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The influence of social media use in journalism practices of Mwananchi communications limited

Getrude Thadayo ^{1*}, Camilius Nikata ², Francis Ng'atigwa ³

¹⁻³ Department of Journalism and Mass Communication St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), Tanzania

* Corresponding Author: **Getrude Thadayo**

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Abstract

This study explored *The Influence of Social Media Use in Journalism Practices of Mwananchi Communications Limited*. The objective of the study was to find the influence of social media usage in journalism practices of Mwananchi Communications Limited in Tanzania. The research question was: How does the usage of social media influence journalism practices of Mwananchi Communications Limited in Tanzania? Qualitative research approach and case study research design were employed in the study. The study used purposive sampling technique to obtain a sample size of nine respondents. Data were collected through open-ended face-to-face and telephone interviews. The findings revealed that social media serves as a vital tool for real-timenews updates, broader audience engagement, and enhanced storytelling through multimedia integration. The results also raised concerns related to the spread of misinformation, erosion of journalistic standards, and increased pressure on journalists to produce content rapidly. The study recommends that there is need need for adaptive strategies in journalism education and professional practice to harness the benefits of social media, while mitigating its adverse effects.

Keywords: Influence, Social Media, Journalism Practices, Print Media

1. Introduction

Over the past ten years, Tanzania has seen an exponential growth in the use of social media platforms like Facebook, X, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Tanzania's internet penetration rate has been rising steadily, according to a report by the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority TCRA (2023) ^[32]. A sizable fraction of the population primarily uses mobile devices to access internet. The increased use of social media and the internet has democratized the flow of information, allowing people to take an active role in the production and distribution of news.

Social media is growing and developing very fast every day, and its features allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Mazurek, 2018) ^[12]. Even the way journalists perceive social media in their daily lives changes daily. The improvement of social media affects how journalists think about the influence of social media because, before the introduction and use of social media in Tanzania, journalists through newspaper publications, television, and radio programs was the only way that information could be collected and spread.

Currently, journalists face competition from individuals who collect different information and share it through their social media pages and, at times, are faster in news delivery and spread than journalists.

Journalists in Tanzania encounter tensions and contradictions when it comes to utilizing social media just as other journalists around the world this is because there have been significant developments in journalism mainly due to advancements of technology, tools and systems in the media industry, such as computers and advanced media, primarily social media (Weaver & Willnat, 2016) ^[37], which has also resulted of constraints imposed by the government on freedom of speech. While social media provides an avenue for journalists to disseminate information and interact with the public, there are apprehensions regarding

ensorship, intimidation, and monitoring. The government is known to implement measures and rules that curtail online freedom, prompting journalists to practice self-censorship to evade consequences. As a result, journalists in Tanzania must weigh the benefits of using social media in their practices against the potential hazards of government interference and supervision.

The development of Tanzanian journalism began in the 1980s when the press was an essential sounding board for liberalization, development, and democracy. Since then, Tanzania's media industry has grown significantly in the past twenty years (African Centre for Media Excellence, 2022) ^[1]. On the other hand, social media's presence has been overwhelming worldwide and undeniably in Tanzania (Okafor & Okaye, 2014) ^[24]. Due to the advancement of technology and social media, it has been inevitable for journalists in Tanzania to use social media in their journalistic practices. They use Facebook, WhatsApp, and X to contact sources and perform research for a story (Wanda & Gondwe, 2020) ^[35].

Despite social media's significant involvement in journalism, the critical aspect of understanding journalists' views and opinions of its impact must be addressed. It is essential to know journalists' views and opinions because social media has changed how journalists work (Hermans & Vergeer, 2009) ^[10] also because social media is a foreign aspect that, when introduced to the existing environment of Tanzania, must raise some challenges and opportunities.

Therefore, this study the Influence of Social Media Use in Journalism Practices of Mwananchi Communications Limited in Tanzania. To understand journalists' views and opinions on the influence of social media, it is necessary to know how Tanzanian journalists use and adapt social media, taking into consideration the impact of social media in their practice; which social media platforms are used the most for journalism; and how journalists use social media.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The African Context of Social Media and Journalism

In Africa, social media have fostered new opportunities for participatory journalism, but they also pose unique challenges shaped by regulatory, social, and economic factors. African journalism has traditionally been influenced by foreign media standards, limiting the development of indigenous journalistic practices (Nyamnjoh, 2015) ^[23]. While social media offer African journalists a platform to engage with audiences and share localized narratives, they have also led to heightened regulation. In Tanzania, for instance, the Cybercrime Act (2015) and Online Media Regulations (2020) were established to curb misinformation and protect online integrity, but also impose strict controls on journalistic freedom (African Centre for Media Excellence, 2022) ^[1]. Such regulations, while addressing the spread of false information, can limit journalistic autonomy, creating an environment where self-censorship is prevalent.

Economic pressures in the African media industry further complicate social media's role in journalism. Wasserman (2018) ^[36] explains that as traditional revenue models, such as print advertising, decline, media outlets are increasingly reliant on digital advertising. This shift, while necessary for financial sustainability, often pushes journalists to prioritize content that garners high engagement, such as sensational or clickbait articles. In addition, job insecurity is a growing issue as media organizations are forced to cut costs, often by

reducing staff or outsourcing tasks. The constant connectivity demanded by social media, coupled with economic instability, can lead to journalist burnout and mental health challenges. Studies by Chen and Pain (2017) ^[6] point out that the exposure to traumatic content, online harassment, and the relentless pace of social media reporting contribute to chronic stress, anxiety, and burnout among African journalists. With limited institutional support, journalists often face these mental health challenges alone, further complicating the profession's demands.

The introduction of social media into journalism in Africa and Tanzania has revolutionized information dissemination and journalistic practices, offering new avenues for reporting, audience engagement, and participatory journalism. However, these changes come with both opportunities and challenges, influenced by socioeconomic, regulatory, and cultural factors. Social media's widespread adoption in Africa has been driven by the increasing availability of mobile technology and internet access, albeit unevenly distributed across the continent (Nyamnjoh, 2015) ^[23]. With mobile penetration rates rising, social platforms have become critical tools for journalists to reach larger audiences and foster citizen engagement in reporting (Bosch, 2017) ^[4]. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have enabled journalists to provide real-time news updates and engage directly with audiences, enhancing the immediacy and interactivity of news dissemination. As Mhando (2021) ^[18] notes, this shift has helped democratize news by breaking down traditional barriers that limited access to information, especially for remote or marginalized communities.

In Tanzania, social media have been particularly transformative, reshaping how news is gathered, produced, and shared. The immediacy of social media allows Tanzanian journalists to cover breaking news and respond to ongoing events faster than through traditional outlets. Mhando (2021) ^[18] emphasizes that Tanzanian media outlets now leverage social media to circulate content more widely and involve the public in news production. For instance, journalists can use platforms like Twitter to crowdsource information, verify stories, and engage in real-time discussions with audiences, fostering a participatory approach to journalism (Mare, 2014) ^[17].

Economic factors further influence the use of social media in Tanzanian journalism. As traditional revenue streams decline, many media organizations rely on digital advertising, pushing journalists to prioritize engagement-driven content. Wasserman (2018) ^[36] argues that this economic pressure can incentivize sensationalism or "clickbait" content, undermining the credibility of journalistic standards. Moreover, the lack of financial and institutional support, particularly for mental health, adds stress to journalists constantly connected to social media, leading to burnout and emotional strain (Chen & Pain, 2017) ^[6].

In brief, while social media have introduced powerful tools for enhancing the reach, speed, and inclusivity of journalism in Tanzania and Africa more broadly; these benefits are tempered by regulatory, economic, and professional challenges. The evolving media landscape continues to push African journalists to adapt, balancing opportunities for democratic engagement with the need to uphold journalistic integrity.

2.2 Journalism Transformation

The integration of social media into journalism has

transformed news production, distribution, and audience engagement. Mhando (2021) ^[18, 19] explains that social media enables journalists to receive and share real-time news updates, which accelerates the news cycle but often at the cost of accuracy. Traditional journalistic work flows characterized by rigorous fact-checking, editing, and source validation have been bypassed in favor of immediacy, as journalists race to share news before competitors. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook offer unique features for quick dissemination; hashtags on Twitter, for instance, allow journalists to tap into trending topics, rapidly reaching broad audiences (Kreiss & McGregor, 2018; Molyneux & Holton, 2019) ^[13, 20].

Despite these benefits, the reliance on social media for news gathering has led to significant challenges in maintaining journalistic integrity. As Vosoughi and Aral (2018) ^[33] argue, misinformation spreads more rapidly on social media than in traditional news outlets, largely due to the lack of structured editorial processes on these platforms. This trend has fostered an environment where misinformation and sensationalist stories gain traction. Mare (2014) ^[17] highlights that the pursuit of "likes," shares, and clicks has led some journalists to compromise on accuracy, prioritizing engagement-driven content over fact-based reporting. Such engagement metrics, while beneficial for expanding reach, can encourage sensationalism and undermine journalistic credibility.

One of the most notable transformations has been in news production and reporting speed. Social media enables Tanzanian journalists to provide real-time updates and immediate reporting, challenging the traditional news cycle that relies on daily or hourly updates. Mhando (2021) ^[18, 19] explains that this shift allows media houses to deliver breaking news more swiftly and to a broader audience. Social media also facilitates direct communication with the public, allowing journalists to crowdsource information and gain diverse perspectives on news stories. Platforms like Twitter enable media houses to follow trending topics through hashtags, making it easier to monitor public discourse and emerging issues (Molyneux & Holton, 2019) ^[20].

Audience engagement is another area where social media has reshaped journalistic practices in Tanzanian media houses. By providing interactive platforms, social media allows audiences to comment on, share, and contribute to news stories. This participatory model of journalism gives the public a more active role in the news-making process, a shift that increases engagement and fosters a sense of community between journalists and audiences (Mutsvairo & Bebawi, 2019) ^[21]. As noted by Lema (2022), social media has democratized journalism by encouraging the active involvement of audiences in shaping content and influencing editorial decisions.

However, this rapid news dissemination also poses challenges regarding content verification and credibility. Traditional journalism relies on rigorous editorial processes to ensure accuracy, but social media-driven journalism often prioritizes speed over verification. The spread of unverified information can lead to misinformation, impacting the public's trust in media institutions. Vosoughi and Aral (2018) ^[33] warn that social media platforms, by their design, encourage rapid sharing, which can amplify unverified stories, sometimes leading to public confusion. Consequently, Tanzanian journalists are now tasked with balancing the need for immediacy with their commitment to accuracy, a shift that has heightened the importance of media literacy within newsrooms (Mhando, 2021) ^[18, 19].

Furthermore, social media has introduced economic changes for Tanzanian media houses. With the decline of traditional revenue streams, media organizations have increasingly relied on digital advertising and social media engagement to generate income. This economic pressure often incentivizes the production of engagement-driven content, including sensational or "clickbait" articles (Wasserman, 2018) ^[36]. As a result, journalists may feel compelled to prioritize content that garners attention over material that upholds journalistic rigor, which can affect the perceived integrity of journalism as a profession. Regulatory challenges have also emerged as social media grows within Tanzanian journalism. Tanzania's Cybercrime Act (2015) and Online Media Regulations (2020) impose strict controls on digital content, aiming to curb misinformation and maintain social order. While these regulations promote accountability, they also risk inhibiting journalistic freedom and encouraging self-censorship within media houses (African Centre for Media Excellence, 2022) ^[1]. These regulatory frameworks illustrate the complex balance Tanzanian journalists must strike between complying with government standards and fulfilling their ethical duty to report truthfully.

2.3. Journalistic Professionalism and Public Perception

Social media has reshaped public perception of journalistic professionalism, often challenging the traditional roles and boundaries expected of journalists. Interacting directly with audiences on social platforms can foster a sense of connection and accessibility, yet it often diminishes professional image in the eyes of the audience. As noted in the expectancy violation theory by Lee (2015), audiences expect journalists to maintain a degree of objectivity and distance. Engaging in casual conversations or "liking" posts may feel personable, but it can violate these professional boundaries, leading audiences to perceive journalists as less serious in their roles. Bosch (2017) ^[4] further argues that the informal tone common to social media platforms can detract from journalists' credibility, as audiences may struggle to differentiate personal posts from professional reporting.

The intermingling of personal and professional identities on social media also raises questions about objectivity and impartiality. Many journalists use personal accounts for professional purposes, blurring lines that were once clearly drawn (Nyabuga & Booker, 2013). Without strict boundaries, personal biases or off-the-record opinions can inadvertently shape public perception of a journalist's professionalism. This blending not only affects how journalists are perceived but can lead to ethical dilemmas if personal views influence professional reporting.

Another factor influencing professionalism is the risk of compromised journalistic objectivity due to personal and public identities blending on social platforms. Bosch (2017) ^[4] argues that journalists' active use of social media can result in a mix of personal viewpoints with professional responsibilities, which might lead to biases or perceived conflicts of interest. This is particularly evident when journalists discuss personal matters or express opinions on social media, where their roles as both private citizens and professionals can clash. This lack of separation can impact how audiences perceive journalists' neutrality and professionalism, potentially leading to scepticism about their reporting objectivity (Bosch, 2017) ^[4].

The immediacy and interactive features of social media also influence audience perceptions. Social media requires a faster

response time and encourages a continuous flow of content, sometimes at the cost of thorough fact-checking and investigative depth. According to Mutsvairo and Bebawi (2019) ^[21], this shift toward real-time reporting on social media can pressure journalists to prioritize engagement over accuracy, which may lead audiences to question the reliability of the information provided. Consequently, the audience's perception of professionalism in journalism can suffer, as the push for speed on social platforms can result in errors and hasty reporting, thus affecting journalistic credibility.

Additionally, the pursuit of online visibility and audience engagement has introduced the challenge of "clickbait" journalism, where sensationalist or exaggerated headlines are used to attract clicks and shares. This trend, driven by social media algorithms that prioritize engagement, often prompts journalists to craft stories with the potential to go viral rather than stories that uphold traditional standards of rigor and impartiality. Vosoughi and Aral (2018) ^[33] highlight that the quick spread of sensational content on social media platforms can lead to a perception that journalists are more concerned with viewership metrics than with accurate and fair reporting. This perception, in turn, affects how audiences judge journalists' professional ethics and integrity.

The blending of personal and professional identities, the pressure for real-time updates, and the lure of engagement-driven content have contributed to a complex landscape where journalistic professionalism is constantly negotiated. As social media continues to shape journalism, media organizations must address these dynamics to maintain public trust and uphold the integrity of the profession.

3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, focusing on nine journalists selected through purposive sampling to gather in-depth insights into their experiences. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, which facilitated a rich understanding of how social media influences editorial processes and journalistic ethics. The study emphasizes the validity and reliability of findings, ensuring the research reflects the complexities of contemporary journalism in Tanzania. Data analysis utilized qualitative content analysis, categorizing interview responses into themes to effectively describe the phenomenon under study. By prioritizing the journalists' perspectives, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by social media in journalism. This methodological framework enhances the overall understanding of the evolving landscape of print media within Tanzania's digital context, providing a foundation for future research and practical applications in the field. This study is guided by the Technology Innovation Theory, developed by Everett M. Rogers in 1962, explains how new technologies are adopted within societies through stages, moving from innovators and early adopters to the early majority, late majority, and laggards. According to Rogers, adoption is influenced by factors such as usefulness, compatibility, ease of use, trialability, and visibility of results, with social networks playing a crucial role in shaping public opinion and promoting adoption (Rogers, 2003). Additionally, the theory aids in identifying the role of influencers and early adopters, who might drive social media's integration in journalism by demonstrating its utility

in real-time reporting, audience engagement, and information dissemination (Westland, 2017).

4. Findings

The findings of this study indicate that journalists at MCL, have admitted that social media has been very influential in their practices. Journalists explain that the influence of social media within their media house is multifaceted, where 67% of the interviewed journalists recognized and explained on the significant advantages and 33% of the interviewed journalists explained the considerable challenges of social media in journalism practices. By leveraging the opportunities for engagement, innovation, and professional growth while addressing the ethical and practical issues, MCL journalists have enhanced their reporting and better serve their audience. Continuous training and a strong focus on journalistic standards have been addressed as crucial in navigating the evolving media landscape.

The findings of the study show that the positive influence of social media among MCL journalists is wider reach meaning reaching all regions and villages in Tanzania that have access to internet. Journalists at MCL highlighted how social media allows them to reach remote areas and villages in Tanzania, which were previously inaccessible through physical newspapers and even worldwide coverage where social media enables MCL to extend its audience beyond national borders, providing worldwide coverage and enhancing the company's influence on a global scale and by reaching a broader audience, MCL has increased its readership and influence, making it a significant player in both local and international news.

MCL journalists explained how social media has been a very potential source of news tips. Social media has become a very valuable tool for journalists, offering a dynamic and interactive platform for gathering news tips and staying updated with current events. For Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) journalists, social media provides a rich source of news tips, contributing to more timely and diverse news reporting. They explained how they get news tips from other official and verified social media platforms like Ikulu Mawasiliano and Habari Maelezo ensuring credibility and reliability.

The findings also show that social media has also opened new revenue streams for MCL, including selling exclusive news where MCL offers exclusive content to subscribers who pay a monthly fee. These contents include premium news articles or special reports and offering advertising platforms on social media rather than just relying on funds from selling the physical newspapers and advertisements in their newspapers. Companies pay MCL to promote their products or services through posts, videos, or stories to be posted in MCL social media pages.

From the findings, social media allows MCL journalists to provide timely updates and engage with their audience in real time, offering instant news coverage that traditional media cannot match. Also, social media platforms facilitate journalists to have direct interaction with the public, allowing them to engage with their audience and receive immediate feedback. MCL has improved their interaction with their clients and the public at large through taking comments from Facebook, Instagram and X pages and currently Mwananchi has developed the X Space which is a live platform to integrate leaders, potential speakers and the general public to

discuss about different socio- economic and political matters.

MCL journalists explained how social media supports multimedia integration, allowing them to enhance their stories with videos, photos, and audio, making news more engaging and accessible. By taking into account the varied preferences of the audience, this multifaceted approach makes complex stories more approachable and captivating. Multimedia components, such as live video coverage of events, infographics for data visualization, and audio for in-person interviews, have enhanced the overall narrative by adding depth and context that text alone or the newspapers cannot provide.

MCL journalists have also noticed a notable drop in traditional newspaper sales, which they attribute to social media's ascent to prominence as a news source. News is instantly available and free on social media platforms. It is curated by algorithms based on user preferences and is specific to their interests. Users are finding this personalized, real-time news experience more appealing because it is more convenient and engaging than traditional newspapers. Because they can now participate in online forums and exchange ideas with others while simultaneously receiving real-time news updates, a growing number of readers are turning away from print media in favor of digital alternatives. This trend is further accelerated by the move to mobile devices for news consumption, which results in a declining of traditional newspaper sales in MCL.

Furthermore, the findings show that due to the 24/7 nature of social media MCL journalists have to be constantly be active on social media platforms to stay informed and updated on any news tip or event. Also, the need for journalists to constantly be online may result to potential addiction because the journalists must constantly monitor and engage with platforms to stay informed about breaking news and emerging trends. This continuous demand for attention means that journalists are often required to be online outside of regular working hours, leading to an always on work culture. The pressure to remain vigilant and responsive to news tips and events not only increases the likelihood of burnout but also raises concerns about potential addiction to social media. This addiction stems from the need to perpetually check updates and interact with audiences, which can blur the boundaries between professional responsibilities and personal life, ultimately impacting mental health and well-being.

According to the respondents of this research, social media algorithms frequently favor content that generates high interaction which may include sensational or misleading headlines and prioritize engagement over accuracy, they contribute to the spread of misinformation and sensationalism in journalism. False news can spread quickly on social media due to the ease with which information can be shared and the laxity of fact-checking on these platforms. Furthermore, the competitive pressure on news organizations to draw attention online results in the employment of sensationalist and click bait strategies. The proliferation of false information and sensationalism in journalism is facilitated by the democratization of content creation, which also makes it possible for anyone to publish information without verification.

In using social media in their journalistic practice respondents explained how journalism relies on technology, electricity and internet and for the case of Tanzania as a

developing country there are times where this challenges journalism. Unreliable electricity, technology, and internet connectivity causes significant challenges to Mwananchi Communications Limited in the social media driven journalism era by disrupting news production and dissemination, causing delays, and limiting real-time updates. Frequent power outages and poor technological infrastructure hinder the use of advanced digital tools and high-quality multimedia content creation, while unstable internet access impedes quick information retrieval, source communication, and timely story sharing. This unreliability undermines the company's ability to maintain a robust online presence, compete effectively, and engage audiences, leading to a potential loss of readership to more reliable news sources.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study from the journalists at Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) indicate a significant influence of social media on their journalistic practices, aligning with existing literature on the topic. A majority (67%) of the respondents highlighted the advantages of social media, which include broader audience reach and engagement, while 33% acknowledging the challenges it presents. This duality reflects the broader discourse in journalism studies, where social media is recognized as a transformative force that can enhance or complicate traditional practices (Pavlik, 2013).

The positive impact of social media on audience reach is notable, particularly as MCL journalists described its capacity to connect with previously inaccessible rural areas in Tanzania. This finding is supported by research indicating that social media platforms serve as critical tools for news dissemination, allowing media organizations to expand their reach beyond geographic constraints (Pew Research Center, 2021). MCL's ability to attract international audiences underscores social media's role in amplifying local journalism to a global scale (Lilleker *et al.*, 2019). This suggests that MCL's adaptation to digital platforms not only enhances local engagement but also elevates its status in the global news arena.

The findings further highlight social media as a valuable source of news tips, which is consistent with studies suggesting that social media can facilitate faster news gathering and diverse reporting (Hermida, 2010). The MCL journalists emphasized the importance of platforms like Habari Maelezo and Ikulu Mawasiliano for credible news sourcing. This reflects the growing trend among journalists to utilize social media for real-time information, enhancing the timeliness and relevance of their reporting (Cohen, 2021). Social media has opened new revenue streams for MCL, such as subscription-based exclusive content and advertising. This adaptation aligns with findings from other studies that suggest media organizations are increasingly seeking innovative revenue models in response to declining print sales (Carlson, 2017). This innovation is essential for sustainability in the digital era, where traditional revenue models have been disrupted. In Tanzania most media houses depend on Government advertisements for revenue but MCL's innovation of premium content selling has been a game changer for thinking of alternative revenue streams for media houses.

MCL journalists noted that social media allows for enhanced multimedia storytelling, making news more engaging and accessible. This finding is consistent with literature

emphasizing the importance of multimedia in contemporary journalism to cater to diverse audience preferences (Beckett & Deuze, 2016) ^[2]. As one journalist articulated, “Social media has been very integrative unlike the newspapers which do not give room for videos and voices.” The ability to integrate various media formats not only enriches storytelling but also fosters audience connection and retention.

While the advantages of social media are evident, the challenges it presents cannot be overlooked. A notable decline in traditional newspaper sales was attributed to the rise of social media, corroborating findings from previous research that highlights a shift in audience behaviour toward digital consumption (Goyanes, 2020) ^[9]. In MCL social media has led to a drastic decrease in traditional newspapers sales, there has been a decrease of 60,000 copies within eight years. This shift necessitates that traditional media adapt to retain their audience.

Furthermore, the pressure to remain constantly active on social media raises concerns about journalist burnout and potential addiction. The findings echo previous studies suggesting that the 24/7 nature of digital journalism can lead to unhealthy work-life boundaries and mental health challenges among journalists (Binns, 2018) ^[3]. As MCL journalists navigate the demands of digital engagement, strategies for self-care and sustainable practices become increasingly important.

The issue of misinformation and sensationalism also emerged prominently in the findings. Journalists expressed concerns about social media algorithms favouring engaging content over accuracy, leading to the proliferation of misleading information. This aligns with studies highlighting the challenges of maintaining journalistic integrity in the age of social media, where the speed of information dissemination often trumps verification (Tandoc *et al.*, 2018) ^[31]. This raises ethical dilemmas and necessitates that journalists remain vigilant in fact-checking and sourcing information responsibly.

Lastly, the findings reveal that the reliability of technology and internet connectivity remains a significant challenge for MCL journalists, particularly in Tanzania’s developing context. Frequent power outages and inadequate technological infrastructure hinder effective news production and dissemination. This resonates with studies indicating that technological limitations can impede the full adoption of digital journalism practices, particularly in developing regions (Waisbord, 2018) ^[34]. Addressing these infrastructural challenges is essential for harnessing the full potential of social media in journalism.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion that social media serves as a transformative tool in journalism highlights both its revolutionary potential and the inherent challenges it presents. The statistic indicating that 67% of journalists perceive advantages underscores the significant benefits of expanded reach and real-time reporting. However, the 33% who note challenges particularly around misinformation raises critical questions about the sustainability of these advantages. The tension between connectivity and ethical concerns illustrates a fundamental shift in the journalistic landscape, necessitating ongoing discussions about how to uphold integrity in the digital age.

The enhanced audience engagement facilitated by social media is a notable advantage for MCL, especially in reaching

remote areas of Tanzania. This democratization of information fosters a more informed public; however, it also necessitates that journalists engage with diverse audience segments actively. While real-time interaction is a boon for building trust, it can also lead to a pressure-filled environment where journalists may prioritize speed over accuracy, risking the quality of the information being disseminated.

MCL’s exploration of new revenue streams through social media is indicative of a larger trend within the media industry as it grapples with declining print sales. This shift is essential, as traditional advertising models become increasingly untenable. Nevertheless, the reliance on subscription-based content and targeted advertising raises questions about accessibility and equity. If these models cater primarily to wealthier audiences, they could exacerbate information inequality, leaving vulnerable populations without critical news access.

The challenges of misinformation and sensationalism revealed in the findings highlight a growing concern within the industry. The algorithms favouring engagement often compromise accuracy, leading to the spread of misleading information. This dynamic not only threatens the credibility of individual journalists but also erodes public trust in media institutions as a whole. The emphasis on vigilant fact-checking underscores the urgent need for a collective commitment to ethical journalism in an environment that often prioritizes virality over truth.

Finally, the infrastructural limitations faced by MCL, particularly in the context of Tanzania’s developing environment, expose significant barriers to fully leveraging social media. The recurrent issues of unreliable internet connectivity and power outages impede the effectiveness of digital journalism practices, suggesting that the potential of social media cannot be realized without addressing these foundational challenges. This analysis indicates that for MCL to thrive in the digital era, there must be concerted efforts to improve technological infrastructure, ensuring that all journalists have the tools needed to adapt successfully to this new media landscape.

7. Recommendations

This study recommends that MCL should prioritize regular training programs for journalists focused on ethical social media practices, misinformation prevention, and content verification. Additionally, establishing a dedicated fact-checking team or system will help ensure accuracy, mitigate misinformation, and maintain journalistic integrity. This combined approach reinforces ethical journalism and enhances MCL’s credibility in a fast-paced digital environment.

To address the decline in physical newspaper sales, MCL should expand its digital revenue options by offering special reports, and targeted advertising on social media. Developing these sustainable revenue models, including paid partnerships and sponsored live events, will help MCL capitalize on social media’s reach and support financial resilience in the digital age.

MCL should invest in upgrading digital tools, mobile reporting kits, and reliable power solutions to support journalism in areas with infrastructure challenges. Additionally, as a leading media organization, MCL can collaborate with government and international partners to advocate for better internet and power infrastructure across

Tanzania, ultimately benefiting both MCL and the broader media landscape.

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