

Implications of AI-Assisted Data Analysis and Content Generation in Kenyan Online Newsrooms on Journalistic Integrity and Accuracy

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ABSTRACT

The technology of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become more pervasive than ever before in the twenty-first-century practice of journalism, with digital newsrooms around the world using AI to analyze data, generate content, and perform audience and editorial analysis. Although there are many benefits associated with technological adoption, there are serious issues relating to the integrity and accuracy of journalism that have emerged. This research study focuses on the effect of AI-assisted data analysis and content generation on the integrity and accuracy of journalism in Kenya's online newsrooms. Through the qualitative content analysis method, 40 online news articles, selected through purposive sampling technique, published within the period January to April 2026 from three leading digital newsrooms in Kenya, including Nation Africa (n=15), Citizen Digital (n=15), and Radio Africa Digital (n=10), were examined using six criteria of qualitative content analysis which are source attribution, verification, factual accuracy, editorial balance, AI disclosure, and signs of AI involvement. While the coding process was carried out based on the qualitative coding of the textual features, the results are presented in terms of descriptive percentages. It was found that the traditional criteria of journalism were upheld in 87.5%, 77.5%, and 82.5% of the articles in source attribution, verification, and factual accuracy, respectively. On the other hand, only 5% of the articles indicated the use of AI while 85% showed the traits of being created using AI. This research indicates that AI operates as an auxiliary tool in Kenyan newsrooms instead of replacing human journalism. The role of editorial oversight in upholding the accuracy and integrity of journalism is very crucial. The researcher recommended the creation of AI disclosure policies, training of journalists in AI and regulation by the Media Council of Kenya.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, journalism, Kenyan newsrooms, journalistic integrity, gatekeeping, content generation, media ethics

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming a key player in disrupting the media landscape. The international media organizations such as Associated Press, Reuters, and Bloomberg have embraced AI, with the application of the technology in automating news in finance, sport, and other areas (Graefe, 2016; Carlson, 2015). AI in media is being enhanced through initiatives that embrace technology such as Google News Initiative and the Meta Journalism Project (Simon, 2025).

The Kenyan media scene is characterized by stiff competition, technological disruptions, and changing audience behaviors. The leading media organizations such as Nation Media Group, Royal Media Services, and Standard Group are beginning to integrate AI in their operations as a way of increasing efficiencies, audience engagement, and content delivery speed (Muthoki, 2024). These organizations are operating in a rapidly changing media industry where the AI technology is used in two main ways namely: data analysis through analytics, trends, sentiment, and news; and content generation such as article writing, optimization, summarization, and translation (Porlezza & Schapals, 2024).

While efficiency is one of the strengths of using AI, many scholarly debates have been initiated regarding the effect of AI on the ethical principles of journalism. In this regard, the arguments have revolved around the possibility of errors in information presented by AI, algorithmic hallucinations, inadequate sourcing, and low level of editorial control. The above factors have the potential of interfering with the basic principles of

journalism such as verification, credibility, and accountability (Voinea, 2025). Similarly, the tracking of audience behavior and ranking of information using AI is likely to lead to the creation of clickbait journalism.

The application of AI in Kenya's online newsrooms remains understudied in comparison with other areas of study like digitization of media, mobile journalism, media convergence, and audience behavior (Muthoki, 2024). This paper fills this void by evaluating the effects of AI-assisted data analysis and content generation on the accuracy and integrity of journalists in Kenya. Social Responsibility Theory and Gatekeeping Theory are applied in this paper and qualitative content analysis of 40 articles published in three leading digital platforms is conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 *Social Responsibility Theory*

According to Social Responsibility Theory, which stems from the report on the findings of the Hutchins Commission in 1947, followed up by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm in 1956, there is a moral duty for the media to offer true, accurate, complete, and proper information to society. In Social Responsibility Theory, freedom of the media is conditional upon fulfilling its responsibilities towards the democratic publics. Christians et al. (2009) maintain that normative contexts exist for media organizations, in which their activities promote social benefit, accountability, and citizenship.

Social Responsibility Theory can be used to determine whether the use of algorithmic technology contributes or hinders the realization of the media's ethical principles in AI-assisted journalism. Social Responsibility Theory is especially important in assessing whether AI-produced texts meet the criteria of accuracy, impartiality, and accountability of communication in democratic societies (Porlezza & Schapals, 2024).

2.1.2 *Gatekeeping Theory*

The concept of Gatekeeping Theory, initially introduced by Lewin in 1943 and later applied to journalism by White in 1950, describes the selection process of information filtering and dissemination conducted by journalists and editors for their audience. Being gatekeepers, journalists and editors not only decide what kind of information goes into the public domain but also frame it, context and presentation-wise (White, 1950).

The use of AI brings about new technological actors to the process of gatekeeping, which raises many questions regarding the extent to which such tools change or replace the editorial judgement. Diakopoulos (2019) states that the use of algorithmic gatekeeping implies new kinds of biases in news selection, which may lead to selecting news pieces not on the basis of their news value but according to the engagement measures. The current research applies the Gatekeeping Theory framework to evaluate the impact of AI on news selection and editing in Kenyan online media outlets.

2.2 AI and Journalism: Global Perspectives

There have been studies of AI implementation into journalism around the world through various aspects. For instance, Carlson (2015) highlighted that automated journalism is one of the key ways of redefining the process of work in journalism. AI technology allows journalists to create a logically consistent narrative based on structured data, but AI lacks contextual knowledge which would be required for doing complex investigations. Graefe (2016) also mentioned that AI-driven content works best in such fields as financial reporting and sports but does not perform well when it comes to politics and society.

The focus of more recent studies, however, has changed and now cover more ethical problems associated with AI implementation into journalism. For example, Porlezza & Schapals (2024) revealed that there are often low levels of editorial transparency in AI-assisted newsrooms since readers are usually unaware of the degree of

participation of algorithms in creation of content. Voinea (2025) pointed out the problem of AI hallucination, superficial sourcing, and insufficient fact-checking in AI-assisted newsrooms.

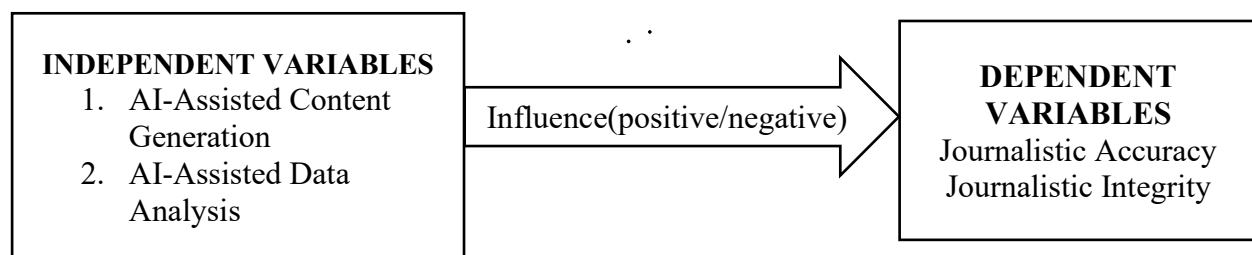
2.3 AI Journalism in the African Context

Academic interest in artificial intelligence in journalism in the African setting is quite sparse. For example, Muthoki (2024) investigated the use of AI in the Kenyan newsrooms, and found that although big media companies have started implementing AI in data handling and content management, there is still no policy or guidelines on this matter. The struggle between innovation and preserving journalistic integrity is an issue identified by Mutsvairo and Bebawi (2019), in the context of digitalization of the African media systems.

It becomes clear why the topic of AI in Kenyan journalism requires further investigation and is relevant from both theoretical and practical point of view. It can contribute to filling the gap in the literature with empirical evidence from Kenya's top digital news platforms.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The research examines the link between AI newsroom functions and journalistic quality through the use of two different groups of variables. In this case, the independent variables will be AI-Assisted Data Analysis, including audience analysis, trend detection, sentiment analysis, and data-based reporting; and AI-Assisted Content Generation, involving automated writing, headline optimization, summarization, and digital distribution of content. It is anticipated that they affect the dependent variables of Journalistic Accuracy measured through fact-checking, verification, and sourcing and Journalistic Integrity measured through editorial balance and ethical practice.



METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research study utilized the qualitative content analysis approach in order to examine the ethical and professional dimensions of AI-assisted journalism in Kenya's online newsrooms. Qualitative content analysis is a well-known approach used in media studies and journalism studies in order to systematically analyze textual data according to certain theoretical perspectives (Broussard et al., 2019). The choice of the qualitative content analysis approach was appropriate due to the nature of the topics studied and their qualitative aspects such as verification practices, editorial balance, and transparency. While qualitative content analysis approach was used for conducting the research, the results of coding were presented in the form of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) in order to indicate the presence of the identified patterns in the selected articles. In this regard, it should be noted that the percentages show the distribution of qualitative patterns coded by the researcher and not the results of quantitative research.

3.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 40 online news articles from the period of January to April 2026 in three major online news sources in Kenya, namely, Nation Africa (n=15), Citizen Digital (n=15), and Radio Africa Digital (n=10). The selection of articles was made depending on the presence of issues such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, AI governance, innovation in the newsrooms, data system, and other themes pertaining to digital technologies because these fields are the most probable for AI-assisted

journalism. The equal number of samples selected from Nation Africa and Citizen Digital enabled comparative analysis of the two of the most significant newsrooms in Kenya, whereas Radio Africa added to that analysis.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data was gathered by employing a coding structure developed and tested based on existing literature on ethics in journalism and artificial intelligence journalism. Each article was qualitatively coded using six analytical criteria: source attribution, verification practices, factual accuracy, editorial balance, disclosure concerning the use of AI, and presence of signs of either algorithmic or audience influence. The accuracy was gauged in terms of consistency of factual claims and presence of evidence backing these claims. The verification criterion was scored based on the evidence of sourcing from a number of sources, consulting experts or official documents. Source attribution measured the precision of identifying sources. Editorial balance focused on how diverse perspectives are represented. Disclosure of AI use concerned presence of any kind of disclosure about its use in creating the content. Algorithmic influence entailed search engine optimized headlines, framing according to trends and audience analysis-oriented content selection.

Each coding category contained qualitative indicators that guided interpretation of the articles. For example, indicators of AI-assisted production were identified through observable textual characteristics including repetitive sentence structures, standardized or boilerplate phrasing, highly uniform paragraph construction, generic transitions, limited contextual localization, absence of distinctive journalistic voice, excessive reliance on institutional language, and search-engine-optimized headline patterns. These indicators did not constitute definitive proof of AI authorship but served as qualitative signals suggesting possible AI-assisted content generation. Representative observations from these coded indicators were subsequently aggregated into descriptive frequencies and percentages.

The techniques of thematic and interpretive content analysis were used on the coded data to uncover the dominant themes. The inter-coder reliability was ensured through using an independent coder to code a subset of randomly selected articles and reaching a Cohen's Kappa value greater than 0.75.

FINDINGS

4.1 Profile of Sampled Articles

The study examined 40 articles spread among three media houses: Nation Africa (37.5%), Citizen Digital (37.5%), and Radio Africa Digital (25%). The articles covered themes such as AI governance and regulation, digital transformation, innovations in newsrooms, youth and technology, data privacy, and AI policy issues. This provided a basis for comparison across media houses while reflecting differences in editing and technology reporting among leading digital media platforms in Kenya.

Table 1: Distribution of Sampled Articles by Media House

Media House	Number of Articles	Percentage
Nation Africa	15	37.5%
Citizen Digital	15	37.5%
Radio Africa Digital	10	25.0%
Total	40	100%

4.2 Source Attribution Practices

Source Attribution was evident in all three media organisations. A total of 35 articles (87.5%) cited their primary sources in the form of government officials, technology experts, researchers, and representatives of companies. Five articles (12.5%) depended on generic citations with no particular attribution. Nation Africa had the most specific sources cited, while Citizen Digital had a tendency of heavy dependence on press statements

from institutions. Radio Africa Digital had fair attribution, but depended heavily on organisers of events and company representatives as their sources. This implies that the digital newsrooms of Kenya still emphasise source attribution, which is an important aspect of journalism.

4.3 Verification Practices

Verification was investigated in all sampled articles. The number of articles demonstrating verification was thirty-one out of forty which constitutes 77.5%. Nation Africa had the best verification practices where reporters used different experts' opinions and documentation. Citizen Digital had average to high verification levels especially in policies and governance-related articles. Verification in Radio Africa Digital was low as single-source verification was common in technology reports related to events. It can be concluded that verification is still a vital element of journalism in Kenyan digital newsrooms despite differences in media organizations.

4.4 Factual Accuracy

The accuracy of factual statements was assessed based on the coherence of claims made, the strength of evidential backing, and absence of any factual contradictions in the stories reported. Thirty-three articles (82.5%) were categorized as highly accurate with strong factual support and coherent contexts. Six articles (15%) showed some form of inconsistency in terms of either the context being too limited, making unsubstantiated predictions, or the sources being singular in nature. One article (2.5%) had some major flaws related to factual statements made. Nation Africa emerged as the most accurate source in this regard, followed by Citizen Digital. Accuracy levels of Radio Africa Digital were good despite a heavier focus on promotional and event-based news.

Table 2: Summary of Journalistic Quality Indicators

Indicator	Articles Meeting Standard	Percentage
Source Attribution (clear)	35	87.5%
Verification Evidence	31	77.5%
Factual Accuracy (high)	33	82.5%
Editorial Balance (multiple views)	28	70.0%
AI Transparency Disclosure	2	5.0%
Indicators of AI-Assisted Production	34	85.0%

4.5 Editorial Balance

The level of balance in editorial writing was measured by checking the diversity of different views included in each article. Seventeen out of twenty-eight articles (70%) were found to be balanced because they took into consideration several views such as expert opinion, policy perspective, and stakeholders' view. Twelve articles (30%) were found to focus on only one source or organization. Nation Africa had the highest level of balance in their news articles. Citizen Digital had some level of balance but mostly focused on government stories. Radio Africa Digital had a relatively low level of balance especially when covering technology events. This shows that editorial balance is still an ideal in Kenyan digital journalism despite the fact that it faces some problems.

4.6 AI-Related Indicators and Transparency

A number of features linked to AI-powered journalism were observed in the selected sample of articles. In particular, thirty articles (75%) featured search engine optimised headlines aimed at increasing online visibility. Another twenty-six articles (65%) featured trend-based framing focusing on the issues with potential for online engagement. Eighty-five percent (34) of articles demonstrated characteristics typical of fast digital publishing.

A qualitative assessment of these articles showed some recurrent textual features related to AI-assisted writing. Such features include repetitions in syntax throughout paragraphs, common introductory and closing remarks, general transitional words, lack of regionalisms and culture-specific idioms, uniform paragraph lengths, and patterned sentence writing. Some articles were written using language common in institutional news releases with little elaboration beyond this. While these features alone do not prove AI-assisted writing, they acted as qualitative coding markers for possible AI-assisted writing in the context of content analysis.

In spite of the presence of these AI-associated features of content production, no significant use of AI was observed in terms of its reporting to the readership. Only two articles (5%) mentioned the role of AI-powered solutions in producing or editing content. The lack of transparency concerning the usage of AI tools is one of the major problems revealed in this study.

4.7 Emerging Thematic Patterns

The following five key themes were identified in the selected articles. The first one was the Role of AI in Driving Economic Growth and Innovation, where AI is presented as a tool for digital entrepreneurship and national development in many articles. The second one was Governance and Regulation, which includes extensive discussions on AI ethics, data protection law, and regulation. The third theme was Digital Inclusion and Accessibility, which involves reports about efforts made for increasing technology availability in Kenya. The fourth theme was Youth Participation in Digital Innovation, where young people from Kenya are always mentioned as major players of digital Kenya. The fifth one was the problem of Misinformation and Digital Safety.

DISCUSSION

5.1 AI-Assisted Journalism and Journalistic Accuracy

The results obtained from this research study defy the conventional view that the use of artificial intelligence in news media leads to a lack of accuracy in journalism. The level of accuracy in more than four-fifths of the sampled articles proves that the Kenyan digital newsrooms have, to some extent, preserved the basic principles of factual journalism amid growing technologization. This conclusion corresponds to the view of Carlson (2015), who points out that today AI tools operate most effectively as means of increasing efficiency but not as autonomous content creators, and Porlezza & Schapals (2024), who state that journalistic accuracy depends more on editorial traditions than on AI tools.

This variation across media houses is telling. The high accuracy rate in Nation Africa may be explained by the editing and training facilities that exist in what is possibly the largest media house in Kenya. The low accuracy rates in the digital coverage of Radio Africa indicate that the issue of accuracy is less tied to technology than to institutional capabilities and control over content. Indeed, it bolsters the claim that the danger of artificial intelligence in journalism is not technological but institutional.

5.2 Verification and Editorial Oversight

Verification stood out as one of the best indicators of quality journalism among the selected samples. The large number of samples that featured verification points is consistent with Diakopoulos' (2019) assertions about how professional journalism practices have remained relevant despite the pressure for algorithmic efficiencies. Verification becomes important within an information industry where the rapidity of online publication often contradicts the need for thoughtful fact-checking.

The disparities in the levels of verification among media houses show that some media houses have more capabilities than others. For instance, Nation Africa has demonstrated great success in verifying facts. It could be attributed to the available resources such as specialized journalists and other systems and processes that make the process of verification easy. Radio Africa has been shown to engage in relatively weak verification in its online publications. The disparity shows that the efforts by media organizations in terms of investments in newsroom facilities will play a big part in the level of verification more than the use of AI tools.

5.3 Transparency and AI Disclosure

The most notable discovery of the research, however, is the clear discrepancy in the occurrence of production traits related to the use of AI in newsroom operations (85% of articles) and in the minimal occurrence of AI disclosure (5%). Such disparity creates an important issue regarding transparency and ethics. As per the principles of Social Responsibility Theory, media outlets are required to take responsibility not only for the truthfulness of what is published but also for the process of production itself.

Importantly, the identification of AI-related production traits was based on qualitative interpretation rather than automated AI detection software. The coding process focused on recurring linguistic and structural patterns observed across the sampled texts, including formulaic writing style, repetitive syntax, generic transitions, standardized news structure, and limited contextual adaptation. These qualitative observations explain why a high proportion of articles were coded as displaying possible AI-assisted characteristics despite very limited explicit disclosure by the publishing organizations.

The results of the research confirm the conclusions of the international study conducted by Porlezza & Schapals (2024) who found out that media outlets tend to avoid disclosure of the use of AI technologies due to the reasons of competition or fear of bad reception from the readership. Similarly, Voinea (2025) found the transparency as one of the least developed aspects of ethical journalism using AI. Development of standardized AI disclosure practices similar to editorial corrections should be done by Kenyan newsrooms.

5.4 Editorial Balance and Institutional Narratives

The fact that 30% of sampled articles are built primarily based on a single institutional point of view poses significant problems for journalism independence in AI-assisted article production processes. The problem of single source reliance cannot be explained by the use of artificial intelligence itself but might be reinforced by the algorithmic processing of official press releases and institutional texts through AI-assisted content aggregators. According to Diakopoulos (2019), algorithmic systems often privilege easy-to-process institutional texts over the complicated process of multi-source reporting.

The more balanced approach observed at Nation Africa indicates that a balance of sources is achievable within AI-assisted processes when enough editorial staff is engaged. Thus, these results confirm the argument that editorial balance is a matter of journalistic culture and not of technology.

5.5 Theoretical Reflections

There are several implications of the findings within the context of both of the theoretical perspectives utilized in this research. As far as the Social Responsibility Theory is concerned, the persistence of relatively high levels of newsroom standards in terms of accuracy, verifiability, and attribution can be regarded as the sign that the Kenyan media outlets continue to understand and uphold their ethical responsibilities towards the public. The lack of AI transparency, on the other hand, indicates the emergence of the ethical challenge that has not been accounted for by the current social responsibility models yet.

As far as the Gatekeeping Theory is concerned, the fact that the human editorial gatekeepers still maintain their roles and responsibilities even amidst the growth of the algorithmic power is revealed through this study's findings. In addition, it becomes clear that the use of algorithms is mainly related to the operations' optimization and audience analytics and not to the news content itself. Thus, the findings confirm the definition provided by White in 1950 and emphasize that the role of a gatekeeper remains the same even if there is some assistance from algorithms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

The study considered the impact of AI-enabled data analysis and content generation on the integrity and accuracy of journalism in Kenya in the context of online newsrooms by means of a qualitative content analysis of 40 articles from three main digital platforms. The findings raise a number of important conclusions.

Firstly, AI-enabled journalism has not undermined journalistic accuracy in the selected Kenyan media organizations. High rates of factual accuracy, strong sources attribution, and consistent verification practices indicate that the principles of professional journalism persist within the digital environment.

Secondly, at the moment, AI is being used as an enabling technology in Kenya in terms of newsrooms operations, audience analysis, and content optimization without replacing human judgment.

Thirdly, transparency in relation to the use of AI appears to be the most important gap in ethics identified by the study. The sharp discrepancy between the high frequency of AI-related production features and complete absence of AI reporting indicates that Kenyan media organizations lack sufficient mechanisms of accountability concerning AI-enabled journalism.

The study also demonstrates that qualitative content analysis can identify recurring linguistic and editorial characteristics associated with AI-assisted journalism while simultaneously using descriptive statistics to summarize coding outcomes across a larger sample. This methodological integration strengthens transparency in interpreting AI-related newsroom practices.

Finally, variance in journalistic excellence between different media organizations is an indicator of institutional capabilities and editorial competence rather than the use of AI, pointing to organizational elements being more important determinants of journalistic excellence than technology.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are advanced for media practitioners, regulators, and educators.

Media firms need to formulate comprehensive policies on the application of artificial intelligence in their operations. The policies should define what constitutes the responsible use of AI and create standardized mechanisms for disclosing the use of AI in news reporting. Such disclosures will be akin to those in corrections policy, which informs the audience whenever the work of journalists has been assisted by automated systems.

Professional training in digital literacy is necessary among journalists and editors. Continuous professional development for journalists and editors should entail lessons on AI literacy, digital verification skills, and ethical considerations arising from algorithms.

The Media Council of Kenya needs to take an active part in formulating sector-wide guidelines on AI applications in journalism. In formulating such guidelines, the Media Council needs to engage regulatory authorities, media firms, NGOs, and journalism schools.

Journalism education programs need to include lessons on AI, algorithmic ethics, and critical evaluations of AI-generated content. Preparing future journalists for a world where AI is increasingly being utilized is essential for maintaining high levels of journalistic excellence.

6.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The current study covered only three major online media outlets of Kenya and a certain four-month period of their operation, restricting the generality of results obtained to the entire spectrum of Kenyan newsrooms. The lack of any triangulation of the content-analytic approach with data gathered via journalist interviews or newsroom observations leaves unexplored the internal perspective and decision-making of editorial teams.

Further research in this area should include triangulation of the content-analytic data with qualitative interviews conducted with journalists, editors, and media managers in order to reveal the process of integration of AI tools into editorial work better. Comparative studies involving the assessment of AI use in various African countries can add to the overall regional picture of the situation. Finally, it is necessary to explore the issue of public trust in AI-based journalism.

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