break Stories

Some respondents revealed that newspapers – the Star Media Kenya for this matter, no longer break news to its audiences. The Respondents expressed that for a long time the DN was the leading source of news across the country. However, this has changed since people are now able to access news through different and numerous online platforms.

This has greatly affected DN's functional model which must now be reexamined to reclaim the lost readership. The effect of this is seen in declining Newspaper circulation. Additionally, the DN is currently playing second fiddle in the breaking news segment, since digital sources, mainly blogs, can produce and update information at a much faster rate meaning that the autonomy in breaking news no longer exists. This, therefore, presents Star Media Kenya Journalists with the headache of coming up with new and compelling story angles if they are to make any sales the next day. One respondent said:

About 10 years ago, the Star Media Kenya was in the business of breaking news. In the digital era, we are no longer in that business. It has been taken over by those running Twitter and Facebook accounts. And it's interesting because this for a long time was a newspaper mainstay. It was what the newspaper was founded on.

#### Innovative Ways of Telling Stories

The majority of the respondents were in agreement that the Star Media Kenya Newspaper has remained relevant during this digital disruption era, because of the way they practice their journalism. Their focus, the interviewees argue, has been on in-depth stories, investigations, and analysis. This practice, the respondents add, has made them appear different from the stories that are published online. One respondent said:

The fact that we no longer break news, the hope for newspapers is in in-depth journalism. Editors are also moving away from 'he said, she said' kind of reporting, events or docket kind of journalism to exclusives. They prefer the stories that are not docketed for the day, to more analytical pieces and exclusives.

#### 4.3.4 Effect on Newspaper Sales

With audiences preferring to get their information online, the majority of respondents were of the view that this decision has affected and will continue to affect the sale of newspapers worldwide, the Star Media Kenya included. The net effect of this, according to some respondents is that media houses will, by the day, reduce the number of copies of publication they print and take to the streets for sale. With time, according to some interviewees, the publications will 'fizzle out and die.' One respondent said:

Look at the Star Media Kenya experience.... But the newspaper will be there. The physical paper we get in the streets will start fizzling out. The vendor you have in your estate will close shop in 10 to 15 years, but the paper will still be around but consumed digitally. The revenue model is going to be heavily reliant on subscriptions. This is what will sustain this business this is because the Ads will go hand in hand with the live websites. The newspaper will, therefore, be here. But it will not be as physical as we see it now.

#### 4.3.5 Convergence

Traditionally, the role of journalists was well stipulated, there were also clear boundaries between different journalistic areas. However, the digital shift has brought the need to be efficient, this has been translated to getting independent journalists to do more and blur the classic boundaries. Today, DN journalists are required to gather news, record videos, take photographs, edit videos, etc. Distinct roles that were previously occupied by different personnel but now DN demands that people develop these capabilities and skills.

#### 4.4 Strategies Employed by the Star Media Kenya to Respond to Digital Disruption.

The researcher collated five areas that NMG's digital strategy is focusing on, based on the responses given by the respondents. They are as follows.

##### 4.4.1 Content

The respondents from the interviews revealed to retain audiences, attract new ones and build loyalty, the Star Media Kenya recognized the need to provide them with the content that meets their needs. This, they argued, means in-depth reporting of exclusive stories and analysis, which the audiences can pay for, and not the 'He said, she said' type of stories.

The respondents were equally emphatic that if they were to win the trust of their audiences, they equally needed to get their facts right while doing their stories. This, the interviewees said, was as a result of the rampancy of disinformation and propaganda spread through a plethora of digital channels has heaped additional pressure on digital journalists to fact check and present credible facts for the expectant audience. One respondent said:

We still find cases where reporters go out and come and repeat word for word what the news sources have said, without adding any critical voice into the matter. Sometimes what news sources say is not entirely true. We therefore must report what happened and what was said but give the audience a sense of guidance whether what

was said was factual, whether it is tenable. That skill is probably more valuable in our journalism today yet not all journalists recognize that.

Another added;

We want to build a content operation that delivers relevant and timely information to people in their spaces. What that means is that if we look at the current behavior, that content must work on mobile. It means that we must have sufficient content that meets the needs of these audiences. It is not just doing such stories for the sake of it, it means taking care of the audience's needs daily and create content that matches those needs. So it is not just information that you should know, but information that helps answer some questions you have in your unique space.

#### 4.4.2 Staffing and Skill Development

The respondents highlighted staff management and skills development as a key strategy the Star Media Kenyahas employed to survive the digital era. Most respondents acknowledged that the reality of digital disruption is that every journalist must now gather commensurate knowledge. More so, the newsroom must have individuals who are well versed with the new technology. Staff retraining to build the capacity of the existent employees to deal with the demands of digitization and hiring of new staff well versed with the digital world accord DN an impetus to survive in light of shifting news and business models.

They pointed out that over the years, several quality journalists, who have helped the publication come up with in-depth exclusive stories and analysis and non-journalists, who, traditionally would not have had jobs in the newsrooms have been employed to help the publication in this digital era. Some of these non-traditional jobs include Audience Engagement Producers amongst others.

But they equally pointed out that the publication has witnessed over the years witnessed massive job lay-offs, with many journalists being sent home. Digital disruption, majority of the respondents added, had further necessitated the retraining, as journalists are required to be multi-skilled. Retraining staff, encouraging skill development on digital journalism. One respondent said:

I have seen people who would not have been employed at the Nation, before 2012, now getting jobs. I am talking about people who do Web Analytics, there are more Video Editors. Before, it was just a simple unit for videos. But today we have video editors sitting in front of the news desk which was unheard of before. I have seen sort of an explosion of digital operations at the Nation.

Another opined:

Newspaper bosses are now concerned about getting quality journalists...I have seen top reporters hired from the competition. They are coming in to do long-form, more in-depth analysis for the paper because the fact that we no longer break news, the hope for newspapers is in the in-depth journalism. There's a lot of investment to ensure we have quality journalists.

Another added:

One of the challenges was the pirated newspaper. People have been sharing the PDFs of the Star Media Kenya. That happened for like a year or so, but Nation has managed to end that. It is through the hiring of the best of the minds from the competition and within the market that they were able to find the software to lock the pirates off this.

Another respondent added:

We have several people who have either gone back to school. We have several others who have left the country. There's in-house training – we have had experts flying in from Europe, the US and other areas to train people. There's a whole big plan to ensure those who want to continue working for the Nation has a feel of how digital works because that is where we are going as a company.

#### 4.4.3 Technology

Another strategy that the Star Media Kenyahas been involved in as revealed by the respondents includes revamping the digital infrastructure to take digital journalism to the world. This, the respondents said, includes investing heavily in building websites and apps that are responsive to gadgets extensively utilized by the majority of the audience. NMG, the respondents said, further aims to convert all content into digital content. Following years of pen and paper journalism, the DN now recognizes the need to present content in a digital format. A host of its readers now own digital devices such as smartphones and laptops.

In order not to lose its appeal to this section of readers the DN is working on publishing and continuously updating news items online. One respondent said:

We have therefore had to shift a lot and put resources where developing Apps, Mobile-friendly websites. We have also to train and spend more to get people to do the digital bit where the consumer has shifted.

Another added:

So when we talk of the consumer shift from print, TV, and radio to a digital platform, we have a strategy on how we want to clean that space called digital in terms of how do we put our journalism on websites, on Apps, and



how can they be consumed on small screens like mobile and how best they can be consumed on large screens like desktops, and the medium screens like iPads.”

Another respondent said:

There's also a strategy to push the E-paper, and hiring the best minds in the market to ensure that in that space, Nation is also playing at that highest level.”

#### 4.4.4 Augmenting Revenue Sources

All the respondents agreed that the Star Media Kenya witnessed a decline in circulation figures and revenue from Ads. This, they said, necessitated a rethink on how best to make more money to complement what is already being done.

The respondents mentioned diversification into music production (through Lit 360) and cookery websites (Pishi), partnerships between the Star Media Kenya and other sponsoring organizations, Monetization of content, which includes coming up with premium content that can be sold as some of the strategies already being implemented to augment the revenue sources. One respondent said:

On the revenue side, the Nation wants to go the subscription way. We are in the process of developing premium content that can be sold. But our strategy is very different from the Western model, in which subscribers use credit cards to pay. But are exploring a method called 'spot sell' where you pay for your content is very easy ways, including mobile money.

Another respondent said:

Now, the strategy that we are working on that has not been fully developed is selling content online – monetizing the content. People have been coming to websites and consuming that content free of charge. There are special reports – investigative stories, things that are exclusive to us that we think can monetize. We are working on a digital subscription model for mobile and desktop.

Another respondent opined:

We have so many events. If you look at our calendar – we have several events that have been planned to generate revenue. Previously these could be supplements that could not generate much. So you see what we are doing is different.

The respondent added:

We now have a music production house which is run by the Nation – It is called Lit 360, where musicians, especially the new ones, are signed by the Nation, just like Ogopa Deejays or Wasafi Records by Diamond. We do every bit, like organizing for their events, sell their music and partnership on revenue sharing is there. So Nation has diversified from just a media-oriented media house to various arms – for instance, when you look at the cooking arm – Pishi – they are not concerned about publishing news, it's about recipes, organizing cooking epos and what not. All this is aimed at shoring up revenues for the company.

Another added:

Newspaper publication is a business; we have always been told that from the time we joined the company. And so one of the things we are doing is that to attract some money on the online content, we either pitch it to advertisers or work in concert with other institutions to publish content that is paid for. So far we do not know how that has picked up but it is a strategy that they have talked about very deeply engaging with the outsider partners.

Another respondent said:

The main pillar of the group digital strategy defines our journey into paid content. We are investing heavily. Not just in the platforms but in the newsroom culture to ensure we create an ecosystem that puts out content that can be monetized. So it is not just doing journalism in the digital space. We want to do sustainable journalism and generate some revenue to sustain the cost of getting that content.

#### 4.4.5 Audience Engagement

All respondents acknowledged that even the internal changes are very much driven by the need for survival, digital disruption has prompted an unprecedented focus on the news consumer. Every change under digital disruption is geared towards meeting the audience's desire for news and most notably delivery of news in the most convenient manner and space.

The respondents further said the DN is now more 'consumer-centric' as evidenced by the introduction of a new position, the Audience engagement producer, the new position is a marker of the renewed need to produce and present only that which the consumer is interested in and most importantly in the format the audience desires.

The respondents stressed the need for the publication to regularly consulting audiences to gauge their demands to tailor-make their products according to their preferences by creating content that takes care of their needs. One respondent said:

(We need to have our) eyes on the ground, to engage constantly with audiences, to monitor their consumption practices, to have someone checking the website every time to check who is consuming our

content from where and how long they have been doing so, and to just be dynamic in the way we approach digital.

Another respondent:

Significant parts of the audience are unable to distinguish between credible digital channels that deliver reliable journalism to sources of disinformation so that, especially for the young ones... We want to, therefore, build a content operation that delivers relevant and timely information to people in their spaces. What that means is that if we look at the current behavior, that content must work on mobile. It means that we must have sufficient content that meets the needs of these audiences. It is not just doing such stories for the sake of it, it means taking care of the audience's needs daily and create content that matches those needs.

Another added:

We know that such a question will keep changing. So this demands that we keep ways of learning and tracking those shifts in audience needs. The fact is because audience needs are always shifting, we cannot do a one size fits all approach. It means we will have to keep innovating and experimenting with new things, many of which will not end up working. The approach is therefore to start some of these ideas small, the ones that work, we scale up, and the ones that don't we discard.

#### 4.5 The Impact of the Survival and Growth Strategies

The respondents had mixed feelings about how effective the survival strategies put in place by the Star Media Kenya have been. While some were optimistic, hailing the strategies as having produced to produce some results, others were pessimistic, noting that despite massive investments and the painstaking effort to align with the strategy, not much has been achieved. They enumerated their reasons as follows;

##### 4.5.1 Content

The respondents agreed that presently, the Star Media Kenya has not been able to monetize revenue for the digital content currently available to the audience. A section of them said sponsored content had shown actual potential for monetization but the revenue is limited. The business is seasonal and thence cannot be relied upon wholly. One interviewee said:

I can say they have had seasonal benefits. For example, the issue of sponsored content. It can work but you know it mainly depends on events... So it doesn't come every day. Because there's competition from other cheaper platforms, it means that you either offer low rates or lose out. It is not a very stable source of revenue.

Another added:

The strategy that we are working on that has not been fully developed is selling content online – monetizing the content. People have been coming to websites and consuming that content free of charge. There are special reports – investigative stories, things that are exclusive to us that we think can monetize. We are working on a digital subscription model for mobile and desktop.

There, however, were respondents who noted that the content flow at the Star Media Kenya had improved tremendously, with more exclusive and in-depth stories being filed by journalists. The digital-first strategy was equally working, with reporters regularly filing for the different platforms.

In terms of convergence, the respondents equally raised concerns that this has been slow, even though they noted that there was some progress at the department level, it is not evident at the organizational level.

For instance, they pointed out that the adoption of digital skills by TV personnel is slow. They are still operating independently, in certain departments, which is against the idea of convergence. The respondents attributed this to a poorly communicated strategy and whose finer details are still at the executive level. One respondent said:

What has, however, not worked out so well was getting TV people to do newspaper and vice versa. Looking back, we realize we may have been too ambitious because you look at these two platforms and you realize the skill set is very different. Even the way we work is very different. We may have to relook...do we want a TV journalist reporter to write an in-depth piece for the newspaper and the newspaper guy to go shooting videos for TV. They can do it using the mobile phone for the videos for social and others but TV standards are way ahead. It requires HD footage and stuff like that.

##### 4.5.2 Technology

A section of the respondents observed that the Star Media Kenya's migration to digital spaces and huge investments in digital spaces was done too fast. The feeling among the majority of the respondents was that DN could have instead made greater effort to make Newspaper work, a related view was that there ought to have been a balanced investment between legacy media and digital media, especially because a bulk of revenue is still coming from legacy media. One respondent said:

Some of the key lessons I have learned are that readers are still interested in quality journalism and also it is not only advisable to sort of kill what is already profitable, starve it off and invest in a new operation and overlooking the old platform. I've learned that it is possible to just ensure that we focus on both at the same time.

However, others argued that some progress had been noted, pointing out that the website – both mobile and the computer has been active and being updated regularly, thus attracting more audiences. Added another respondent:

Nation launched the breaking news alert system, which is an SMS system where subscribers pay a certain fee to get breaking news alerts. With time the website became more and more active, reporters were routinely advised to be filing breaking stories for the online team and the website was being updated from time to time. So the regular updates on the website increased, and the newsroom also had a dedicated team that was involved in working on the stories that go on the website.

#### 4.5.3 Staffing and Skills Development

The respondents were in agreement that said there has been an improvement in the quality of stories that currently being told by Star Media Kenya journalists. This, they say, is because of the management's deliberate efforts to hire experienced journalists while at the same time, offering extensive training to the others: Newspaper bosses are now concerned about getting quality journalists... I have seen top reporters hired from the competition. They are coming in to do long-form, more in-depth analysis for the paper because the fact that we no longer break news, the hope for newspapers is in the in-depth journalism. There's a lot of investment to ensure we have quality journalists.

#### 4.5.4 Augmenting Revenue Sources

The respondents gave mixed views on the success or otherwise of this strategy. According to some respondents', the returns presently being generated from the digital investments are not only low but also irregular.

Given the number of resources that the DN has expended on facilitating digitization, there is little to show in terms of the organization's ability to produce digital content and generate sustainable revenue from it. According to the respondents, up to date, the DN has not been able to generate any meaningful revenue from its digital wing.

On the content front, the respondents, as mentioned above, agreed on the need to monetize it to bring in more money to the publication. But they pointed out that there were equally other successful ventures that the publication had been involved in to bring in revenue – like partnerships, sponsored content amongst others.

#### 4.5.5 Audiences

One of the successes a section of the respondents noted was the fact that the Star Media Kenya had been able to woo audiences to read its website. A respondent said:

There have been successes in terms of wooing audiences... When the Star Media Kenya aggregates its audiences let's say for a year, it does not just look at the newspaper circulation, it looks at the guys who buy the hard copy and those who subscribe to the digital formats of the newspaper. At the same time, the guys who visit our website, we are also looking at how they engage with our content. There has been some exponential growth aided by digital technology.

#### 4.5.6 Further Improve Newspaper

The feeling among the majority of the interviewees was that DN could have instead made greater effort to make Newspaper work, a related view was that there ought to have been a balanced investment between legacy media and digital media, especially because a bulk of revenue is still coming from legacy media.

Notably, respondents admitted that despite the doom and gloom surrounding the Newspaper, it will continue being a major source of news due to its present reputation of providing actual and verifiable content. Based on this view, a majority of the respondents believed that investment in digitization should not be done at the expense of the current model which is still DN's cash cow. Resultantly, the present focus should be on developing or enabling a hybrid system that accommodates the Newspaper and the digital means of news production and distribution. On respondent said:

Every market is also unique such that the successes of the New York Times cannot be cut and paste here. It will backfire. This has been the notion that because NYT has made money, though subscriptions, then all media houses around the world should just invest in premium content and sell. Some of the markets we are serving as the third world, Kenya being one of them, we realize that maybe we rushed to fast to assume that the advertising model was broken already.

#### 4.6 Summary

The current chapter reviewed the findings of the research. In-depth interviews, was the preferred method of data collection. The approach accorded the researcher an opportunity to develop a wholesome view of where NMG stands in its bid to weather the digital storm, which threatens the prominence of the Star Media Kenya. The findings are aligned with the emerging themes as gathered from the extensive interviews, that

enlisted a wide range of individuals presently working for the DN either as administrators, journalists, editors, and commercial agents.

### **III. Discussion, Conclusions And Recommendations**

#### **5.2 Discussion of Key Findings**

The digital wave, or as the study refers to it, digital disruption, is manifest in Kenya. Statistics, supplied by the CA, show that there are currently about 42.2 million active internet/data subscribers. More so, internet coverage has expanded reaching 112 percent, and it's growing (CA, 2019).

From these statistics, it is evident that Kenya is formally part of the digital revolution. The citizenry has taken up commensurate trends that place traditional business models in jeopardy. Consequently, every business, specifically those involved in the print industry have to revisit their manner of doing business.

The Star Media Kenya Newspaper, which has dominated the newspaper industry is now at crossroads. The newspaper stares at the possibility of obsolescence, according to interviewees, as the digital disruption invalidates the traditional journalism and business model.

On the other hand, a hurried shift to digital platforms, although commensurate with the global trend, risks disorienting a significant population that still favors 'the old fashioned' way of accessing news.

As the research revealed, the newspaper circulation will decline, and there are already signs. However, the popularity of newspapers as a credible source of information will persist, in light of a plethora of blogs as well as the prominence of social media.

Banning and Sweetser (2017) in their research found out that to varying degrees, online news sources are seen as less credible than the traditional media. Further, their research also revealed that a rising number of media organizations presently have an online presence or Internet news, and this has added to a degree of credibility.

Whereas it is not always possible to believe what one reads on the Internet, the research indicated that branding of online content with a trusted source name significantly increases the credibility of the published news (Banning & Sweetser, 2017). Consequently, Star Media Kenya has seized the goodwill gathered over the years, as a credible news provider, to attempt to build credible Internet news.

Typical of the New York Times and the Washington Post strategies, the Star Media Kenya has equally invested in having a workforce with skills fit for the digital arena. To gain traction in the Internet news, Star Media Kenya has offered training for journalists, employed a new crop of journalists and continues to converge the newsroom.

These efforts are geared towards having in place a multi-skilled workforce. Traditionally, Star Media Kenya had dedicated reporters and editors, all of whom fitted into the class of traditional journalists, the pen and paper journalists. However, the introduction of the online news requires modern journalists to be able to carry out several tasks, such as video editing, news publishing and so on.

Nygren (2014) refers to this demand as 'multiskilling'. He further elaborates that this is a result of "cross-platform production, deadlines 24/7 and flexible news workers going in and out of production and growing interactivity with the audience" (p.76).

This has given rise to what is separately defined as 'versatile journalism', in the novel age of converging media, journalists have to keep up with the trends and build their versatility as their jobs become rationalized and re-designated.

Star Media Kenya Group, the parent company of the Star Media Kenya, has earnestly started the process of rationalization and re-designation, to nurture flexible journalistic practices that emerge in television and newspaper production which in collaboration with online journalism have brought about a weighty effect on the Star Media Kenya journalist, and in extension every modern journalist.

Additionally, the research also illustrated that Star Media Kenya journalists are now required to have business skills. The news environment has significantly changed and journalists are now called to do more than gather and report the news.

The research in the Star Media Kenya indicated that journalists are now expected to develop business acumen. This is because they are required to pitch to businesses to establish partnerships. Due to a decline in newspaper circulation, the number of classifieds and advertisements has also reduced.

More so, the monopoly enjoyed by newspapers, owing to their extensive geographical reach, has been overcome by the Internet (Wilding, Fray, Molitorisz & McKewon, 2018). Businesses now have numerous platforms to advertise, including the use of social media influencers. This research revealed that businesses are heavily inclined to online advertisements as they can determine aspects such as reach and distribution of clients.

The situation fits perfectly under the dictates of the Disruption Innovation Theory. The theory explains a situation where smaller companies take on the more established ones, head-on. Today, the Star Media Kenya faces unparalleled competition from social media influencers and social media entities, in the business of news generation and advertisement (Christensen, Raynor & McDonald, 2015).

Star Media Kenyanow, more than ever, faces the need to determine a progressive way of managing this level of competition. The current research viewed the best option as having in place a concrete digital strategy.

Indeed, the Star Media Kenyahas a digital strategy that is currently shaping their movement towards a digitized world. The strategy is based on five tenets; a review of the manner Star Media Kenyareports and presents news, to develop in-depth and quality news, retraining, and hiring of multiskilled journalists, developing a web-centric strategy, where all news is first published online, augmenting revenue sources and encouraging continuous investment in digital knowledge and platforms to improve consumer experience.

The scale of investment in the aforementioned areas has been expected to yield results, financially. However, the research showed that the scale of investment has not been matched by revenue. The Star Media Kenyahas not been able to fully monetize its online news business. This remains very much a work in progress.

Is this alarming for the Star Media Kenya, which is painstakingly working towards developing a sustainable revenue source given the declining newspaper circulation? Grabowicz (2014) argues not necessarily. Grabowicz (2014) writing on the transition to digital journalism, made the following observation, which captures the current reality in the Star Media Kenya, that the influx of people consuming news online presents the organization with a dilemma on revenue allocation to build their readership.

On one hand, there is an irrefutable need to hold on to their existing, and often aging print or broadcast audiences. Thenceforth, in preliminary stages, online revenues for a majority of news media are a small fraction of the income from traditional print or broadcast.

To contextualize this, Grabowicz (2014) reported that in the first years of operation, typically 15 percent or less of overall revenue, came from the online operation. Arguably, Star Media Kenyadoes not need to panic from negligible earnings from their online investment, it takes time.

Notwithstanding, the Star Media Kenyamust recognize the clear trend, where people, especially the young, are turning to the Internet for their news needs underlining the need to have in place an effective digital strategy.

Considering the findings, the Star Media Kenya's strategy was unclear or it meant different things to different journalists and the newsroom hierarchy. The publication has failed to properly communicate its strategy. This could partly explain the lack of concrete gains from the organization's management.

Kramp and Loosen (2017) writing on strategy identified that a strategy, in this case, a digital strategy, is so critical in this time and age, as it is part of changing a news industry struggling with disrupted business models and declining audiences.

A digital strategy allows a media house or will enable the Star Media Kenya, to rediscover and reengage audiences through digital media channels (Kramp & Loosen, 2018). Such a strategy needs to follow a linear process and take place simultaneously within the newsrooms and across all individual journalists, this is not happening in Star Media KenyaGroup and the Star Media Kenya.

There is no linearity, and this is extensive because the senior management has not openly communicated the strategy to everyone and even to those in the know, the knowledge on what are the exact priority areas is disjointed.

Seuri (2016) however, explains that a formulating a sound digital strategy does not involve every individual in the newsroom, this would be a disaster. Nonetheless, the final version should be communicated to enlist the support of everyone in the organization and to harness support across the board.

This is because newsroom managers, majorly the various section editors and desk heads, play a crucial role in strategy implementation (Kramp & Loosen, 2018). It is in this regard that the Star Media Kenyais failing. The repercussion is a prolonged period of having the strategy fully operational in the organization and could also lead to disorientation across the newsroom staff.

The Media Economics Theory is concerned with resource allocation in the media industry, ideally, the goal is to allocate resources to create information and entertainment content to meet the needs of audiences, advertisers and valid social institutions (Albarran, Chan-Olmsted & Wirth, 2006).

Star Media Kenya's allocation of resources can be questioned, given the astronomical resources dedicated to building a fully-fledged digital week, capable of meeting the needs of all stakeholders, there is no commensurate growth in the outcome, the digital strategy appears disjointed, digital platforms are not yet fully optimized and convergence is still to fully happen.

The view is that although the Star Media Kenyafaces a genuine threat, the Star Media KenyaGroup is yet to fully implement its digital strategy that will guarantee steady revenue to supplement lost revenue from a slowed newspaper readership. The Star Media Kenyais still caught in the transition stage, it still faces a conundrum as the traditional media, which the Star Media Kenyaseeks to earnestly replace is still the paper's cash cow.

### 5.3 The Future of Journalism

Radical shifts in journalism are changing virtually every aspect of the gathering, reporting, and reception of news. This, perhaps, explains why media houses, struggling under the era of digital transformation, are under intense pressure to reinvent themselves to remain relevant and survive disruption.

Franklin (2016) says this struggle, has, however, precipitated a massive change in the way media organizations are managed. This change, he says, does not, however, mean that opportunities for quality journalism have disappeared. Only that the opportunities are now different and with that, new ways are required to provide it.

But just what is the future of journalism? Franklin argues that even though it is too early to foresee this, some prominent tendencies are perceptible. He says there will be a significant change in structures and competition surrounding news provision, growth in the number of forms of news and information providers and that the definition of journalism and journalists will be based on practices not employment.

A report by the Aspen Institute (2017) has put it more succinctly – that the digital revolution has and will create a fertile field for more media start-ups looking to compete with legacy newsrooms.

Franklin (2016) agrees. He says there will be space for more commercial and commercial new enterprises, but it is likely that a few large generals, commercial news providers – either in print, broadcast, or digital-only platforms, will dominate provisions in most countries in the digital form.

“As these changes occur, some players will reduce the frequency of their print publications, cutting out the unprofitable days...they will switch the focus of their daily operations to digital platforms.” He argues that more independent, entrepreneurial journalists and production cooperatives will emerge to provide specialized coverage, localized news, and information.”

“Some of these enterprises will find ways to operate as for-profit entities with funding from syndication, paying audiences and advertising. The others will operate non-profit enterprises and obtain funds from a multitude of sources including foundations, community organisations amongst others.”

### 5.4 Conclusion

This study confirms the long-standing hypothesis that digital is the way to go for newspapers, not only in Kenya but around the world as well if they are to survive the disruption era. Even though newspapers will not die, as many expect that in the near future, what will change is the way they are consumed.

The physical paper we get on the streets, will at some point, fizzle out. This means job losses for most of the people depending on that production chain like vendors, those responsible for printing it, drivers ferrying them to the various markets amongst others. But as this happens, the physical paper will have taken a different form – online.

This perhaps explains why the Star Media Kenya found it necessary to have an online edition as well as an E-Paper, which is a direct replica of the physical paper, but its access only limited to online. Newspaper publishers, therefore, have no choice but to adopt a format that is suited to the technology of the day.

Newspapers will also have to critically relook at its revenue streams, given that both circulation and advertising numbers are dwindling and continue to plummet by the day. Even though a lot is being done to remedy the situation, for instance, by engaging in other money-minting measures like partnerships, engaging in events, this is not enough. A lot more needs to be done, starting with encouraging audiences to subscribe.

This, however, cannot be done with poor quality content. Stories published by the Star Media Kenya must be exclusive, in-depth, must tell the reader something new and not simply telling audiences what they already know from social media.

This is where day two reporting must come in. Journalists at the publication must embrace the importance of telling a story already out there differently. Exploring angles that have not been touched. This, however, cannot be achieved without proper and adequate training. This is what will sustain the business.

### 5.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been derived from findings and conclusions:

The Star Media Kenya needs to further scale up the publication of more exclusive content. This, however, should not be a preserve of the hardcopy newspaper alone but in its digital spaces as well. Exclusive stories can come in the form of features or even news that no other competing publication has. This tends to differentiate the Star Media Kenya and its competition and will go a long way in improving circulation figures and increase traffic to the digital spaces as consumers will always want to associate with such publications.

The Newspaper should equally, be constantly exploring new ways of telling its stories to its audiences. Apart from what the audiences have been used to – pictures, video's and texts, the publication, in its website should explore new formats like Podcasts, Live Chats, Maps, interactive storytelling tools like Augmented Reality amongst others.

With audiences spending most of their time on media websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others, media houses must critically think of how to package their information to suit the needs of these individuals. These individuals like stories they can interact with – when to read a text when to look at photos, when to watch a video, when to listen to sound and so on.

Invest more in improving the technology they use to deliver information to its audiences - that will improve user experience. It should be noted that as technology, being dynamic, evolves, it has a corresponding impact on how media houses tell stories.

With more and more people using smartphones, where stories can be watched and read on-demand, media houses should not take their eyes off this channel. They should constantly be looking for ways of delivering their content through this channel, by developing user-friendly Applications (Apps) that will facilitate this. Secondly, with immersive storytelling gaining popularity in other parts of the world, the Star Media Kenya should also experiment with this. This is where Augmented Reality comes in. The publication should invest in equipment that will deliver this to their audiences.

Invest more in hiring experienced journalists and empowering the existing staff with digital storytelling skills that will enable them to adapt to the digital era. Having experienced journalists in newsrooms has its advantages. One is efficiency. They can be relied upon to get and tell exclusive stories with ease because they have, during their many years in the trade, interacted and made friends with numerous news sources amongst others. The Star Media Kenya should equally invest in hiring individuals with other equally important skills required in the newsrooms like audience engagement, design, fact-checkers and others.

The publication should equally invest more in training its staff. The reality of digital disruption is that every journalist must now gather commensurate knowledge. More so, the newsroom must have individuals who are well versed with the new technology. The publication should, therefore, build the capacity of the existent employees to deal with the demands of digitization.

To improve its revenue streams, it is evident that the newspaper has already set in motion measures to improve this. These include events, partnerships, diversification into other non-core businesses like music studio - 'Lit 360', cookery channel 'Pishi' amongst others. But it hasn't rolled out other equally important revenue streams like subscriptions. The New York Times and The Washington Post, have, for instance, improved their revenue tremendously through this venture. Even though there's still debate about whether this will work out in the developing world like Kenya, I think it's worth a try.

#### 5.6 Areas for Future Research

Faced with dwindling revenue sources, media houses these days are diversifying to areas that are considered non-core. The Star Media Kenya Group has, for instance, ventured into music production and established a record label called Lit 360, whose main responsibilities include signing new musicians, organizing their events as well as selling their music. Businesswise, this sounds a great idea as the venture will bring in more revenue to the company but is this right ethically especially when such organizations are faced with scandals. How have media houses navigated this quagmire? What lessons have they learned in the process that may influence future relationships and others? This is an area future researchers should explore.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A Interview Guide

- i. What do you understand by the term digital disruption?
- ii. What changes and challenges have been posed on the Star Media Kenya by the digital disruption?
- iii. What strategies has the Star Media Kenya employed to guarantee its future in the era of digital disruption?
- iv. How effective have the survival and growth strategies adopted by the Star Media Kenya been?  
What key lessons have been learned from the entire process
- v. What, in your opinion, is the future of newspapers in this constantly changing digital environment?

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