
MEDIA INDUSTRY IN KENYA

Media is definable as any tool that stores and transmits information. It takes the forms of broadcasting, advertising, print, recording, multimedia, digital, electronic, mass and hypermedia, all present in Kenya. The media industry in Kenya dates back to 1895 with the introduction of Taveta Chronicles by Rev. Albert Stegal. In 1901, an Asian trader launched the African Standard which was later bought by two British men. It was renamed East Africa Standard and is now a daily newspaper.

Media in Kenya include FM stations, TV stations, print magazines and newspapers. There are over ninety (90) FM stations, 15 TV stations and an unknown flock of magazines and newspapers. Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) remains to be the only state corporate, with coverage across the whole country. Royal Media Services are the largest private sector followed by Nation Media Group.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT OF MEDIA

In 1998, the Kenya Corporation Act and Postal Act were created in the constitution. They gave rise to Communications Corporation of Kenya which was the regulatory body.

Later in 2013, the Media Council Act (2013) and the Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Act were assented to by President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Media Council Act (2007)

The Media Council of Kenya is an independent national institution established by the Media Act, 2007. It deals with regulation of media and conduct and discipline of journalists. It acts like the 'judiciary' of the media industry. The Media Act (2007) was formed to mainly establish the Media Council and describe its membership, functions and powers. Inside the council is a Complaints Commission that deals with media complaints.

Media Council Act (2013) and Kenya Information and Communication (Amendment) Act (2013)

This Act bore the Communication Authority of Kenya (CA) which replaced the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK). It was signed by President Uhuru Kenyatta and became effective in 2014, January. These Acts effectively silenced the media and warned the media against critical reporting and otherwise would cause a hefty fine and penalties on journalists and media houses that publishes; KES500,000 and KES2 million respectively.

Media is also regulated by the Kenya Film Classification Board which regulates the creation, possession, broadcasting, exhibition and distribution of films in Kenya. Their main roles are:

- Examination and classification of films and posters.
- Monitoring films and enforcing laws.

❖ Media

Under media, there are different forms of services offered to the public.

They include: -

➤ **ADVERTISING**

This is a fast growing industry in Kenya. it is incorporated by all forms of media such as radio advertising, T.V., newspapers, magazines, billboards and so forth. Magnate Advertising Company is the biggest in Kenya.

Online advertising has become the core for the advertising industry. Most people spend most of their time on the internet, making it easier for companies to tap markets for their goods. Kenyan bloggers are on the rise and companies are approaching them to use their platforms for advertising.

➤ **BROADCASTING**

This simply means transmitting information and communicating through videos and audios to a large mass over the same communication network. Broadcasting in Kenya uses common channels such as T.V., Radio, Social Media, and print media as newspapers.

• **TELEVISION**

Formerly known as the Voice of Kenya, KBC still remains the number one broadcasting television channel in Kenya. it has coverage across the country, and also penetrates into the East African market. KBC also remains the only government owned media house in Kenya.

Other major players in broadcasting are Citizen of Royal Media Services, NTV of Nation Media Group and KTN of the Standard Group. KTN was the first broadcasting TV station to break the monopoly of KBC.

• **RADIO**

This is the common form of media in Kenya. This is because it can be accessed by most people in the country as it is cheap; with the use of carbon batteries which are very cheap and available. Kenyan radio is broadcast from the English and Swahili languages to Vernacular and foreign languages.

➤ **PRINT MEDIA**

This is a mode of communication through the use of newspapers and magazines. It could be substituted for published media.

➤ **PUBLISHED MEDIA**

- **NEWSPAPERS**

There are three leading newspapers in Kenya namely: - The Daily Nation (Nation Media Group), The Standard (Standard Group) and People Daily (Mediamax Networks) which is a free newspaper sponsored by the President himself Uhuru Kenyatta.

- **MAGAZINES**

The leading magazines currently read in Nairobi and beyond are the Drum, True Love, Saloon and Parents magazines

➤ **SOCIAL MEDIA**

This is the trendiest and widely used form of media across the globe now. With social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Skype, Snapchat, Pinterest and WhatsApp, communication has never been easier. These social platforms have made it easier for the internet service providers to grow both financially and physically.

Most media platforms also use social media to communicate with their viewers and listeners.

Social media has its pros and cons. Where it promotes interaction of cultures, it can also cause disintegration through the spread of propaganda and hate speech. If used wisely, it also promotes businesses and job opportunities if utilized well.

ENTERTAINMENT

Apart from the aforementioned forms, the Kenyan industry also allows for movie filming and broadcasting. Kenya's Riverwood is growing daily and the Kenyan media is broadcasting more local content. The music industry is also something to be proud of.

Hollywood in the USA has also extended their efforts and appreciation with big stars such as Lupita Nyong'o of 12 Years a Slave, Ede Mue Gathegi of Twilight, Benjamin Ochieng of the X files, just to mention a few.

GROWTH POTENTIAL

Kenyan Press is likely to grow but uncertainly. This is because of the major threat of Government interference. With the Pay T.V. services and other media service providers, there are countless media houses, T.V. and radio stations in Kenya. Pay T.V. services currently in Kenya include DSTV, GOTV, Star times, Zuku. However, there are Free-To-Air Decoders in Kenya such as Bamba TV. The media is facing a revolution alongside the technological advancements. The media in Kenya nowadays seeks to do Edutainment, a vocabulary emerging from Educate and Entertain, instead of doing what is fashionable and trending.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE KENYAN PRESS

- OVERWHELMING INFORMATION

Most media houses had overwhelming amounts of information more than they could handle; from newspapers, news clips, and more. It is until recently where data handlers approached media houses. Through the use of fiber optics such as Seacom, TEAMS and EASSy, it is now easier to handle huge amounts of data as well as faster transmission and better quality.

- GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The legislation of Kenya makes unorthodox laws for the media industry in order to deprive them the freedom of speech. There have been antagonist wars between the two (government and the media). Media are accused severally of reporting inaccurate information and therefore stirring unpleasant emotions of the public as it was the case just before and during the Post-Election Violence in 2007.

The parliament is responsible for making laws that govern the media industry. These laws affect directly what the media industry can dispense to the public, for example, freedom of the media Act.

It is also notable that the more a media house is liberal, the more viewing it receives. Gone are the days where intimidation oppressed the Kenyan press with the signing of the new Acts aforementioned.

- MEDIA COURSES

The courses in media have become popular in Kenya just the other day. Daystar University was the first in Kenya to offer journalism in Kenya. The quality of education offered to students determines the quality of professionalism in media.

The emergence of backstreet mass communication schools whose syllabus have not been approved by the Media Council, has become a common phenomenon. This results in half-baked journalists, camera men, radio and T.V. presenters, producers and other professionals in the industry.

- **TECHNOLOGY USED**

Advancement of technology used in media houses improves almost every day and it is hard for Kenya to keep up. The better the quality of the media services in terms of imaging, sound and quality of the paper attracts a wider audience and buyers of the services. Media houses had protested the Analog-Digital migration which became effective in 2014 anyway; where all media houses that had not adopted the change became non-functional.

Innovativeness could also follow in this category. The competing media houses should be as innovative as possible in their choices of programming and advertising. This boosts the market base for advertisement opportunities, which is the main source of revenue.

- **EARNING POWER OF CITIZENS**

The better the income of Kenyans, the higher the purchasing power for media materials such as magazines, newspapers, television sets and also subscription fees for Pay T.V. services.

- **INSUFFICIENT BROADBAND SERVICES**

Safaricom is the leading provider of broadband services in Kenya. Until recently, Kenya had limited number of service providers. Other companies providing the service are Access Kenya, Zuku, Kenet (Kenya Education Network)

- **INADEQUATE FINANCES AND MATERIAL RESOURCES**

Media houses depend on advertisement and revenue from publications sold.

- **POLITICAL INTERFERENCE**

The government of Kenya, represented by the legislature, makes laws that favor them from time to time.

Most of the time, this is done to curb the irregularities in the government.

SWOT ANALYSIS FOR MEDIA INDUSRY IN KENYA

Strengths

For the media, strengths do not necessarily mean the different awards and trophies that lie on their shelves, but their customer base. The trendier in terms of hash tags, trending topics in terms of discussions and entertainment a media house is, the higher the chances of advertising agencies to approach them. This contributes to the largest portion of their sales revenue and also a large audience.

Weaknesses

Stiff competition is possibly the biggest challenge for media houses. Media houses face a major challenge to maintain its customer base. It has to have enough ratings and circulation at any given time.

Media houses can sometimes have no control of who is going to access information dispatched to the public. Media channels cannot filter information 100%, and again, programs designed for adults can be accessed by minors if there is no close supervision. Media are often blamed for the corrupt information passed to minors.

Opportunities

There is the emergence of the e-paper replacing the physical newspaper. This creates an opportunity for web advertising for the media houses. Media houses take advantage through offering subscription fees could be a good source of revenue. The constant shift in consumer preferences is mostly viewed negatively but if exploited, it gives rise to opportunities for a media house to cover the needs of its audience.

Threats

Obsolescence of technology is a major threat to media. Replacement of such requires purchase costs, restructuring and reorganization costs.

Interference by government through change of media laws is a huge threat. Media houses have to follow set rules which may vary from one government regime to the next.

Another threat is the upcoming social media platforms such as YouTube that some view as taking away business from established media. People no longer watch much television or listen to radio but prefer streaming media content live from the internet.

Media fragmentation, which simply means the need to meet the target audience, is also a major threat. This forces media to engage in different channels of communication in order to reach out to those intended.