

The Influence Of New Media Technology On Television Content Sourcing In Kenya

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Abstract

Advancements in technology are shaping the way things are done in the media at a very high rate. It has led to a proliferation of devices that have greatly changed the processes of content sourcing, producing and disseminating. This paper was born of a pilot study that aimed at exploring ways in which the new media technology has influenced television content sourcing in Kenya. The study was informed by The Technological Determinist Theory and the Media Determinism Theory. It was conducted in Nairobi County, being the centre of technological innovation in Kenya. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Its target population comprised of television content creators, television program managers and television audiences. Content creators were selected since they interact with new media technologies daily as they source for content. Program managers were selected since they know the implications of the new media technology on television operations while television audiences who comprised of urban youth were selected since they are techno savvy and exposed to new media technologies. The study employed the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Tools for data collection included self-administered questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussion guides. The findings revealed that the most commonly used new media technologies for content sourcing include X, F, You Tube, blogs, Google, Zoom among others. The study also revealed that the new media trends including digitization, convergence and media fragmentation have also made content sourcing easier, cheaper and more efficient. Further, the study revealed that Covid-19 pandemic saw television stations switch to alternative methods of content sourcing. Since technology is ever evolving, the findings will help the television industry anticipate challenges posed by technology in order to come up with coping strategies.

Key words: Content Sourcing, Content Creators and Technological Innovation

1.0 Introduction

New media technology has dramatically changed the media environment and altered the way things are done including content sourcing, producing and disseminating (Alzubi, 2022). Technological advancement has led to a proliferation of online devices through which media houses source for media contents. Unlike the analogue methods of content sourcing that were cumbersome and costly, the new media devices have made the process easier, cheaper and more efficient (Ndonye & Khasandi-Telewa, 2013).

The new media trends including digitization, technological convergence and media fragmentation have affected content sourcing in numerous ways (Pavlik, 2011). Digitization has allowed for citizen journalism and the digitization of the content sourcing tools such as cameras, voice recorders and other computer-based technologies. Digitization has made capturing multimedia content including images, video, text and audio has been made possible (Pavlik, 2011; MCK, 2016). Additionally, it has made the content sourcing process simpler and cheaper by reducing incidents of physical travelling to locations of events, since content is archived through digital files that flow seamlessly into the editing and layout systems (Picard, 2011).

Technological convergence has allowed content sourcing tools such as mobile phones to feature cameras, voice recorders, and hold images, videos, music, and other media forms (Pavlik, 2011). Convergence has also given rise to converged newsrooms where content creators are able to collaborate more and integrate all their services in one newsroom, making it possible for them to create contents for different media outlets more effectively (MCK, 2016). Media fragmentation has given rise to more content options which compel journalists to obtain content in various forms for different media outlets (Ndonye & Khasandi-Telewa, 2013).

Such strengths of the new media over the traditional media have made it gain popularity in the present generation (Ogwelle, 2011). This scenario prompted some scholars to predict a digital revolution that would see the old media replaced by new media, whereby for instance, broadcasting would be replaced by the Internet (Ibold, 2012). However, this view was

challenged by a number of scholars including Tapscott (2009) according to whom there is nothing like the ‘death of broadcasting’ rather, the traditional media trying to keep up with the rapid changes and improvements brought about by new technology which seem to threaten its existence. According to him, this will be an ongoing process as technology and audience expectations continue to change (Tapscott, 2009).

Mbatia (2014) supporting this argument says that the new media is not replacing the old rather, the two are interacting in more complex ways with the new fusing with the old media to affect communication positively. Additionally, Ndonge and Khasandi-Telewa (2013) point out that the new media and specifically online platforms complement the traditional media and don’t replace it.

The new media technology also has a downside. Although content sourcing is easier today, many media outlets have had to bear the financial burden that comes with ‘going digital’. Media houses are compelled to equip their staff with multimedia skills which further poses financial challenges on the media houses (Murunga & Diang’a, 2021). The transformed media environment is pushing media organizations into finding new ways of content sourcing. Presently, many organizations prefer obtaining news from social media platforms to covering press conferences. This implies that the journalists must follow the news makers on their social media platforms (Githaiga, 2014).

The proliferation of media outlets has given rise to many content forms including tweets, stories, pictures, links, face-book pages as sources of information. Sifting through the volumes of information currently available is cumbersome This also implies that content creators currently have to tailor their content for each device and to the specified standards (Githaiga, 2014).

The new media environment and the demands of the audience force the media to provide ‘bitty’ raw information in form of breaking news which adversely affects the credibility of news media organizations (Nyamboga, 2014). Moreover, with citizen journalism, audiences have developed a curiosity mindset where they challenge what is presented to them (Ndonge, 2013). In the face of the ever-evolving technology, the television industry is compelled to look for new strategies to counter these challenges and meet the demands of the newly empowered consumers. This paper

explores the influence of new media technology on television content sourcing in Kenya and recommends strategies to be adopted.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was premised on the Technological Determinism Theory (McLuhan, 1962), which perceives technology as ‘an external force introduced into a social situation, producing a series of rebound effects. This theory was relevant in describing the effects of the new media technology on the television content sourcing. It was complemented by The Medium Theory, which claims that technology has powerful effects on societies and inevitably causes specific changes in how people think, how society is structured and in the forms of culture that are created’ (McLuhan, 1964). The medium theory was relevant in providing a deeper understanding of the influence of new technology on television content sourcing and the changing media environment.

2.2 The Impact of New Technology on Television Content Sourcing

Technology has brought about trends including convergence, digitization and media fragmentation that have made content sourcing easier and cheaper (Pavlik, 2011; ITU, 2011). Digitization has led to citizen journalism and made multimedia content sourcing through the internet and mobile phones possible (MCK, 2016). Technological convergence has given rise to converged newsrooms, making it possible for content developers to produce contents for different media outlets more effectively (Mbatia, 2014; MCK, 2016). Media fragmentation has given rise to a multiplicity of media platforms, compelling content creators to obtain content in various formats and for the different media outlets (Ndonye & Khasandi-Telewa, 2013). Despite these advantages, new media technology has a downside. Media houses have had to bear the financial burden of going digital. Cases of stories that lack facts, a balance and necessary background information have also been on the rise (Baecker, 2011; Nyamboga, 2014).

Currently, we have the multimedia content formats which make selection of the correct content cumbersome (Githaiga, 2014). Moreover, content creators now have to respond to the needs of the newly empowered consumers who challenge what is presented to them (Ndonye, Kemunto & Maseke, 2014). Covid-19 also had tremendous effects on the television content sourcing process where media houses had to switch to alternative ways of content sourcing including the use of social media platforms (UNESCO, 2020).

2.3 Strategies Being Used to Adapt to the Changes

In the face of the new media technology, media houses have had to come with strategies to help them cope with the effects. The strategies include re-engineering of businesses to serve multi-platforms and integrated online outlets, collaborations among television stations and integration with online platforms. Others include forming alliances and acquisitions between different media sectors, and between traditional media and new media corporations (Ajehandro, 2010). In Kenya, cross-ownerships and co-opetition where competitor companies establish cooperative activities through alliances, partnerships, sharing arrangements and networks are common (MCK, 2016).

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

Earlier studies in this area focused broadly on the effects of new media technology on traditional media or other aspects of content development. The study on the influence of new media technologies on broadcasting by Ogedi (2009) conducted in Nigeria looked at the extent to which the new media technologies have been incorporated into the operations of the broadcast media and their influence on the operations of the stations. Although it was similar with the current study, its focus was different.

The study on the effects of social media on the content of local television program in Kenya by Ouma (2013) on the other hand sought to establish the influence of social media on television content production. The study focused narrowly on social media platforms and on the content production while the current study looked at the content sourcing. Another study conducted by the Media Council of Kenya in 2016 aimed at determining the impact of digital technologies on the media and journalism in Kenya (MCK, 2016). Although the methods used were similar with

the current study, its approach was broad and included the print and electronic media. From the foregoing, little has been done specifically on the effects of new media technology on television content sourcing in Kenya, which necessitated this study.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study employed the descriptive research design which aims at describing various aspects of a phenomenon including characteristics and /or behavior of a sample population (Ethridge, 2004). It was therefore used to describe how the new media technology is influencing television content sourcing. This design was preferred since it allows a large volume of data to be collected cheaply and makes the data analysis process easier and faster (Gilbert, 2008).

3.2 Population and Sampling design

The study population comprised of the television workforce while the target population included television content creators, television managers and television audience members. A sample of 15 television content creators, 2 television program managers and 10 audience members participated in the study. These were purposively selected since they interact with media on a daily basis. The purposive sampling technique was also used to select one of the most popular television stations (KTN), program managers and television audience members. The table below provides a summary of the sample population:

Table 1: Sample Population

Tool Used	Respondents	Number of Respondents
Questionnaire	TV content creators	15
FGDs	TV audiences	10
Interviews	TV program managers	2
Total		27

3.3 Research Instruments

The main instrument for data collection was the questionnaire, which contained both close-ended and open-ended questions. It generated quantitative data. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with program managers to ensure high response rates (Neuman, 2006). Focus group discussion guides were used to obtain information from the African Nazarene university communication students who represented television audiences. Two (2) focus groups, each comprising of 5 media students from every level of study in the undergraduate degree program were represented (Bryman, 2012). These generated qualitative data.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Data obtained using the quantitative research method was coded and entered in the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) for analysis. After entry into SPSS, data was then cleaned to identify errors made while keying the data. This was done by ensuring that data is entered twice independently by two people according to Robinson (2002). SPSS aided in organizing, summarizing, tabulating and analyzing the data using descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations and frequency distributions, to enable the researcher come with conclusions.

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data adopted thematic analysis approach where major concepts or themes drawn from the FGDs and interviews were identified. This was done procedurally through identification of information relevant to the objectives, developing a coding system based on collected data, classification of major issues covered and major themes identified. Development of a summary report identifying major themes and the association between them was then done (Creswell, 2009).

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to research ethics by obtaining written permission from NACOSTI, informed consent from each participant was also sought and the principle of voluntary participation adhered to.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

This pilot study sought to find out the influence of new media technology on television content sourcing. All respondents (100%) were in agreement that PD video cameras, voice recorders, video switchers, vision mixers, audio tapes, camcorders, VHS tapes, DVDs and voice recorders were among the traditional media devices used for content sourcing. However, advancements in technology has brought about a host of new media devices including DV cameras, social media platforms such as facebook, twitter, You Tube, Tiktok, instagram, snapchat, blogs and google plus that are currently used for content sourcing. This is in line with what Ndonye and Khasandi-Telewa (2013) claimed that media fragmentation has given rise to a multiplicity of media platforms through which content creators obtain content.

Among the most preferred new media technologies used for content sourcing according to the respondents (100%) were DV cameras, blogs, twitter, facebook, You Tube, social media networks, Google, Zoom, among others. The technologies are preferred to the traditional ones since they are cheaper, faster, convenient, allow for self expression, are easy to manipulate and they provide unfiltered information. This supported an earlier study by Pavlik (2011) that found out that new media devices are digital and they make content sourcing easier, cheaper and more efficient.

The study also found out that digital devices are preferred since they are multi-purpose and allow for multi-tasking. This concurs with what Mbatia (2014) found out that technological convergence has given rise to converged newsrooms, where content developers are able to collaborate more and integrate all their services in one newsroom, making it possible for them to produce contents for different media outlets more effectively.

However, the flip side to this is that one person can now perform tasks that were traditionally performed by 3-4 people. Although this saves costs, it has led to laying off of veteran content creators who are now pressured with loads of work and beating deadlines. Consequently, this leads to a compromise on content quality. This is in accordance with what Nyamboga (2014)

found out that in the face of new media technology, cases of stories that lack facts, balance and necessary background information have been on the rise.

Although media houses have had to switch to new media devices, 86.7% of the respondents said media organizations still use the traditional media technology for content sourcing. This concurs with what Mbatia (2014) claimed, that the new media technology is not replacing the old rather, the two are interacting in more complex ways with the new fusing with the old media to affect communication positively. The scholar further argues that the present-day audience uses multiple devices (Mbatia, 2014). For instance, a person who wants comprehensive news or sports reports will watch television while for news updates, they may switch to social media platforms. The content creators' role is to find out which media platforms the audiences are interacting with, to access which type of contents so as to serve them appropriately.

Among the motivations for the use of traditional media for content sourcing, 86.7% of the respondents said the traditional media provide accurate information, are more reliable, allow for a mastery of skills and have a centralized system. This scenario can find an explanation is the proliferation of media outlets which has brought about stiff competition, allowing content creators no room to verify information. Secondly, digital media devices are highly automated unlike the traditional or analogue one which allows for learning and acquiring skills.

4.1 Influence of the New Media Technology on the Content Sourcing Work

The study found out the various ways in which the new media technologies have influenced television content sourcing including the fact that the new media technologies have made the process faster, easier and cheaper. They have also made the process more efficient, allowing one to do more in less time and convenient, where content creators can get information from the comfort of their offices. Accessing information sources and fresh information in real time has been made easy. Moreover, they allow for fact-checking and provide an avenue to interact with content sources.

This is in agreement with what Pavlik (2011) and ITU (2011) claimed that technology has brought about trends including convergence, digitization and media fragmentation that have made content sourcing easier and cheaper. According to a report by the Media Council of Kenya (2016) for instance, digitization has led to citizen journalism and made multimedia content sourcing through the internet and mobile phones possible.

4.2 New Media Trends Affecting TV content sourcing

The study revealed that new media trends have affected content sourcing in a number of ways with 93.3% of the respondents citing digitization, convergence, media fragmentation the smartphone and handling of news. Digitization has led to higher quality contents sourced, ability to compress the contents and greater efficiency.

On the flip side are the financial implications caused on content sourcing due to the need for digitized devices and media digital skills for content creators. Additionally, with advertisers moving to online media platforms, there is less revenue, less work force and reduced content quality. This explains why there are many mistakes in the information presented to us ranging from missing facts to grammatical mistakes.

Convergence has led to the emergence of converged newsrooms with reporters, producers and editors working across the media platforms. This has enhanced efficiency since converged technology can perform several functions, making content sourcing easier. Convergence has also led to mobile media where content creators can access information from anywhere and made multi-media content sourcing easier. This concurs with earlier claims that technological convergence has given rise to converged newsrooms where editors and reporters are able to collaborate more and integrate all their services in one newsroom, making it possible for them to produce contents for different media outlets more effectively (Mbatia, 2014; MCK, 2016).

According to the findings, media fragmentation has placed pressure on content creators who now have to source for content for the various media platforms and different formats. It has also led to stiff competition which puts pressure on content creators who now must work harder to get

more compelling stories for different media outlets and beat deadlines. For instance, most mainstream media run at least a television station, a radio station, a newspaper and online platforms. This is in agreement with Ndongye and Khasandi-Telewa (2013) who found out that media fragmentation has given rise to a multiplicity of media platforms, compelling content creators to obtain content in various formats and for the different media outlets.

Another trend is the handling of breaking news. Currently, digital media platforms are used for breaking news although some people still trust traditional media as a more credible source of news. Additionally, while television is trying to adhere to the canons of journalism; verifying facts and information sources, the information will already have broken on digital media platforms. Chalkley et al. (2012) pointed out that in the new media environment, market and audience demands force the media to provide 'bitty' raw information in form of breaking news, which eventually hurts the credibility of the news media. Another trend is the introduction of the Smartphone. People have adopted a new habit of interacting highly with their phones as they look for different media contents. Consequently, television stations have to be swift in updating the viewers on breaking news to avoid scenarios whereby by the time you give them the information, they already have it or there are new developments on the ground. This puts a lot of pressure on content creators who must now come up with creative ways of retelling the story to make it sound like news.

4.3 Demands The New Media Technology has placed on Television

The study found out that the new media technology has placed a number of demands on the television content sourcing process. It was noted that knowledge of the target audiences and their changing needs is among the demands. Presently, media houses have to hold constant conversations with audiences and review their feedback comments on social media platforms to determine their changing needs. Ndongye, Kemunto and Masese (2014) found out that the new media environment and audience demands have placed a burden on media companies and content producers who now have to rethink existing assumptions about media from the consumer's point of view and respond to the needs of the newly empowered audience.

The other demand according to the findings is ensuring that program content is fresh, relevant and unique. This implies the stations must be ready to spend more to acquire good contents. Additionally, stations have had to spend a lot of money on staff trainings to equip them with digital skills to enable them interact with the digital equipment used for content sourcing. Moreover, stations have had to invest in human resource by hiring staff with digital skills and content creators who can produce content across the media platforms.

The present content creator must be multi-skilled to survive. With most functions being merged, a content creator currently source content for TV, radio and for social media platforms, a role that was formerly played by 3 people. Similarly, content creators have had to employ new methods of telling stories in line with what Githaiga (2014) said, that the new media landscape has transformed the media environment, pushing traditional media into finding new ways of sourcing for content. Content creators must therefore be more on toes to find out emerging trends in the media space, determine their effects on audience needs and come up with new content strategies.

4.4 Implications of Covid-19 on Television Content Sourcing

The study found out that Covid-19 disease compelled media houses to look for alternative content sourcing methods where interviews and press conferences had to be conducted online. The pandemic also led to the proliferation of social media platforms which have been useful in content sourcing.

4.5 Strategies Being Used to Combat the Effects of New Media Technology

The study found out that the television industry has had to come up with strategies to combat the effects of new media technology on its operations. Among them include coming up with unique content that draws the viewers' attention and meets their needs. They are also investing more in audience research to establish the changing needs of their audience in order to appropriately respond to them. The other strategy being used by television media is coming up with partnerships with other television stations and individual content creators for purposes of cost-sharing.

4.6 Summary

The advent of new media technologies has seen the television industry switch to new modes of content sourcing. The present-day devices used are digital including web-based, computer-based devices as well as social media platforms, which require a new skill-set among content creators. This has had financial implications on the industry as it has had to train its staff to be able to operate in the digital environment. The new media devices are preferred over the traditional since they are faster, convenient, more efficient, they allow for interactions, are manipulatable, ensure higher quality and unfiltered information and are multi-purpose. However, these digital media devices are used alongside the traditional ones on the account of provision of accurate information, being more reliable, allowing for a mastery of skills and having centralized systems.

The new media technologies have made the process of content sourcing easier, more efficient and more convenient. The technologies have made it possible for content creators to get fresh information in real time. The study revealed that new media trends including digitization, convergence, media fragmentation and the Smartphone digitization have affected content sourcing both positively and negatively. The study also found out that the new media technology has placed a number of demands on the television content sourcing process for instance conducting frequent audience surveys, ensuring fresh and relevant content and multi-media digital skills. There is also more pressure on content creators who must now be on their toes to find fresh information, beat deadlines, identify emerging trends in the media space and come up with new strategies of telling stories.

Among the strategies being used to cope with these effects include coming up with unique content that draws the viewers' attention and meets their needs, investing more in audience research to establish the changing needs of their audience in order to appropriately respond to them, coming up with partnerships with other television stations and individual content creators for purposes of cost-sharing.

5.0 Conclusions

The study confirms earlier studies which claim that new media technology has affected television content sourcing positively and negatively. Television stations need to invest more in research to establish its implications on content creation and to identify the audience's ever changing information needs. There is also need to invest in new media devices and staff trainings in order to keep up with the changing times. Additionally, since technology continues to evolve and is here to stay, content creators need to continue evolving and coming with new content strategies in order to remain relevant. Finally, since this was a pilot study, a larger study investigating the influence of new media technology on television content development is recommended.

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