

The Emerging Trends of Business Reporting in Kenyan Newspapers: New Media, AI, and Data Journalism

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the emerging trends of business journalism within Kenyan newspapers, specifically *The Business Daily*, *The Daily Nation*, and *The Standard*. Despite significant digital transformation, there is a notable gap in comprehensive analysis regarding how these emerging trends are influencing business reporting practices in Kenya. The research addresses this gap by analyzing how the new trends are reshaping the field and contributing to socio-economic empowerment. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, including content analysis of the newspapers and questionnaire responses from journalists and industry stakeholders, the research reveals that Kenyan newspapers have integrated digital and print business reporting. Key findings include the prevalence of themes like innovation, technology, and green energy, alongside effective newsroom convergence that mirrors global trends. Data journalism has become a staple, particularly at *The Business Daily*, enhancing reporting reliability, while Artificial Intelligence's potential benefits are acknowledged amid concerns about privacy and bias. The study also highlights the shift towards alternative revenue models such as subscriptions and digital monetization due to declining advertising revenues. The conclusions underscore a significant transformation in the business journalism landscape driven by technological integration, data reliance, AI adoption, and evolving business models. Despite these advancements, challenges persist, including ethical use of data and sustainable revenue strategies. Recommendations emphasize the need for ongoing professional development in digital and data skills, the adoption of multimedia storytelling, and the exploration of new revenue sources. Further research is suggested to assess the impact of training on reporting quality, the role of audience feedback, and comparative practices in other African countries. This study provides valuable insights into how Kenyan newspapers are adapting to modern trends and the implications for both practice and theory in business journalism.

Keywords: Business Journalism, Kenyan Newspapers, Emerging Trends, Data Journalism, New Media, Artificial Intelligence (AI)

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Business journalism, crucial for interpreting economic activities, has evolved from focusing solely on stock prices and indicators to covering a broader range of topics, including financial literacy, labor issues, and technological advancements (Jooste, 2016; Pani & Butmaloiu, 2017). This shift addresses the growing demand for accessible economic information essential for decision-making in a complex global economy, highlighting the vital role of robust business reporting (Luesby, 2011).

Digital transformation has introduced new platforms for disseminating business news, increasing accessibility but also presenting challenges such as declining newspaper circulation and advertising revenues (Ekmekcioglu, 2012). In response, media organizations have adopted multimedia content, data journalism, and investigative reporting to better engage their audiences and provide real-time, data-driven insights (Schlesinger & Doyle, 2014).

In Kenya, newspapers like *The Business Daily*, *The Daily Nation*, and *The Standard* are adapting to these trends by using innovative reporting techniques and addressing relevant topics such as financial inclusion and market

dynamics. However, there is a lack of scholarly analysis on how these trends are influencing business journalism practices in Kenya. This study aims to address this gap by examining how Kenyan newspapers are adapting to global and technological changes in business reporting (Podesta, 2014).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The landscape of business journalism in Kenyan newspapers is evolving in response to global and technological shifts. Traditional reporting on economic indicators and stock prices has expanded to cover a broader range of topics, including financial literacy, technological impacts, and policy effects. This evolution is driven by the digital transformation, which introduces new platforms and tools but also challenges established revenue models and circulation patterns. Despite these changes, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis of how these emerging trends are shaping business reporting practices in Kenyan newspapers. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the new trends in business journalism within Kenyan newspapers to understand their influence on reporting practices and their implications for the audience.

1.3 Research Purpose and Objective

The purpose of this study is to explore the emerging trends of business reporting in Kenyan newspapers. The study aims to identify and analyze these trends to understand how they are shaping the practice of business journalism in Kenya.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is significant for several reasons. It offers insights into how Kenyan newspapers are adapting to global trends in business journalism and the implications of these adaptations for economic literacy and decision-making. By highlighting the evolving nature of business reporting, this study provides valuable information for media practitioners, policymakers, educators, and the public. The findings can inform training programs for journalists, help develop guidelines for ethical and effective business reporting, and contribute to the broader understanding of the role of media in shaping economic perceptions and behaviors.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on business stories published in *The Business Daily*, *The Daily Nation*, and *The Standard*, and includes insights from business journalists and representatives of key industry organizations such as the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI). Data will be collected through document analysis and interviews, with a focus on understanding how emerging trends are influencing business journalism practices in Kenya. The research is situated within the context of Nairobi, reflecting the city's role as a media and economic hub.

1.6 Limitations

This study is based on a single-month sample (May 2022), which may not capture seasonal or long-term variations in business reporting trends. The relatively small sample of 36 respondents, drawn primarily from Nairobi-based institutions, limits the generalizability of the findings. Further, the voluntary nature of participation introduces a possible self-selection bias, as those with stronger views or greater interest in digital transformation may have been more inclined to respond. Additionally, this study focuses exclusively on content from print and associated digital platforms of major newspapers, the findings primarily reflect trends within a newspaper-oriented audience. Audiences that consume business news primarily via social media, podcasts, or broadcast may encounter different thematic emphases and platform dynamics. These limitations suggest caution in extending the results beyond the specific time frame and participant group studied.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Historical Context of Business Journalism

Historically, business journalism in Kenyan newspapers was marked by a narrow focus and a lack of in-depth

analysis. Early business sections were often limited in scope, offering only superficial coverage of business news. According to Kareithi & Kariithi (2007), newspapers of the past exhibited minimal investigative journalism and frequently missed critical issues such as corporate governance and corruption. Their reliance on press releases and official statements from government and businesses led to biased reporting and a lack of critical scrutiny (Usher, 2017). This period also saw a limited digital presence, with most newspapers focusing on print media, which constrained their ability to reach a broader audience and engage interactively. Recent years have brought notable changes to business journalism, both globally and within Kenya. These changes reflect advancements in technology, shifts in working practices, and evolving business models.

2.2 Notable Trends in Business Journalism

2.2.1 New Media and Technology

The advent of new media technologies has significantly impacted business reporting by introducing more interactive and dynamic communication channels. Reese (2010) argues that technology has restructured communication systems, allowing for the formation of novel communities and the creation of new media spaces. Loiko (2011) underscores that new media platforms, such as blogs and social networks, have gained popularity due to their speed and interactivity, often surpassing traditional media in these aspects.

New media tools facilitate crowdsourcing and audience engagement, which are essential for modern business reporting. However, there is skepticism about the quality and reliability of user-generated content (Loiko, 2011). The author suggests a collaborative approach, where traditional media and new media complement each other to address each other's weaknesses.

Although the impact of new media on general journalism is well documented, there is limited research on how these advancements specifically influence business journalism in Kenyan newspapers. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how new media is shaping business reporting practices in Kenya.

2.2.2 Citizen Journalism and Independent Content Creation

Citizen journalists and independent creators have emerged as influential players in disseminating business news. This trend, often described as self-reporting disseminates their content through blogs, podcasts, and social media platforms. They allow individuals to bypass traditional gatekeeping structures and directly reach audiences (Wilding et al., 2018). In Kenya, citizen journalists have been pivotal in reporting on SME innovations, fintech developments, and market disruptions, sometimes breaking stories before mainstream outlets (Nganga, 2025). While this enhances diversity of perspectives, it also raises concerns over verification and ethical standards.

Independent content creators are increasingly monetizing their platforms through advertising partnerships, sponsored content, and subscription models, creating a new revenue stream outside the traditional newspaper economy. These developments intersect with formal journalism as mainstream newspapers republish or reference citizen-generated content, blurring the line between professional and amateur reporting (Dubey, 2023).

2.2.3 Remote Work and Freelancing

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote work and freelancing within media houses. Newman (2021) notes that tools like Zoom and Slack have become integral to remote journalism, allowing media practitioners to work from home and embrace greater flexibility. This shift has led to increased reliance on freelance contributors and a move away from traditional office-based roles.

Editors such as María Ramirez of El Diario in Spain now view office settings as outdated, reflecting a broader trend towards remote and freelance work (Newman, 2021). This transition has also led to an increased focus on paid content and user-generated contributions, further changing the landscape of business journalism.

The effects of remote work and freelancing on business journalism in Kenya are not well explored. This research will analyze how these trends impact business reporting practices and newsroom dynamics in the Kenyan context.

2.2.4 Newsroom Convergence

Newsroom convergence involves the integration of technologies, products, and teams that were once separate. Gicobi (2018) highlights that digital devices are enabling the distribution of content across multiple platforms, leading to the convergence of editorial teams and content creation processes. This trend is evident in Kenyan newspapers, where business desks have been integrated across various media platforms, such as the merger of business desks in *Business Daily*, *NTV Business*, and *the Daily Nation* (Gicobi, 2018).

Convergence allows for a more streamlined approach to content creation and dissemination, but also leads to smaller, more versatile newsrooms. The trend towards a global business news arena, supported by networks of multinational media professionals, further underscores the impact of convergence (Reese, 2010).

While newsroom convergence is well-documented globally, its specific effects on business journalism in Kenya remain underexplored. This study aims to identify both the positive and negative consequences of convergence on business reporting in Kenya.

2.2.5 Reliance on Data Journalism

Data journalism has become a prominent trend in business reporting, offering depth and precision to business stories. Jooste (2016) notes that data journalism was not prevalent until the late 20th century, with earlier practices focusing more on press releases and celebrity quotes. Today, data journalism combines data analysis with storytelling to enhance business reporting (Newman et al., 2021).

Data journalism enables business journalists to provide detailed and factual explanations of complex issues, helping audiences make sense of global business trends (Oriedo, 2020). However, Cheruiyot & Ferrer-Conill (2018) highlight that data journalism in Africa, including Sub-Saharan Africa, is often driven by non-profit organizations and advocacy groups. Gondwe & White (2021) found that Zambian and Tanzanian journalists, despite practicing data journalism, often lack the advanced tools and skills associated with this field. Munoriyarwa (2020) reports that data journalism is gradually increasing in South Africa, with calls for its inclusion in journalism education programs.

The adoption of data journalism in Kenyan business reporting has not been extensively studied. This research will assess the extent of data journalism integration in Kenyan newspapers and its impact on business reporting practices.

2.2.6 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI is transforming business journalism by enhancing efficiency in data collection, analysis, and reporting. AI applications include real-time fact-checking and automated news generation (Kothari & Cruikshank, 2022). The Associated Press (AP) was an early adopter of AI, collaborating with Automated Insights to produce quarterly earnings reports, resulting in increased output and fewer errors (DeJarnette, 2016).

Despite its potential, AI adoption in African media, including Kenya, is slower due to language barriers and limited technological infrastructure. Developing AI tools that cater to local languages and contexts is recommended for improving AI integration in African media (Kothari & Cruikshank, 2022).

African scholarship reveals that data journalism and AI adoption are often mediated by donor programs and non-profit organizations rather than newsroom budgets. Chiumbu and Munoriyarwa (2023) argue that African universities remain slow to adapt curricula, leaving journalists dependent on ad-hoc training initiatives. Code for Africa, a Nairobi-based NGO, has emerged as a continental leader in data journalism and fact-checking, operating across 21 countries and providing training and digital tools that mainstream media houses lack. These developments highlight that while African newsrooms are experimenting with AI and data, structural capacity and skills gaps remain the defining constraints. There is limited information on AI usage in Kenyan business journalism. This study will explore the extent of AI adoption, its challenges, and opportunities within the Kenyan context.

2.2.7 Business Models

The global business news industry is facing financial challenges, leading to a shift from advertising-based revenue models to subscription-based models and revenue diversification (Schlesinger & Doyle, 2014). Newman (2021) cites factors such as declining advertising, globalization, and COVID-19 as drivers of this shift. For example, The New York Times saw a significant increase in digital subscribers, reflecting a growing demand for high-quality, independent journalism.

While Western media institutions' shift to subscription models is well-documented, the impact of this shift on business journalism in Kenyan newspapers is not thoroughly studied. This research will examine which business models are most effective for sustaining business journalism in Kenya.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the agenda-setting theory, introduced by McCombs and Shaw in 1968, which highlights how media influence public perceptions by emphasizing certain topics (Bajracharya, 2018). In the context of business journalism, this theory is crucial for understanding how Kenyan newspapers shape the importance of various business issues, potentially influencing public attitudes and economic behavior.

Agenda-setting theory suggests that media coverage not only reflects reality but also filters and shapes it, often emphasizing specific topics to signal their importance (Strauß, 2021). This selective emphasis is vital for exploring how business journalism in Kenyan newspapers highlights particular economic trends, thus guiding public understanding and discussions about these issues.

Furthermore, the theory argues that repetition and prominence given to certain topics can condition the audience to perceive them as most important (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). This aspect helps to explain how emerging trends in business reporting may influence readers' perceptions of economic priorities.

Thus, agenda-setting theory provides a lens through which to examine how business journalism in Kenyan newspapers highlights emerging trends, thereby shaping public perceptions and potentially influencing economic decision-making.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the nature, emerging trends, and influence of business journalism. Qualitative data were gathered through open-ended questions, while quantitative data were obtained from structured responses. This design allowed for a comprehensive analysis of both the practices and the impacts of business journalism.

3.2 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Nairobi, which hosts the headquarters of the newspapers and organizations involved.

3.3 Research Population

The population included business newspapers in Kenya, business journalists, and staff from influential organizations such as KAM and KNCCI. This approach helped to capture diverse perspectives on business journalism and its effects on economic decisions.

3.4 Target Population

The target population consisted of issues from *The Business Daily*, *The Daily Nation*, and *The Standard*, as well as business journalists from these newspapers, along with middle-level staff from KAM and KNCCI. The respondents were selected based on their direct involvement in business news production, corporate communication, policy analysis, or industry relations, ensuring that they had substantive interaction with

business news content. This selection ensured that all participants possessed relevant professional experience to provide informed perspectives on emerging trends, thereby minimizing sampling bias.

3.5 Sample Sizes

The study analyzed 30 newspaper issues from May 2022 and included 36 participants - 21 business journalists and 15 middle-level staff members from KAM and KNCCI. This sample size was selected to ensure data saturation and reliability. The month of May 2022 was purposively selected because it represented a period of relative economic stability following the COVID-19 pandemic's peak and preceding the Kenyan general elections of August 2022. This timing provided a context in which business coverage was not dominated by electioneering, allowing for the observation of organic trends in business journalism.

3.6 Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through document analysis of business news articles and in-depth questionnaires. Document analysis involved examining themes and trends in newspaper articles, while questionnaires provided insights from journalists and organizational staff.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability, pretested instruments and a test-retest method were used. Validity was addressed through a pilot study, established research instruments, and data triangulation to confirm the findings.

3.8 Data Analysis Tools

Newspaper data were analyzed using reflexive thematic content analysis with NVIVO software to identify patterns and themes. The coding scheme was developed from both literature and an initial pilot review of five business articles from each newspaper. The coding categories included: (1) primary theme (innovation, technology, environment, SMEs, and governance); (2) geographic origin of the story (local, regional, international); (3) source type (staff reporter, wire service, external contributor, organizational handout); and (4) data use (figures, percentages, currency). Participant data were analysed using descriptive statistics with SPSS for quantitative responses and thematic analysis for qualitative feedback. The inter-coder reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa, which yielded an overall score of 0.82, indicating strong agreement.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was assured. Ethical approval was obtained from the Chuka University Institutional Ethics Review Committee and NACOSTI to ensure that the study was conducted ethically and legally.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The study analyzed 75 business-related articles from May 2022, with contributions from *Business Daily* (26 articles), *Daily Nation* (23 articles), and *The Standard* (26 articles). Additionally, 21 business journalists and 15 middle-level staff from the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) provided input through questionnaires.

4.2 Response Demographics

In terms of demographics, the journalists averaged 31 years old, indicating a young, tech-savvy group balanced by more experienced individuals. The KNCCI and KAM staff averaged 35 years, reflecting a mature workforce. Gender distribution was nearly equal among journalists (10 females and 11 males) and among KNCCI/KAM staff (7 males and 8 females), promoting diverse perspectives. Educationally, most journalists held Bachelor's degrees, while KNCCI and KAM staff had a mix of Bachelor's and Master's degrees, highlighting a well-qualified group. Experience varied, with most journalists and staff having between 2-5 years of experience,

suggesting a blend of new and seasoned professionals.

4.3 Emerging Trends of Business Journalism in Kenyan Newspapers

4.3.1 New Media and New World

All print articles were mirrored on the newspapers' websites, with 10 of the 75 analyzed articles sourced online, particularly from BBC and Reuters. Table 1 illustrates that themes such as innovation, technology, environment, and green energy are prominent in modern reporting.

Table 1: Topics in Sampled Newspapers Showing New World Realities and Stories with Global Origins

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard
Themes Covered	Economy and Business (9), Technology and Innovation (6), Politics and Governance (5), Social and Lifestyle (4), Environment and Energy (2)	Economy and Business (10), Environment and Energy (4), Politics and Governance (4), Technology and Innovation (3), Social and Lifestyle (2)	Economy and Business (8), Environment and Energy (7), Social and Lifestyle (4), Technology and Innovation (4), Politics and Governance (3)
Origin	Staff reporter (9), outside specialist (7), handouts from the organization (8) BBC (global) (2)	Staff reporter (8), Reuters (global) (8), outside contributor (expert) (7)	Staff reporter (13), outside contributor (13)

As seen in Table 1, *The Business Daily* focused on innovation and climate mitigation, aligning with global sustainability trends. *The Daily Nation's* coverage of technology and mining reflected Kenya's economic priorities, while *The Standard* emphasized energy and green initiatives, highlighting a commitment to environmental awareness. This content analysis indicates that sustainable reporting is a notable trend in business journalism. The frequent coverage of climate mitigation, green energy, innovation, cybersecurity, SMEs, and technology, reflect a global shift towards modern, technology-driven topics and a growing focus on sustainability and innovation. Similar trends are observed in Europe and America (Wagenhofer, 2024).

Journalists highlighted a shift to digital platforms, noting their focus on addressing audience needs and market trends as represented in Figure 1. As one observes, "*It's oriented towards solving audience needs and focused on market trends, regulation changes, and corporate development.*" Digital platforms now integrate multimedia elements like images and infographics, marking a departure from traditional print practices. However, 5 journalists expressed concerns about misinformation, with one stating, "*New media platforms have transformed the way we deliver news, but we must remain vigilant in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of our reporting.*"

Survey respondents from KNCCI and KAM emphasized the need for digital advocacy, with one noting, "*In the past, it was common to publish opinion pieces in print; now, digital platforms are crucial for digital advocacy*" (Figure 1). This indicates a complete integration of digital and print journalism, showing a synergy that expands audience reach (Henkel et al., 2020).

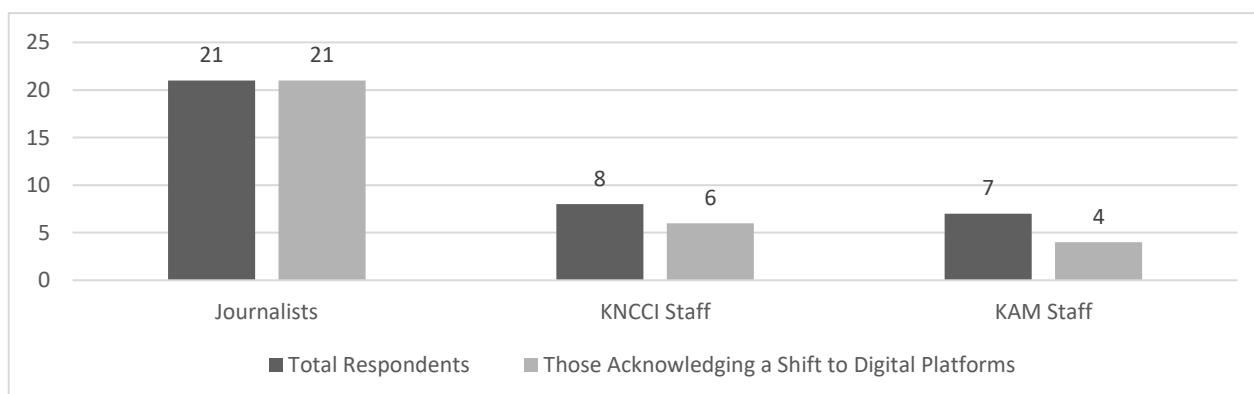


Figure 1: Respondents Who Had Observed Business Reporting's Shift to New Media

The respondents consistently acknowledged that audience preferences directly influence both platform choice and content style. Analytics from digital platforms guide editorial decisions on which business stories are prioritized for online or print publication. This aligns with research indicating that digital readership metrics, such as page views and social media shares, increasingly shape newsroom agendas (Conill & Tandoc, 2018). In this way, audience feedback loops contribute to shaping not only which topics are covered but also how they are framed and distributed across multiple platforms.

Yet audience literacy and trust remain underexplored dimensions of this transformation. Evidence from Kenyan media dialogues shows that AI-generated content risks undermining credibility if audiences cannot distinguish between human-verified and machine-generated reporting (Omwoyo, 2024). Editors from *The Standard* and *Tuko.com* stress that transparency and clear labeling of AI-assisted stories are essential to retain reader trust. These concerns underscore that socio-economic empowerment through journalism is not only about newsroom adoption of technology but also about ensuring that audiences are equipped to interpret and critically engage with evolving formats of news.

The findings align with Loiko (2011) and Newman (2021), who discuss the evolving impact of new media and remote work on business journalism. The strong emphasis on modern themes such as innovation and environmental issues reflects this shift. Furthermore, increased freelance and remote work are enhancing newsroom productivity and collaboration, in line with industry trends (Gegerfelt & Sandström, 2023; Sharra, 2023).

4.3.2 Newsroom Convergence

Seventeen of the journalists, 5 KNCCI staff, and 4 KAM staff acknowledged the presence of newsroom convergence and its impacts. Figure 2 represents these figures against the total number of respondents. However, concerns were raised by 14 journalists regarding the dilution of specialized expertise. Nine of the respondents from KNCCI and KAM acknowledged having observed the newsroom convergence trend.

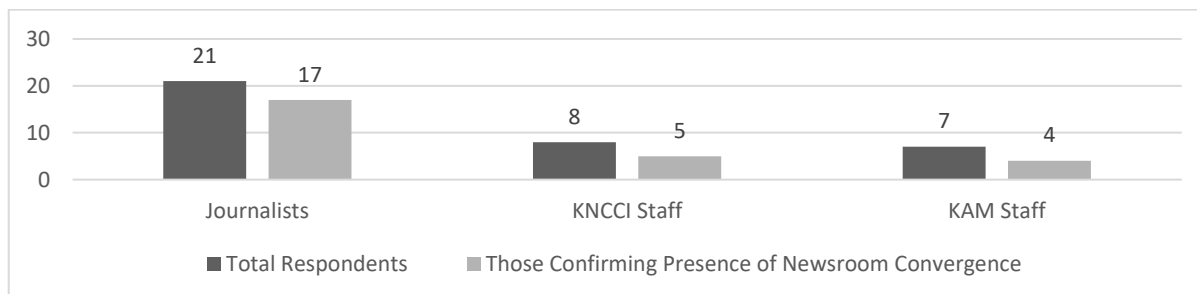


Figure 2: Respondents Who Affirmed the Presence of the Newsroom Convergence Trend

One of the journalists emphasized, *"Collaboration among journalists from different departments has improved resource utilization, but we must ensure that quality and specialization are not compromised."* Newsroom convergence was found to facilitate shared resources and collaborative work. As stated by one of them, *"The rise of citizen journalism, newsroom convergence, data journalism, artificial intelligence, and shifts towards subscription models are reshaping the landscape."* A member of KNCCI said, *"Journalists are increasingly working across various platforms, impacting the depth of business coverage."*

Newsroom convergence enhances the effective use of resources for media houses and responsiveness to changing dynamics. By leveraging synergies between different media formats, newspapers can deliver comprehensive and engaging coverage of economic developments to a larger audience.

There is a clear consensus with other research findings on the impact of newsroom convergence in transforming journalism practices globally. Technological advancements have led to a convergence trend where traditional distinctions between technologies, products, locations, and teams are blurred (Gicobi, 2018; Ruth, 2023). This convergence is evident in digital distribution and content creation processes, leading to streamlined operations and cost efficiencies for media owners. Additionally, there is a shift towards multi-platform content

dissemination through websites and social media, necessitating journalists to adopt versatile roles that span various media formats, similar to those identified in the current study.

4.3.3 Reliance on Data in Reporting

As shown in Table 2, data were incorporated into 19 out of 26 articles in *The Business Daily* newspaper. *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers also included data in 16 out of 23 and 12 out of 26 articles, respectively. This illustrates different levels of data integration among the three newspapers, with *The Business Daily* showing the highest frequency, followed by *The Daily Nation* and then *The Standard*. Overall, these newspapers rely on data from government agencies, financial institutions, and industry reports to support their reporting and analysis.

Table 2: Numbers of Stories Containing Data in the Sampled Newspaper Issues

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard
Stories Containing Data	Numbers (7), figures in percentages (6), figures in millions (6).	Data in numbers (3), percentages (3), and currencies (10).	Figures (6), percentages (6),

Nineteen out of twenty-one journalists emphasized their use of data in reports, while the remaining two highlighted the importance of data in enhancing, analyzing, and presenting their findings. They argued that this approach had significantly contributed to more reliable and insightful reporting. One journalist highlighted, "*Data journalism allows us to provide evidence-based analysis and enrich our storytelling, improving the quality and depth of our reporting.*"

Eight of the respondents from KNCCI and KAM acknowledged witnessing reliance on data in Kenya's print business reports. The respondents pointed to an increased demand for data-driven stories to demonstrate the societal need for factual reporting.

The integration of data into reporting enhances the credibility and depth of analysis, enabling newspapers to provide fact-based insights into economic trends, market dynamics, and policy implications. As noted by Aimiomode et al. (2023), readers make informed decisions and understand the underlying forces shaping the economy when business journalism empowers them with clear, transparent, and data-driven economic information.

Additionally, two journalists mentioned the use of transcription, incorporating multimedia content from other media sources into their reporting, making financial information more accessible to a diverse audience (Dienste, 2023). This indicates a new trend in business journalism practices.

Aligned with other researchers, the use of data in Kenyan newspapers has emphasized a global trend in which data journalism is increasingly seen as essential for enhancing the depth and accuracy of business stories (Newman et al., 2021; Oriedo, 2020). Data-driven approaches help journalists provide evidence-based analyses and enrich storytelling, thereby improving the quality of reporting (Cheruiyot & Ferrer-Conill, 2018; Munoriyarwa, 2020). However, there are regional variations in its adoption and perception, as seen in cases from South Africa, Zambia, and Tanzania, where factors such as access to technology and skills influence its practice (Gondwe & White, 2021).

4.3.4 Artificial Intelligence

Only 6 out of 21 journalists acknowledged that Artificial Intelligence (AI) had the potential to streamline news production processes and improve information verification. "*AI assists us in research, information verification, and content creation, enabling us to deliver news more efficiently and accurately,*" highlighted one of *The Standard*'s business journalists. However, ethical considerations were raised by 13 journalists regarding data

privacy and algorithmic bias. Some KNCCI and KAM respondents (6 out of 15) acknowledged that Artificial Intelligence was affecting business reporting in Kenyan newspapers.

Journalists in Kenya continue to grapple with ethical challenges in data management, making responsible collection and use of information essential. Effective navigation of these issues shapes what topics gain prominence in line with agenda-setting theory and influences how stories are framed for the public (Ireru et al., 2018). Although artificial intelligence is recognized for its potential to support storytelling, most journalists still view its impact on media platforms as limited and evolving. This finding aligns with Aissani et al. (2023), who note that AI's influence remains more potential than fully realized. The gradual adoption of AI and data journalism nonetheless reflects a growing commitment to using innovative tools to improve reporting quality and depth, signaling a cautious but significant shift in journalistic practice.

While AI tools and data journalism are increasingly visible in Kenyan newsrooms in such tasks as audience engagement, data visualization, transcription, and social media analytics, the adoption remains heavily constrained by management buy-in, costs, technical capacity, clarity of newsroom use cases, and organizational structures. Studies of *BBC-Africa* and *Radio Africa Group* show that lack of quality data, ethical concerns, and the unpredictable impact of automation further limit AI's meaningful integration in newsroom workflows (Kioko, Booker, Chege, & Kimweli, 2022). Comparative evidence from Tanzania, Ghana, and South Africa confirms similar bottlenecks, from infrastructure deficits to linguistic limitations and ethical dilemmas, indicating that Kenya's challenges are emblematic of broader, persistent constraints across the continent (Ishengoma & Magolanga, 2025; Ogola, 2023).

Similar to Kothari & Cruikshank's (2022) findings, the current study found that AI has the potential to enhance news production processes by improving information verification and facilitating more efficient content creation. This is evident from the acknowledgment by journalists that AI assists in research and content creation, thereby influencing the efficiency and accuracy of news delivery. Moreover, ethical concerns arising in this study were also echoed by Kothari & Cruikshank (2022). These concerns highlight a common challenge faced by journalists globally in balancing technological advancements with ethical considerations in journalism practice.

However, there are notable disagreements regarding the extent of AI's current influence on media platforms. While the research findings suggest a cautious optimism among journalists about AI's impact on storytelling and journalism innovations, other researchers indicate a more advanced integration of AI in global media institutions, particularly in developed countries like the U.S. and China (Dejarnette, 2016; Kothari & Cruikshank, 2022). This finding suggests that AI adoption and its practical application in media platforms are more advanced globally compared to the perceptions and practices observed among Kenyan journalists and media professionals.

4.3.5 Business Models

As seen in Figure 3, all the business journalists who responded revealed that the industry was struggling with advertising and thus was exploring alternative revenues such as subscriptions, direct sales, and new media monetization. Similarly, all KNCCI and KAM respondents acknowledged the presence of challenges in funding traditional newspaper institutions.

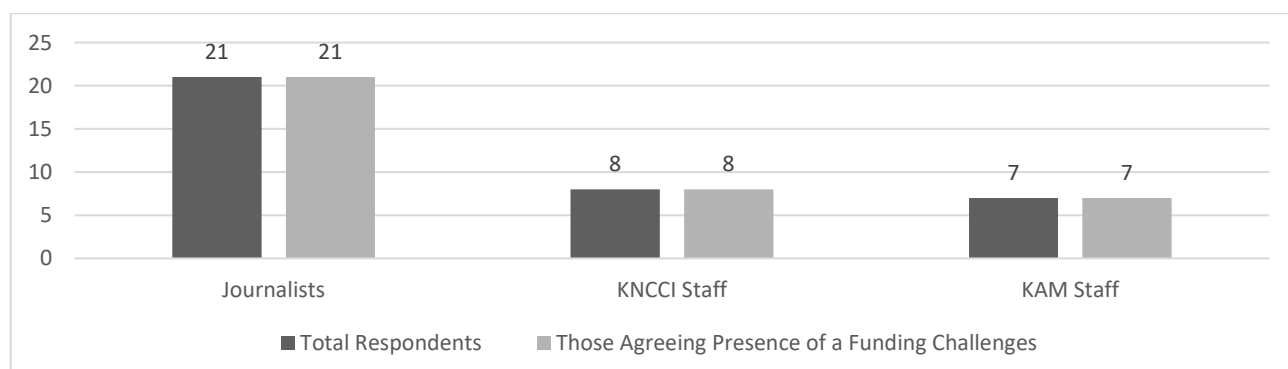


Figure 3: Respondents in Agreement with Challenges in the Advertising Funding Model

One journalist from *The Business Daily* indicated that the paper's revenue stability is bolstered by "subscription, digital monetization, and direct sales." Similarly, a journalist from *The Standard* mentioned, "*We have ventured into subscription and new media monetization to reduce our reliance on traditional advertising.*" Another noted that "*The Daily Nation employs subscriptions, direct sales, and digital media partnerships to enhance revenue.*" These strategies reflect the shift towards sustainability in business journalism (Nyarko, 2023).

Globally, media organizations face similar revenue challenges and are adopting alternative models. Major outlets such as The New York Times, The Guardian, The Australian, and Le Monde have increasingly turned to subscription models, direct sales, and digital monetization to counteract declining advertising revenues (Newman, 2024). This trend highlights a broader industry shift towards leveraging reader support and innovative digital strategies for financial stability.

The research indicates that Kenyan newspapers are following global trends by exploring subscriptions, direct sales, and digital monetization as revenue alternatives (Newman, 2024). However, unlike their Western counterparts, Kenyan newspapers continue to rely heavily on government and political advertising. While Newman (2021) emphasizes the shift toward subscriptions in Western media, Kenyan newspapers face different challenges, such as less developed digital monetization models and persistent reliance on traditional advertising.

Contrary to Knowles, Phillips, and Lidberg's (2015) findings, which suggest that funding pressures impair investigative journalism quality, this research did not specifically address the impact of financial constraints on investigative practices in Kenyan business journalism. Instead, the focus was on the adoption of alternative revenue sources, with e-commerce and live events also explored as potential revenue streams (Vara-Miguel et al., 2021).

The viability of subscription and digital monetization in Kenya must be assessed against the country's economic realities. Unlike Western markets, where large middle classes sustain paywalls, most Kenyan audiences consume free news through mobile phones and social media. Evidence from Ghana and Nigeria shows that while initiatives such as events, branded content, and partnerships can generate revenue, subscription models alone rarely succeed in low-income settings (Cagé, 2015; Nyarko, 2023). For Kenyan business journalism, financial stability is more likely to come from hybrid approaches that combine advertising with digital partnerships, events, and e-commerce rather than replicating Western subscription models.

4.4 Theoretical reflections

The prominence of themes such as innovation, green energy, and technological transformation across all three newspapers illustrates the agenda-setting function of business journalism. By repeatedly foregrounding these issues, newspapers may shape audience perceptions of what constitutes the most pressing economic priorities, thereby influencing both public discourse and potential policy focus in Kenya's economic development agenda.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

Kenyan newspapers now integrate print and digital platforms seamlessly, with most print articles also published online. Business coverage increasingly emphasizes themes such as innovation, technology, sustainability, and green energy, reflecting a shift toward modern reporting priorities. Journalists rely on multimedia tools to engage audiences and explain market trends, regulatory changes, and corporate developments, although challenges around misinformation and ethical standards remain significant.

Newsroom convergence is evident, allowing newspapers to share resources and collaborate effectively. This trend aligns with global practices in which technological advancements blur traditional media boundaries, leading to more efficient operations and cost savings.

Data journalism is prevalent, with *The Business Daily* leading in data-driven articles, followed by *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. The use of data enhances reporting reliability and storytelling, mirroring global trends

in evidence-based journalism.

AI is recognized for its potential to streamline news production and improve accuracy, though concerns about data privacy and algorithmic bias are noted. While AI's impact on Kenyan journalism is still emerging, its benefits are acknowledged.

Kenyan newspapers are exploring alternative revenue models such as subscriptions, direct sales, and digital monetization. This shift aims to achieve financial stability and editorial independence, reflecting a global trend in which major newspapers increasingly rely on subscription models to compensate for reduced ad income.

5.2 Conclusion

Business journalism in Kenya is undergoing major transformation, shaped by digital integration, newsroom convergence, greater reliance on data, adoption of AI, and shifting revenue models. Newspapers are adapting to new technologies and audience expectations, which has improved storytelling, collaboration, and financial experimentation. Yet critical challenges remain, including protecting specialized expertise, ensuring ethical use of AI, and developing sustainable revenue strategies to secure the long-term growth and credibility of the sector.

The integration of digital platforms with print marks a transformative shift that requires journalists to develop skills in multimedia storytelling and data-driven reporting. This transition calls for continuous professional development and stronger collaboration within newsrooms. The use of AI and the testing of new revenue streams through subscriptions and digital monetization show how Kenyan newspapers are adapting to both technological change and financial pressures. Their repeated emphasis on innovation and sustainability reinforces agenda-setting theory by demonstrating how business journalism influences public perceptions of economic priorities.

Kenya's trajectory in integrating AI and data journalism mirrors broader African experiences. Tanzanian newsrooms use AI mainly for translation, transcription, and fact-checking, but lack strong infrastructure and supportive policies (Ishengoma & Magolanga, 2025). South African and Ghanaian journalists have adopted AI tools informally for research and editing, yet face cost and ethical barriers that stall institutional uptake (Ogola, 2023). By situating Kenyan developments alongside these peers, it becomes evident that while Kenya leads in mobile-driven digital innovation, it lags in structured adoption of AI and advanced data journalism, reflecting a continental pattern of innovation constrained by resources and governance frameworks.

5.3 Recommendations for the Study

To address the evolving landscape of business journalism in Kenyan newspapers and enhance its effectiveness, several recommendations are proposed to improve journalistic practices, leverage new technologies, and ensure financial sustainability.

1. Advance professional skills by investing in training and innovation to leverage technology by integrating multimedia storytelling and ethical use of AI.
2. Diversify revenue streams by implementing innovative revenue models, such as subscriptions and digital monetization, to achieve financial sustainability and, consequently, editorial independence.

5.4 Recommendations for further research

The researcher identified gaps that could be filled for a deeper understanding of the field. The following recommendations are proposed for further studies:

1. Conduct comparative studies on how various countries' business journalists approach emerging trends in their reporting.
2. Explore the successes and challenges of alternative funding models for declining advertising in the field of business journalism in Kenya.

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