

Business Journalism in Kenya: News Values, Agenda-Setting, and Practices in Print–Digital Outlets

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the nature of business journalism in Kenya by analyzing the practices across leading newspapers (The Business Daily, Daily Nation, and The Standard) as well as digital outlets (*Tuko*, *Business Today*, and *The Elephant*). Guided by agenda-setting theory, it investigates how business news is selected, framed, and presented, and how news values shape story priorities. A mixed-methods design combining extended content analysis over multiple months and surveys with journalists and industry professionals was employed. The findings reveal distinct editorial patterns. The newspapers maintain consistency in covering institutional and macroeconomic issues, with heavy reliance on authoritative sources like the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and the Central Bank of Kenya. In contrast, digital outlets highlight immediacy and audience-centered themes such as entrepreneurship, consumer markets, and startups, while relying more on press releases and social media data. Statistical tests confirmed significant differences in writing styles and sourcing across platforms. Resource limitations, advertiser influence, and gaps in subject-matter expertise are main challenges. Nevertheless, both print and digital outlets demonstrate a commitment to accessibility through simplified language, visual aids, and varied writing styles. The study concludes that business journalism in Kenya is characterized by a divided ecosystem, with print providing institutional grounding, while digital outlets offer immediacy and broader audience engagement. These findings contribute to business journalism academia and practice by highlighting the need for ongoing professional training in financial reporting and digital storytelling, investment in data literacy, and strategies to safeguard editorial independence in an era of commercial and technological pressures.

Keywords: Business Journalism, Kenyan Newspapers, News Writing Style, Credibility, Digital Media, News Sources, Agenda-Setting, and Advertiser Influence

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Business journalism, which focuses on interpreting financial and economic developments, has become increasingly central to modern media (Jooste, 2016). In Kenya, growing public interest in wealth creation and market participation has heightened the demand for timely and accurate reporting. Coverage now spans labor, technology, consumer trends, finance, investment, and policy (Pani & Butmaloiu, 2017), reflecting a global shift from basic price reporting to nuanced analysis of economic indicators and financial literacy (Hayes, 2014).

As Kenya's financial systems evolve, business journalism serves diverse stakeholders including policymakers, investors, and the public, by translating complex data into accessible narratives (Luesby, 2011). The profession is also adapting to digital transformation, data journalism, and investigative demands, requiring new skills in technology and analysis (Schlesinger & Doyle, 2014). While these trends mirror global developments, Kenya faces unique challenges in infrastructure, training, and newsroom capacity.

Specialist reporters and outlets like *The Business Daily* have begun reshaping the field, integrating AI, infographics, and multimedia to enhance interactivity (Pani & Butmaloiu, 2017). Yet concerns persist about

the depth and consistency of business reporting. Strengthening journalistic practice can improve economic literacy and transparency (Luesby, 2011), offering valuable direction for journalism educators and institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growth of business journalism in Kenya, research remains limited in several respects. First, prior studies have relied on short-term datasets that fail to capture the cyclical nature of business reporting, particularly during such economic events like the national budget and institutional politics. Second, little attention has been given to business reporting over digital media. Third, there is insufficient analysis of the structural pressures that affect business news selection and framing in Kenya. These gaps limit a comprehensive understanding of how business journalism functions in Kenya. Lack of comparative analysis across platforms and the analysis of the intersection between news values, styles, and pressures, hinders understanding of the nature of business reporting in Kenya. This study seeks to bridge the gap by examining news values, news writing strategies, and influencing factors affecting the practice of business reporting in Kenya.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Kenyan landscape of business journalism in both print and digital platforms. It analyzes the thematic priorities, stylistic approaches, source credibility, and institutional factors that shape business journalism, in order to understand its agenda-setting role and contribution to public economic awareness.

Research Objectives

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. To examine the thematic focus and stylistic strategies used in business news coverage.
2. To evaluate the credibility and diversity of sources in business journalism.
3. To explore the roles and constraints shaping business journalism in Kenya.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on African journalism by offering a focused analysis of business reporting in Kenya. It provides insights into how media institutions construct economic narratives and influence public discourse on fiscal policy. The findings will be valuable to media scholars, journalism educators, and practitioners seeking to enhance the quality and impact of business journalism. Moreover, the study offers policy-relevant knowledge for media regulators and civil society actors interested in promoting transparency, accountability, and informed economic citizenship.

Scope of the Study

This study examined business reporting in Kenya across both print (*The Business Daily*, *Daily Nation*, and *The Standard*) and digital outlets (*Tuko*, *Business Today*, and *The Elephant*) between June 2021 and May 2022. The analysis focused on news values, dominant themes, writing styles, sourcing practices, and the use of visual aids, supplemented by surveys on business journalists and industry professionals from KAM and KNCCI. Content analysis, descriptive statistics and Statistical testing (chi-square) was employed in analysis of datasets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business Reporting Overview

Business journalism has evolved significantly since its origins in 16th-century Europe, where publications like *Neus Zeitungen* by the House of Fugger focused on commodity prices (Roibu, 2011). By the 18th century,

coverage expanded to broader financial matters, culminating in innovations such as Charles Dow's cable news service in 1882 and the founding of *The Financial Times* in 1888 (Roibu, 2011; Wells, 2020). The early 20th century saw the rise of investigative business reporting, notably through figures like Ida Tarbell and platforms like *The Wall Street Journal* (Wells, 2020). However, Madrick (2001) critiques the shift toward speculative and opinionated narratives, which often undermine factual rigor.

The rise of digital platforms has redefined how business news is produced and consumed. Newman et al. (2021) show that immediacy and audience responsiveness are core features of online reporting, with Search Engine Optimization (SEO)-driven headlines and conversational formats reshaping content delivery. Grzegorzec (2024) highlights the importance of integrating AI and big data analytics in newsrooms to enhance efficiency and accuracy. Hansen, Pollach, & Malmlose (2023) argue that journalism must adapt to multimedia storytelling formats to remain relevant in digital-first environments. Research by d'Haenens, Lo, & Moore (2022) shows how digital media democratizes access to business information but raises questions about credibility when compared to traditional outlets. Dutta (2023) emphasizes that while digital platforms expand reach and enable rapid coverage, they also create challenges, including over-reliance on press releases and reduced analytical depth.

Business News Values

News values play a central role in determining how business stories are selected, framed, and disseminated. Classic studies emphasize criteria such as relevance, timeliness, impact, and proximity as guiding principles in journalistic practice (Walsh, 2017; Kobiruzzaman, 2021). In business journalism, these values are applied to issues like fiscal policy, trade, innovation, and corporate governance, shaping the priorities communicated to audiences. Kristensen & Bro (2024) argue that business news values are often tied to institutional credibility and data reliability, while Harjuniemi (2023) underscores the importance of accuracy given the high stakes of economic reporting. While print outlets emphasize stability and institutional authority, digital platforms prioritize immediacy, accessibility, and audience-centred framing. Studies have not sufficiently explored how business journalists in Kenya weigh into these values.

Stylistic Strategies

Business journalism relies on writing strategies that balance clarity with depth. Kulkarni, Thomas, Komorowski, & Lewis (2022) stress that the inverted pyramid remains dominant in news writing because it prioritizes essential facts for readers and editors. However, Lambert (2023) and Mack (2022) note that narrative features, infographics, and multimedia storytelling are increasingly important for engaging diverse audiences. In Kenya, business journalism reflects global trends but remains underdeveloped in stylistic diversity. Publications such as *Business Daily*, *Daily Nation*, and *The Standard* cover a wide range of topics, yet often rely on general news bulletins rather than tailored storytelling (Kariithi, 2004). Writing styles vary, but concerns persist about repetitive content, lack of investigative depth, and over-reliance on press releases (Wachira, 2017; Kareithi & Kariithi, 2007). Scholars emphasize the need for accessible language, integration of numerical data, and human interest framing to engage diverse audiences (Kobiruzzaman, 2021; Pani & Butmaloiu, 2017; Newman et al., 2021; Bathke, 2017).

Roles of Business Reporting

Globally, the failure of business journalism to act as a gatekeeper was exposed during the 2007–2008 financial crisis. Analysts like Fox (2003) and Overholser (2005) argue that journalists prioritized investor perspectives over public accountability. Usher (2017) and Tambini (2010) call for stronger investigative practices and broader sourcing to enhance economic literacy. In Kenya, Jarso (2010) and Olawoyin (2017) note a growing interest in investigative business reporting, though challenges remain in accessing reliable data and expert commentary.

Business journalism is expected to serve informative, educative, and watchdog functions (Tambini, 2010; Usher, 2017). However, its effectiveness is shaped by institutional and contextual constraints. In Africa, the

growth of business journalism has paralleled democratic reforms and economic liberalization (Kariithi, 2004), yet professionalism varies widely. The roles of business reporting in Kenya has not been satisfactorily studied.

Quality and Standards in Business Reporting

Effective business journalism depends on credible and diverse sourcing. Institutions such as KNBS, CBK, and the World Bank play a central role in shaping economic narratives, yet Kenyan media often rely on a narrow range of corporate and government sources (Kareithi & Kariithi, 2007). This limits the depth and balance of reporting, especially when press releases dominate content.

Thomson et al. (2023) argue that reliance on authoritative sources such as central banks and statistical agencies enhances the credibility of economic reporting. Harjuniemi (2023) similarly emphasizes the centrality of institutional data for journalistic integrity, especially in business journalism where misinformation can have material consequences. However, African scholarship (Jarso, 2010; Wachira, 2017) critiques business journalism for often being shallow and under-resourced, pointing to gaps in expertise and resource allocation. The research seeks to determine whether the Kenyan business reporting practice upholds standards and what challenges the practitioners are facing while balancing accessibility with depth.

Constraints in Business Journalism

The intersection of editorial independence and advertiser influence has been widely debated in journalism studies. Garz, Ots, & Sjøvaag (2023) and Bekidusa (2024) highlight how commercial pressures and ownership structures influence news selection and framing. Editorial policies, ownership structures, and competitive pressures significantly influence content (Belachew, 2016; Wafi & AbouMddan, 2021). In the African context, Kareithi & Kariithi (2007) and Wachira (2017) show that advertiser influence can marginalize critical coverage in favor of content aligned with commercial interests. In Kenya, political interference and unethical practices like “brown envelope journalism” compromise independence and credibility (Egbuor, 2018; Thembo, 2013; Mare, 2018). These constraints hinder the media’s agenda-setting capacity and its ability to foster informed public discourse. The above concerns resonate with the present study’s objectives that seek to the various factors that influence business reporting in Kenya.

Research Frameworks

This research is grounded in agenda-setting theory, originally formulated by McCombs and Shaw in 1968, which posits that the media significantly influence public perception by determining the salience of issues in the public sphere (Bajracharya, 2018). In the context of Kenyan business journalism, this theory is instrumental in explaining how newspapers shape economic awareness by prioritizing certain topics over others. When these issues are repeatedly highlighted, the media send signals about their importance, guiding public focus and shaping individual interpretations and responses to economic developments (Bajracharya, 2018; Strauß, 2021).

The study’s conceptual framework of this study comprises a number of research variables. News values determine which business stories are prioritized, influencing both public perception and the media agenda. Journalists’ writing styles, whether factual, analytical, or investigative - shape how stories are presented, affecting reader engagement and comprehension. The quality of reporting, including accuracy, depth, and clarity, reflects the credibility of business journalism and helps build public trust. Lastly, factors such as economic conditions, editorial policies, political influences, and media ownership impact how business news is framed and delivered, shaping the integrity and effectiveness of business journalism.

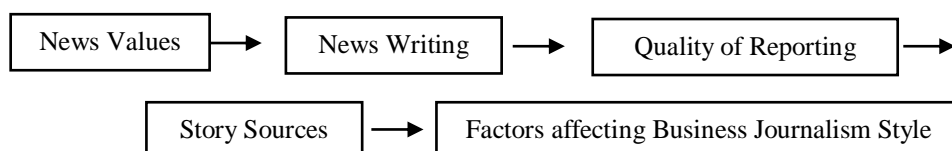


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing Key Research Indicators

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively explore the nature of business journalism in Kenyan newspapers. This design was suitable given the study's focus on multiple aspects such as news values, writing styles, reporting quality, sourcing, and the factors that influence business journalism practice.

The research was conducted in Nairobi City, Kenya's media and economic capital, selected for its concentration of national newspaper headquarters and key business organizations. The target population included business journalists from Kenya's leading newspapers - *The Business Daily*, *The Standard*, and *The Daily Nation* - as well as middle-level staff from two influential business organizations - the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI).

Sample Size

The sample size was determined using purposive sampling and the principle of saturation. In total, 186 samples were analyzed across a one-year period (June 2021–May 2022) to capture a wider range of business reporting beyond a single budget cycle. This included 120 newspaper issues (40 from each of the three newspapers) and 66 participants. These comprised 21 business journalists, 8 staff from KAM, and 7 from KNCCI, alongside 30 additional digital business reports sourced from online outlets such as *Tuko*, *Business Today*, and *The Elephant*. This sample allowed the study to explore both temporal patterns and cross-platform differences.

Table 1: Sample Size Distribution

Target Population	Sample Size
Business Daily newspaper issues	40
<i>Daily Nation</i> newspaper issues	40
<i>The Standard</i> newspaper issues	40
<i>Business Daily</i> journalists	10
Daily Nation business journalists	3
<i>The Standard</i> business journalists	8
Kenya Association of Manufacturers middle-level staff	8
Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry middle-level staff	7
Digital Reports	30
Total Sample Size	186

Data Collection

Different tools were used to collect data from newspapers and participants. For newspaper issues, a structured document analysis matrix was used to examine themes, geographical focus, story treatment, and source diversity. To gather information from business journalists and staff from KAM and KNCCI, in-depth

questionnaires were used. These questionnaires included both open-ended and closed questions, enabling participants to give detailed insights into business journalism practices, emerging trends, and the factors influencing them.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using a combination of thematic content analysis and both inferential statistics and descriptive. For the newspaper and digital media content, NVIVO software facilitated theme identification and coding across the dataset. Thematic patterns were tracked over time to assess the practice of business journalism in Kenyan newspapers responded to seasonal events and other journalistic realities. The survey data were subjected to statistical testing in SPSS where descriptive summaries and chi-square tests were used to determine associations between journalists’ demographics, media type and organizational affiliation characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study reviewed 120 newspaper issues drawn from *Business Daily*, *Daily Nation*, and *The Standard* over a one-year period (June 2021–May 2022), yielding 255 business-related articles. In addition, 30 digital business reports were analyzed from *Tuko*, *Business Today*, and *The Elephant*, making a total of 285 media reports examined. The study also included 21 business journalists and 15 mid-level staff from KNCCI and KAM, bringing the total human sample to 36 participants. Journalists averaged 31 years in age, reflecting a youthful and tech-savvy demographic, while KNCCI and KAM staff averaged 35, indicating more mature professional perspectives. The gender distribution was nearly balanced. Academically, most participants had Bachelor’s degrees or higher.

Business News Values

The newspapers maintained a consistent focus on institutional and macroeconomic topics, while digital outlets highlighted immediacy and audience-centered issues. As seen in Table 2, *Business Daily* sustained an emphasis on innovation (15 articles), *Daily Nation* prioritized SMEs (18), and *The Standard* consistently highlighted macroeconomic themes (20). In contrast, digital outlets showed entrepreneurship as their dominant theme (22 reports), followed by consumer trends (15), startups (10), and digital finance (8). These distributions, covering multiple cycles including budget debates and external economic shocks, demonstrate both stability in print agenda-setting and fluid responsiveness in digital media. This editorial distribution illustrates how each outlet applies news values such as relevance, impact, and audience alignment in story selection, supporting observations by Walsh (2017) and Kristensen & Bro (2024) that news values play a vital role in shaping journalistic agendas.

Table 2: Key Business Themes and Frequency of Coverage

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard	Digital Outlets
Dominant Topics	Innovation (15)	SMEs (18)	Economy (20)	Entrepreneurship (22)
Other Topics	Fiscal Policy (12), Manufacturing (8), Technology (7), Agriculture (6), Energy (5), Climate Change (4)	Loans (10), Debts (9), Housing (7), Fraud (6), Health (4)	Food Prices (12), Energy (10), Environment (8), Marketing (7)	Consumer Trends (15), Startups (10), Digital Finance (8), E-commerce (7)

The newspapers also covered a diverse range of secondary topics, from legislation and agriculture to fraud and energy, demonstrating comprehensive coverage of the business environment. For example, *The Standard* paid attention to food prices and environmental issues, while *The Daily Nation* included stories on fraud, loans, and

banking. These editorial choices underscore the role of audience needs and the prevailing economic climate in shaping business reporting, echoing Kristensen & Bro's (2024) assertion that impact and timeliness are crucial in the formulation of news stories.

In terms of sources, the newspapers relied heavily on authoritative institutions to enhance the credibility of their business reporting. Key references included the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), the Treasury, the World Bank, and the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) (Table 3). Regarding digital reports, while also citing KNBS, they lean more heavily on press releases, company blogs, and startup announcements. This indicates a divergence in sourcing practices, with print prioritizing institutional authority and digital platforms emphasizing immediacy and accessibility. These findings align with Thomson et al. (2023), who emphasize the role of credible institutional sources in business journalism, and with Harjuniemi (2023), who underscores that frequent use of authoritative voices safeguards journalistic integrity, especially in economic reporting.

Table 2: Authoritative Sources Used Across Outlets

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard	Digital Outlets
Main Sources	KNBS (12), Treasury (10), CBK (9), World Bank (6)	KNBS (10), KRA (9), CBK (7), World Bank (5)	KRA (8), Bank CEOs (7), CBK (6)	Press Releases (15), Company Blogs (10), Startups (7), KNBS (6)

The perspective of practicing journalists reinforced this commitment to quality and trustworthiness. Out of the 21 business journalists interviewed, nineteen emphasized the need for accuracy, data literacy, and industry understanding. As one journalist stated, *"We prioritize accuracy and factual reporting, ensuring our readers can rely on us for trustworthy information."* This shared ethos supports Kobiruzzaman's (2021) argument that news values like usefulness, accuracy, and relevance are essential in building content that informs and engages readers effectively.

Audience targeting also emerged as a determinant in shaping news values. According to the findings, 14 journalists identified the general public, including small business owners and employees, as their primary audience, while the rest focused on an elite audience, comprising professionals and policy influencers (Figure 2). This variation reflects the importance of understanding the audience in framing stories and selecting business topics—a practice consistent with Walsh (2017) and d'Haenens, Lo, & Moore (2022), who argue that modern business journalism plays a key role in democratizing access to business knowledge for both grassroots and elite stakeholders.

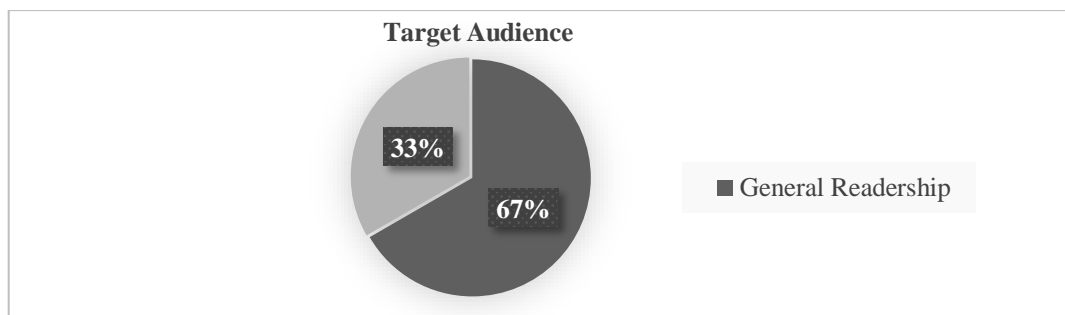


Figure 2: Sampled Business Journalists' Views on Who They Target

From the organizational side, insights from KAM and KNCCI participants emphasized the communication of innovation and market developments as a critical news value in business reporting. A KAM respondent noted, *"Business journalism serves as a vital channel for businesses to communicate innovations and market developments."* This mirrors d'Haenens et al. (2022), who posit that business journalism is increasingly instrumental in disseminating innovation and promoting adaptive behavior in dynamic economies. Figure 3

further illustrates that ten of the fifteen respondents from KNCCI and KAM viewed business journalism as crucial for helping businesses inform the public about new trends and commercial interventions.

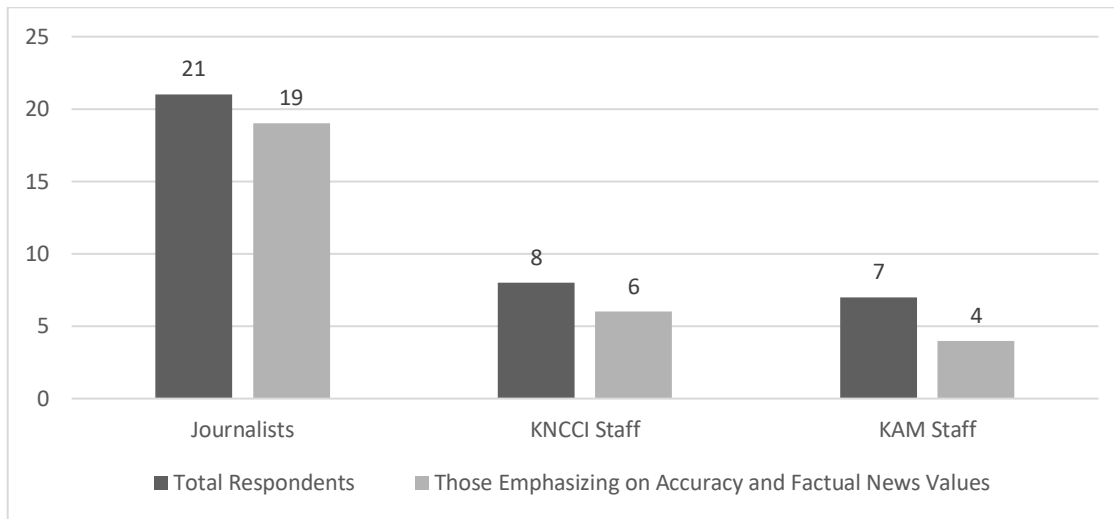


Figure 3: Respondents Who Emphasized on Accuracy and Factual News Values

Business Writing Style

The newspapers overwhelmingly favored the inverted pyramid structure across the one-year dataset, with 106 of 120 sampled print articles adopting the format (Table 4). This consistency reflects the institutionalized nature of business reporting in Kenyan newspapers, where clarity, hierarchy of information, and editorial efficiency remain paramount. By contrast, digital outlets exhibited greater stylistic variety, producing 15 conversational briefs, 8 SEO (Search Engine Optimization)-driven headlines, and 7 narrative commentaries. *The Elephant* provided most of the narrative analyses (5), while *Tuko* and *Business Today* leaned toward brevity and accessibility. Chi-square testing across the full sample confirmed significant differences between print and digital writing styles ($\chi^2 = 15.83$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.0004$). This clear divide illustrates the distinction between structured, institutional reporting in newspapers and the more audience-responsive storytelling dominant in digital platforms.

Table 3: Writing Styles Across Outlets

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard	Digital Outlets
Styles	Inverted Pyramid (35), Narrative (5)	Inverted Pyramid (38), Narrative (2)	Inverted Pyramid (36), Narrative (4)	Blog Style (15), Inverted Pyramid (10), Narrative (5)

Out of the 21 journalists surveyed, 20 emphasized the importance of objectivity, diversity of coverage, and clarity in communication. One journalist noted, *"We emphasize clarity and neutrality in our reporting, ensuring that our readers can easily understand the information provided."*

The inverted pyramid style remains the predominant structure in Kenyan business journalism. This classic news writing approach presents information in descending order of importance, with the most crucial details at the top of the article. It serves both the reader and the editor efficiently: readers who skim through articles can absorb the key message quickly, while editors can cut from the bottom without omitting essential facts (Kulkarni, Thomas, Komorowski, & Lewis, 2022). This format is especially useful in business reporting, where stories often involve complex policies or technical data that need to be communicated clearly and succinctly. The findings support Pani & Butmaloiu's (2017) argument that business news writing should prioritize fundamental questions upfront to meet the audience's need for immediate, relevant information.

Across the analysed newspapers, the use of the inverted pyramid was accompanied by simple, reader-friendly language and explanatory notes for technical terms. This reflects a strong editorial focus on accessibility and

public comprehension, allowing a wide readership that include small business owners, students, and professionals with no formal training in finance, to engage with complex economic topics. For instance, stories dealing with innovation, fiscal policy, or technological reforms were written in ways that introduced the main point early, followed by supporting data or expert commentary. Articles on topics such as economic growth and fraud were also made more digestible by using clear language and credible data from authoritative sources (Abrahams, 2023).

The digital outlets favored conversational and blog-style formats to appeal to online audiences. Short, SEO-optimized briefs in *Tuko* and *Business Today* prioritized engagement and accessibility, often using simplified headlines tailored for quick consumption. Narrative commentary, particularly in *The Elephant*, added depth and context, often linking business developments to wider socio-political implications. This diversity in digital formats demonstrates a more flexible, audience-oriented model, balancing accessibility with commentary and interpretation.

This commitment to clarity and simplicity aligns with Newman et al. (2021), who stress the importance of explaining jargon and using accessible language in business journalism to avoid alienating less-experienced readers. The emphasis on objectivity and fact-based reporting, as expressed by the interviewed journalists, further reinforces these findings. The journalists recognized that their audiences vary widely in economic knowledge, and therefore, clarity and accuracy are not just stylistic preferences but essential principles in delivering inclusive economic journalism.

Additionally, the integration of narrative storytelling - especially in feature articles from *The Business Daily* and *The Daily Nation* - adds richness and depth to the coverage. These narrative elements provide background context, human interest angles, or explanations of how policies affect everyday life. This aligns with Lambert’s (2023) recommendation that business stories should go beyond numbers and data to include engaging storytelling techniques. By blending narratives with factual structures, these newspapers elevate their content from mere reportage to compelling, informative storytelling. This trend reflects a broader shift in journalism toward formats that are not only informative but also emotionally resonant and engaging.

Role of Business Journalism

As seen in Table 5, the three newspapers consistently published a wide range of themes, with each outlet maintaining distinct editorial priorities. *The Business Daily* emphasized innovation (15 articles), policy (12), and manufacturing (8), reflecting its focus on policy shifts and sectoral developments. *The Daily Nation* concentrated on SMEs (18) and loans/debts (12), showing its orientation toward grassroots business issues and financial accessibility. *The Standard* highlighted broader macroeconomic themes, publishing 20 pieces on the economy alongside extensive attention to food prices (12) and energy (10). In contrast, digital outlets prioritized immediacy and entrepreneurial narratives, with entrepreneurship (22), consumer markets (15), and startups (10) emerging as their most prominent topics. This distinction demonstrates the stability of print outlets in institutional agenda-setting compared to the fluid responsiveness of digital platforms.

Table 4: Impactful Topics Covered

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard	Digital Outlets
Coverage	Innovation (15), Policy (12), Manufacturing (8)	SMEs (18), Loans/Debts (12)	Economy (20), Food Prices (12), Energy (10)	Entrepreneurship (22), Consumer Markets (15), Startups (10)

The geographical distribution of coverage, shown in Table 6, further highlights these editorial orientations. All three newspapers maintained a strong national focus, with 40 national articles each from *Business Daily* and *The Standard*, and 37 from the *Daily Nation*. Digital outlets, while also producing nationally focused coverage (28 reports), offered a higher proportion of regional and global stories (12), reflecting the demands of online audiences for more diverse and outward-looking perspectives.

Table 5: Geographical Focus of Business Reporting in Sampled Newspapers

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard	Digital Outlets
National	40	37	40	28
Regional/Global	5	8	4	12

These findings underline the multifaceted role of business journalism. Newspapers largely anchored themselves in domestic policy and economic issues, reinforcing their role in shaping local debates and providing continuity in public discourse. At the same time, digital outlets diversified their geographical coverage by extending business journalism into more globally responsive conversations while catering to online audiences' demands of both immediacy and international perspectives.

All 21 journalists acknowledged the industry's transformative nature, focusing on specific trends such as finance, markets, and entrepreneurship. The emergence of digital platforms has enabled newspapers to provide extensive and rapid coverage of market trends, regulatory changes, and corporate developments. As one of the Daily Newspaper's journalists pointed out, "Our role is not only to inform but also to educate our audience on financial matters, corporate governance, and ethics." On the other breath, a majority of respondents (13 out of 15) from KNCCI and KAM pointed out that business journalism facilitated their communication with the public. They emphasized the importance of media in informing and educating the public about organizational initiatives and industry insights.

The distribution of topics highlights the broader agenda-setting function of business journalism in Kenya. Usher (2017) and Bekidusa (2024) argue that thematic diversity is essential in ensuring journalism addresses wide-ranging public concerns. The breadth of coverage across print and digital outlets aligns with this perspective, illustrating journalism's ability to provide nuanced analysis of varied economic issues. Similarly, Lee et al. (2023) note that newspapers' national focus reflects deliberate tailoring to local interests, while Brodowicz (2024) confirms that agenda-setting strengthens media's role in shaping economic awareness.

Beyond informing, business reporting performs an educational function by framing issues in ways that influence public understanding and policy engagement (Bajracharya, 2018). This role was emphasized by KNCCI and KAM respondents, who described business journalism as central to showcasing innovation, trade, and investment. These observations mirror Hansen, Pollach, & Malmlose (2023), who stress journalism's critical role in sustaining economic discourse and guiding policy debates and Grzegorzec (2024)'s educational role.

Quality of Reporting

The analysis of reporting practices reveals significant differences in how print and digital outlets present and substantiate economic content. *The Business Daily* showed precision in handling numerical data, frequently using percentages and figures in millions, with 15 articles relying on percentages and 12 on millions (Table 7). *The Daily Nation* emphasized straightforward figures, percentages, and simple graphs, with 18 articles citing figures and 12 applying percentages. *The Standard* demonstrated a distinct focus on detailed financial data, with 14 articles featuring forex and stock figures and 10 providing market analysis, often visualized through charts. In contrast, digital outlets favored infographics (12) and social media data (10), leaning more toward accessible presentation rather than detailed institutional analysis. This divergence was statistically significant, as chi-square testing confirmed a strong association between platform type and sourcing practices ($\chi^2 = 12.47$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.006$).

Table 6: Application of Data in Reports

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard	Digital Outlets
Nature of	Percentages (15),	Figures (18),	Forex/Stock Data	Infographics (12),

Analysis	Millions (12), Quotes (13)	Percentages (12), Simple Graphs (7)	(14), Market Analysis (10)	Social Media Data (10), Percentages (8)
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Institutional reliance was strongest in newspapers, with 41 articles across newspapers citing KNBS, CBK, Treasury, or World Bank data. Digital outlets broadened their sourcing to include press releases, blogs, and social media, but often at the expense of analytical depth and credibility. Out of the 21 journalists surveyed, 20 prioritized verifiability and factual rigor in their work, highlighting a shared commitment to professional standards. As one Standard journalist explained, “*I maintain high standards of journalism by ensuring that my reporting relies on credible sources and accurate data.*” This professional ethos reinforced the credibility of Kenyan print journalism.

All the journalists who participated in this study pointed out that Kenya’s print business reports were detailed. Ten of the middle-level staff members from KNCCI and KAM argued that Kenyan print reports were detailed while 5 of them had mixed reactions, arguing that some reports are detailed while others are shallow.

Table 7: KNCCI and KAM Members’ Take on Depth of Business Reporting in Kenyan Newspapers

	N	%
Shallow	0	0 %
Detailed	10	66.7 %
Other	5	33.3 %

Visual communication also emerged as a defining feature of business journalism practices. As shown in Table 9, *The Business Daily* and *The Daily Nation* used a mix of images, graphs, and tables, ensuring clarity and reinforcing data with visuals. *The Standard* leaned more heavily on images and charts, producing visually engaging but sometimes less data-intensive coverage. All the digital outlets surveyed integrated infographics (15), embedded videos (10), and social media posts (8), demonstrating an interactive, audience-oriented model of content presentation. Content promotion strategies further reflected these differences with newspapers emphasizing on use headlines, pull quotes, and blurbs, while digital outlets relying on social media sharing and sponsored posts to amplify reach.

Table 8: Visual Aids and Content Promotion

Dimension	Business Daily	Daily Nation	The Standard	Digital Outlets
Visuals	Images (10), Tables (12), Graphs (10)	Images (12), Graphs (10), Infographics (8)	Images (15), Charts (12), Tables (10)	Infographics (15), Embedded Videos (10), Social Media Posts (8)
Promotion	Headlines (12), Pull Quotes (10), Teasers (8)	Blurbs (10), Headlines (12), Teasers (8)	Pullouts (12), Direct Statements (10)	Social Media Sharing (12), Sponsored Posts (10)

The integration of these practices demonstrates that while newspapers emphasized structured, data-heavy reporting with balanced use of visuals, digital platforms innovated with interactive formats to enhance engagement. Both approaches reflect different responses to audience needs. The Newspapers reinforced authority and credibility through reliance on institutional data, while digital platforms sought immediacy and accessibility. This duality reflects Liu’s (2023) observation that detailed and data-driven reporting underpins trust, while innovative visual formats foster audience reach and interaction.

The quality of reporting across the three newspapers remains robust, countering earlier claims that African and Kenyan business reporting lacked depth or rigor (Kareithi & Kariithi, 2007; Jarso, 2010; Wachira, 2017). *The*

Business Daily's focus on numerical precision, *The Daily Nation*'s straightforward presentation, and *The Standard*'s detailed financial analysis exemplify a strong commitment to comprehensive, data-backed reporting. The creative use of visual aids and promotional strategies further enhanced accessibility and ensured that Kenyan business journalism continues to serve as both a credible source of information and a dynamic vehicle for audience engagement.

Factors Affecting Business Reporting

Enquiry into newspaper analysis, digital reports, and respondents reveal several factors influencing the quality and orientation of business reporting. All participants considered themselves active news sources, using media to highlight organizational initiatives, yet pointed to challenges ranging from limited subject matter expertise to commercial pressures. A recurring concern was the lack of deep understanding of complex financial or economic topics among some reporters, which led to simplified or shallow coverage. As one journalist noted, *"There's often a lack of subject matter understanding, which makes some reports appear shallow."* Similarly, a KNCCI participant observed that business stories are frequently overshadowed by politics or breaking news, affecting their prominence and depth.

The analysis confirmed that both internal and external pressures shape business journalism. Consistent with earlier studies (Plappert, 2007; Belachew, 2016; Egbuior, 2018; Garz, Ots, & Sjøvaag, 2023), editorial policies, media ownership, advertiser influence, and political regulation play significant roles. Competition for readership was a constant concern, as was the challenge of balancing editorial independence with advertiser expectations. One journalist emphasized, *"Government regulation shapes the way we report on certain economic issues and impacts our ability to access information."* Regulation, including taxation, trade, and environmental policy, directly affected reporting practices, while audience behavior such as consumer interests, investment trends, and ethical concerns, determined the issues that attracted wider coverage.

The Digital platforms were identified as both a catalyst and a challenge. Their immediacy enabled rapid reporting and broader reach, but also intensified competition for attention. Journalists noted the pressure to adapt to SEO-driven formats, integrate multimedia, and respond to social media trends, often at the expense of depth and analysis. This reflects Dutta's (2023) observation that while digital media expands coverage, it requires significant adaptation to preserve journalistic integrity. The rise of digital-first outlets also introduced new vulnerabilities, such as greater exposure to advertiser influence and the risk of prioritizing engagement metrics over content quality.

Within this context, agenda-setting theory provides a useful lens. As Bajracharya (2018) explains, agenda-setting influences not only what topics are reported but also how prominently they are framed. In Kenya's case, internal constraints such as resource limitations and skill gaps, alongside external pressures like government regulation and audience demand, shape the prioritization of business coverage. Geiß (2022) adds that insufficient subject expertise among reporters amplifies these effects, limiting the ability to provide in-depth, analytical reporting.

Despite these challenges, the findings also highlight resilience. Kenyan newspapers and digital publications continue to deliver detailed reporting on themes ranging from innovation to fiscal policy, while experimenting with new formats and visual aids. This reflects a commitment to maintaining quality standards and addressing diverse audience needs. By embracing varied styles, expanding coverage across print and digital platforms, and navigating structural pressures, business journalism in Kenya demonstrates a capacity to enrich public debate and sustain its role as a critical pillar of economic discourse.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study reveals that business journalism in Kenya's leading newspapers demonstrates a consistent commitment to factual, accessible, and credible economic reporting. These outlets explored covered a broad spectrum of business topics over multiple reporting cycles, including innovation, SMEs, fiscal and economic

policy, food prices, and governance, tailoring content to the needs of their diverse readerships. Their frequent reliance on authoritative sources such as the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), Treasury, and the World Bank reinforced credibility and aligned their reporting with international standards of business journalism.

The findings also demonstrated clear differences between print and digital outlets. Newspapers relied heavily on the inverted pyramid style, using simple language, percentages, and institutional data to clarify complex topics. They supplemented this with narrative features and visual aids such as tables, graphs, charts, and pullouts to enhance comprehension and engagement. *The Business Daily* emphasized numerical precision, *The Daily Nation* stressed clear economic insights, and *The Standard* blended detailed financial analysis with strong visual presentation. In contrast, digital outlets such as *Tuko*, *Business Today*, and *The Elephant* employed more diverse formats such as conversational briefs, SEO-driven headlines, infographics, and embedded videos, reflecting agility and audience-centred responsiveness, while at the same time relying on press releases, company blogs, and social media sources.

Statistical testing confirmed significant associations between platform type and both sourcing practices ($\chi^2 = 12.47$, $p < 0.01$) and writing styles ($\chi^2 = 15.83$, $p < 0.01$). These results highlight the structural divide between business journalism in Kenyan newspapers grounding and digital journalism's flexible, engagement-driven model. No significant demographic effects emerged, indicating that pressures such as advertiser influence and competition for readership are systemic across the profession.

This diverged ecosystem illustrates the complementary strengths of the two platforms. Newspapers' business journalism provides rigor, institutional credibility, and analytical depth, while digital reporting expands immediacy, multimedia integration, and reach. Together, they contribute to a dynamic media landscape that both informs and educates audiences, reflecting the agenda-setting role of business journalism in shaping public priorities and discourse.

The findings also uncover persistent challenges. Some reporters lack technical expertise in complex business topics, leading to uneven depth in coverage. Resource constraints, editorial and advertiser pressures, and government regulation influence reporting practices and can limit independence. Digital competition has amplified the struggle for visibility and increased pressure to adapt to new storytelling formats. Yet the resilience of both newspapers and digital reporting in covering diverse themes, maintaining accuracy, and experimenting with narrative and visual approaches shows a strong commitment to sustaining quality in Kenyan business journalism.

Generally, the study underscores the importance of ongoing adaptation. Simplified language, credible sourcing, and audience awareness remain central to ensuring trust and accessibility. At the same time, integrating data analysis, digital tools, and multimedia storytelling will be vital in meeting emerging challenges and opportunities for business journalism in Kenya.

Recommendations

To strengthen the field of business journalism, the study recommends preservation of clarity and accessibility by expanding professional development through investment on ongoing training in financial literacy. There is need for the stakeholders to develop strategies to mitigate advertiser influence, resource constraints, and regulatory pressures without compromising journalistic integrity. Lastly, practitioners are encouraged to responsibly use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), data-driven reporting, and social media analytics to enrich coverage while upholding ethical standards. The above measures can be achieved through the cultivation of stronger partnerships with industry associations, universities, and regulators to promote knowledge sharing, professional standards, and sustainability in business journalism.

There is need for further research that seek to examine the long-term effects of digital integration on audience trust, advertiser influence on editorial independence, and the comparative effectiveness of multimedia storytelling in business journalism. Also, longitudinal studies across multiple years would provide deeper insights into the evolving nature of business reporting and its broader societal impact.

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