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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON LEGACY
MEDIA IN UGANDA: THE CASE OF NEW VISION NEWSPAPER**

By

Francis Kagolo

580171

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Executive Master's in Media Leadership and Innovation

Nairobi, Kenya

26/12/2023

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APPROVAL PAGE

The Aga Khan University
Graduate School of Media and Communications

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Executive Master's in Media Leadership and Innovation

Members of the Capstone Project Evaluation Committee appointed to examine the project of
FRANCIS KAGOLO-580171, find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Prof. Nancy Booker,
Dean,
Chair, Capstone Project Evaluation Committee

Mr David Aduda, Supervisor

Member,
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26/12/2023

DECLARATION

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON LEGACY MEDIA IN UGANDA: THE CASE OF NEW VISION NEWSPAPER

I, FRANCIS KAGOLO-580171, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. The editorial assistance provided to me has in no way added to the substance of my thesis, which is the product of my research endeavours.

Signature

26/12/2023

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this capstone project to the memory of my beloved father, Peter Lusiba. His unwavering dedication to securing the best education for me and his constant encouragement to pursue continuous learning have been the guiding lights throughout my academic journey. Sadly, he departed this world on January 15, 2023. Dad, may your soul continue to rest in eternal peace. Your enduring legacy and the values you instilled in me will forever inspire and shape my pursuits.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the academic advice and support offered by my supervisor David Aduda. His guidance contributed significantly to the completion of this Capstone Project. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of all the EMLLI scholars, especially Cohort 3, for always sharing their insights, which came in handy throughout the course and in writing this project. I also thank the AKU-GSMC faculty and staff for their support since we joined the programme in 2022.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the impact of digital transformation on legacy media in Uganda, using the leading English newspaper, New Vision, as a case study. Employing qualitative methods, including documentary analysis and interviews with 13 senior editors, circulation and finance managers, and media scholars, the study evaluated the impact of digital transformation on New Vision, examined revenue streams, and assessed the newspaper's content strategy effectiveness. Findings reveal that while digital technology enhanced news gathering and distribution efficiency, it diminished the newspaper's ability to break stories, leading to declining sales and revenue. New Vision's attempts to monetise digital content face challenges due to low online subscription rates, prompting cost-cutting measures that compromise content quality. Diversification into non-media ventures and reliance on non-profit agency funding raise sustainability concerns. The study recommends re-evaluating downsizing, streamlining business ventures, exploring government funding cautiously, and considering a freemium paywall model. Crucially, it advocates for a streamlined non-profit revenue model, proposing the establishment of a foundation dedicated to funding investigative public interest journalism.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACME:	African Centre for Media Excellence
API:	American Press Institution
BPS:	The British Psychological Society
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CJP:	Charitable Journalism Project
DGF:	Democratic Governance Facility
FY:	Financial Year
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
ICIJ:	International Consortium of Investigative Journalists
INN:	Investigative News Network
MIC:	Media Innovation Centre
NAA:	Newspaper Association of America
NAB:	National Association of Broadcasters
NMOs:	News Media Organisations
NPJ:	Non-profit Journalism
PWC:	PricewaterhouseCoopers
TV:	Television
UBC:	Uganda Broadcasting Corporation
URN:	Uganda Radio Network
WAN:	World Association of Newspapers
WAN-IFRA:	World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Business Model:

This is a revenue stream that can ensure that quality journalism is funded (Donders, et al., 2018). This funding aims to ensure that the media zealously upholds its role as The Fourth Estate, scrutinising power dynamics, and championing the public interest with an unyielding commitment (Folkenflik, 2009)

Business Model Innovation:

The process through which an organization adjusts its business model” (Joubert, 2020).

Media Viability:

The process of producing quality journalism content in a financially sustainable way (Owilla, et al., 2022). This definition considers two major dimensions of media viability, that is content sustainability and financial sustainability.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a growing crisis in the media landscape that poses a severe threat to media organizations and journalism and the vital role it plays in contemporary democracies (Macnamara, 2010). Available statistics paint a sobering picture of the challenges facing the newspaper industry.

Statistics from the US Audit Bureau of Circulations show a decline in total daily newspaper circulation in the United States, plummeting from 63.3 million in 1984 to 48.6 million in 2008, followed by a further dip of 10.6 per cent in 2009, bringing it down to approximately 44 million (NAA, 2008; Pérez-Peña, 2007). Alarming as these figures are, the situation has only worsened in recent years, with the year 2020 witnessing another painful descent to 24.3 million for weekdays and 25.8 million for Sundays, each marking a 6 per cent decrease from the previous year (Pew Research Centre, 2021).

This trend is not confined to the United States or the Global North alone; it is a global phenomenon. In Uganda, New Vision, the country's largest circulating English daily, has seen its circulation decline from about 31,000 copies in 2013 (Alina, 2013), to 23,636 copies in 2019 (Uganda Business News, 2020).

Concurrently, media organisations face mounting pressure on their advertising revenues (Klaß, 2020). The Media Innovation Centre (2021) posits that the survival of many media organisations globally is pegged on advertising revenues and this is no different in the Ugandan media scene but the new players on digital platforms are tapping into the

advertising market share. This has intensified anxieties among journalists already grappling with the spectre of job redundancies and media closures. Cuts (2008) and Konieczna & Powers (2016) estimated a staggering loss of 15,554 journalist jobs in the United States in 2008, followed by a comparable number in 2009. This pattern has been experienced globally, posing a grave challenge to the very essence of journalism as a watchdog and catalyst for societal progress.

These economic realities have made it increasingly difficult for traditional media entities to sustain their profitability while fulfilling their noble public duty as the Fourth Estate - a role pivotal to propelling nations, including Uganda, toward enhanced governance and social development (Tumusiime, 2016). Konieczna & Powers (2016) argue that as the fourth estate, journalism has the responsibility of building democracy but the current financial instability has forced many traditional mainstream media houses to reduce expenditure on newsroom operations, highlighting investigative journalism as the biggest casualty.

In Uganda, declining media revenues have forced companies to terminate the contracts of many senior journalists and editors and increase story count targets for the young team members while maintaining them at low pay in the endeavour to cut operating costs. The Media Innovation Centre (2021) explains that this has worsened the vice of corruption among journalists, which lowers the quality of content published. Kyamutetera (2019) concurs that this situation – the declining advert revenues – will challenge the operations of newspapers in Uganda unless they diversify revenue models. There is a pressing need to devise business models that can sustain the production of high-quality, impactful public-interest news content in the changing media landscape (Macnamara, 2010 Holm, Günzel, and Ulhøi, 2013 cited in Klauf, 2020). As such, this study investigated the impact of digital transformation on New

Vision newspaper to explore revenue streams that can safeguard quality public interest journalism in Uganda's ever-evolving media ecosystem.

1.2. Background of the Study

During the second half of the 20th century, the world welcomed the Third Industrial Revolution, marked by the advent of digital technology. This marked the transformation from the traditional/legacy, analogue media platforms such as printed newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio, to internet-enabled digital media, where platforms can supplement each other about different user contexts and productions (Petersen, 2007). To adapt to this digital shift, Williams & Stroud (2021) noted that mass media outlets ventured into the creation of websites, providing readers with access to news “stories on the internet in addition to traditionally printed newspapers”.

Authors such as Cornia, et al. (2019, cited in Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021:1) noted moving slowly, imitating international players and trying to implement many things without clear business strategies as the key mistakes legacy media owners committed at the onset of the digital technology. In Uganda, Tumwine, et al., (2014) noted that print media houses first downplayed the digital revolution and instead, increased cover prices without corresponding upgrading of the quality of news content, to the detriment of the readers. Fenez (2009) posited that these mistakes played in the favour of global social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which not only attracted audiences but also advertisers.

In an era characterised by rapid technological advancements, media houses worldwide are now confronted with the intricate challenge of producing compelling content while simultaneously maintaining their financial viability. An unmistakable trend is the changing

preferences of audiences, who are increasingly gravitating toward consuming audio-visual content, thereby inducing a discernible migration away from traditional print media. This transition is further complicated by the emergence of novel content creators in the digital realm who are seizing a share of the advertising market (PWC, 2019). Content creators on social media are increasingly replacing newspapers as the primary target of commercial advertising, resulting in reduced revenues for newspapers (Marwan, 2022).

The global concern of hard paper copy sales came to the limelight after the WAN reports (2011 and 2012) indicated that newspapers revenue in 2010 and 2011 were in the free fall from 10.6 to 9.6 per cent, hitting European and American continents hardest followed by Africa and Asia (Tumwine, et al., 2014). Over the years, advertising in Uganda – the backbone of print media revenue - has witnessed a substantial contraction from 21 per cent in 2010 to 13 per cent in 2018, underscoring the inherent challenges within the industry (Ipsos, 2015 cited in Tumusiime, 2016; Media Innovation Centre, 2021).

Donders, et al., (2018) noted that “newspaper publishers have been hit hardest by advertising revenues moving online and a difficult implementation of pay models online yet there are many professional and semi-professional offers of news to compete with, more so than in broadcasting”. This has created an intricate web of challenges that media entities must navigate. Online there is a model of abundance, yet with a much smaller return on investment (Donders, et al., 2018). Online newspaper advertising has failed to compensate for the decline in print advertising revenue (Marwan, 2022 Donders, et al., 2018). Yet, as Salazar (2019) noted, the watchdog role of the media is most likely to be undermined under the new digital dispensation.

Thus, the new digital news organisations appear to be imperfect substitutes, lacking the resources to replace the democratic oversight traditionally provided by disappearing newspapers and other legacy media (Fico et al., 2013, cited in Franklin, 2014). “As advertising revenues fall, digital media platforms rise and traditional media business models fail in many parts of the world, the reaction has been to lay off staff, cut back on journalism-related expenses, jump onto the digital bandwagon or stop publishing altogether” (Cage 2016, cited in Tumusiime, 2016:9). Donders, et al. (2018) observed that the profusion of easily accessible news online has not attracted the quality that the newspapers are known for. The persistent trends in declining revenues from copy sales and advertising mean that for news producers, the newspaper’s pre-digital business model has crumbled (Wilding, et al., 2018).

In Uganda, an unsettling contemplation has emerged. According to Agaba (2023), some journalists are still being paid as little as Uganda Shillings 5,000 (US Dollars 0.13407) per story published or less, yet the cost of living keeps rising. She argues that the poor pay has resulted in high attrition rates among Ugandan journalists. The impact is also visible through the content published in newspapers, which shows a deviation from impactful public-interest news to market-driven journalism (Kiggundu, 2023). This market-driven journalism manifests through various facets, such as the forging of editorial-business alliances, heightened coverage of celebrity-related news, and the integration of infotainment characterised by sensationalism to attract a diverse readership (Underwood, 1993). Good investigative journalism and public interest reporting have been sacrificed because whenever cash-strapped news organisations make cuts, they look to what is most costly or riskier (Folkenflik, 2009; & Lewis, 2007).

Roberts (2006) posits that: “A people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives”. “Therefore, as news organizations have reduced their commitment to serious journalism, numbers of reporters monitoring those in power have reduced, there has been an incalculable cost to communities, to citizens’ ability to monitor those in power, and of course to those professionals directly impacted in the profession of journalism itself” (Lewis, 2007:3). According to Lewis, this has resulted in a generation of an uninformed populace that is less knowledgeable about public affairs and thus, unarmed to advocate their rights and services, especially in countries in the Global South like Uganda where literacy levels are still minimal, effectively undermining or slowing down democratic governance.

In response to this intricate political-economic media landscape in Uganda, “business model innovation in news media organisations is pressing and urgent” (Evens, et al., 2017:2), to reignite and sustain a profession that Lewis (2007) says is under serious threat. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the impact of digital transformation on the legacy media in Uganda and explore viable revenue streams necessary to guarantee the sustainability of quality public interest journalism. The New Vision newspaper stood out as a compelling case study, offering valuable insights into the evolving media ecosystem and the quest for sustainable pathways amidst turbulent times.

1.3. Rationale of the Study

Just like the global trend, Uganda’s print media has been hit hardest by the digital disruption, which was worsened recently by the COVID-19 lockdowns and its consequent financial squeeze in 2020 and 2021. At least eight newspaper titles and an investigative news magazine

have folded up in the past decade or so. Of these, Vision Group (publishers of New Vision), “where the government holds a 53.3 per cent stake and as the biggest advertiser in Uganda, the majority shareholder inevitably channels a huge chunk of her advertisement spend to the company’s extensive portfolio, lost four – Kampala Sun, a popular tabloid for the urbanites and Etop, Rupiny, and Orumuri; the only vernacular weeklies in the East, North and Western Uganda respectively” (Kigambo, 2020:4). Others like The Independent, an investigative news magazine, have kept only the online versions. The remaining four national newspapers are also grappling with ever-reducing revenue, which has resulted in layoffs and cuts on newsroom operations as media managers struggle to cut down costs.

This made this research quite timely to investigate the impact of digital transformation on legacy media in Uganda as well as revenue models that newspapers can utilise to sustain the production of good quality public interest news content. This study has cast light on possible ways newspapers can compete in a media landscape characterised by an increasing number of both rivals and substitutes online. In scholarship, the study contributes to the field of media business management research.

1.4 Current Literature Review

1.4.1. Introduction

This literature review provides the background about New Vision newspaper, the case study for this research. Although the introduction and background of the study have offered a fair insight into the impact of digital technology on traditional print media, the literature review expounds on this by taking a much deeper look at the digital disruption in Uganda’s context.

The literature review also discusses the media revenue streams that are emerging in response to digital disruption. It also provides insights into print media content strategies for attracting newspaper readers.

1.4.2. About New Vision

The New Vision Printing and Publishing Company Limited started in March 1986 as a government-owned corporation but was in 2004 transformed into a public company listed on the stock exchange as Vision Group. The majority shareholder is the Government of Uganda with a shareholding of 53.3 per cent. The public holds the remaining 46.7 per cent (Vision Group, 2023). This gives the government a dominant say in major decisions of the company (Alina, 2013).

The company has seven titles: New Vision, Saturday Vision, Sunday Vision, Bukedde, Bukedde ku Lwomukaaga, Bukedde ku Sande and Kampala Sun (now published only online at www.kampalasan.co.ug); six television stations and seven radio stations. The company also has commercial printing services under the brand “Vision Printing”, publishing services under “Vision Publishing”, a digital platform under the brand “New Vision Digital Experience” and customized offerings.

The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development appoints the company board on behalf of the government. This board is tasked with appointing the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director as well as deciding on the editorial policy (Media Barometer Report, 2010). The government’s shareholding and involvement in the management of the company may imply that the media house struggles to balance government interests on the one hand and give the public credible news on the other. However, the Media Barometer Report

indicates further that despite the pressures the New Vision faces, it is still a more credible and respectable paper than most government-owned papers in Africa, as can, for example, be seen in published hard-hitting editorials on corruption within government institutions and demands that the culprits be prosecuted.

1.4.3. Uganda's Media Landscape Amidst the Digital Disruption

Whereas the majority of Ugandans report getting their daily news from radio than any other medium, that news and even the topical issues that inform all kinds of talk shows come to them courtesy of newspapers (Kigambo, 2020). Print remains key in Uganda's media ecosystem, as many radio stations across Uganda do not even have basic functional newsrooms (Kigambo, 2020). Besides some niche print media like Sports Weekly and magazines (which are mainly about fashion and entertainment), the country today has four newspapers – New Vision and Daily Monitor (dailies), The Observer (weekly) and Bukedde (daily published in Luganda, the most spoken local language in Uganda). At least six newspapers and an investigative news magazine – The Independent – have folded in the past decade. Of these, Vision Group (publishers of New Vision), where the government holds a 53.3 per cent stake and as the biggest advertiser in Uganda, the majority shareholder inevitably channels a huge chunk of her advertisement spend to the company's extensive portfolio (Kigambo, 2020), lost four – Kampala Sun, a popular tabloid for the urbanites and Etop, Rupiny, and Orumuri, the only vernacular weeklies in the east, north and western Uganda respectively.

Nonetheless, newspapers and other mainstream media in Uganda are in the throes of innovating albeit at a slow pace and in a re-oriented fashion to connect with a globalised media landscape, which is in a constantly changing mode (Diedong, 2022). In Uganda, 93 per

cent of media outlets across print, TV, and radio have transitioned to producing and distributing digital content in podcast or audio format (Owillla et al., 2022). There is also a fast-growing segment of peripheral online/social media content producers supported by rapid technological developments that have seen greater use of smartphones in the country. Research conducted in Uganda by the Media Innovation Centre (2021) acknowledged 23 local digital news media outlets by May 2020 and yet the number keeps increasing every year.

Consequently, subscriptions to newspapers have been decreasing, classified advertising has largely moved online, and add-skipping poses a real-life problem to free-to-air players (Donders, et al., 2018). The Media Innovation Centre (2021) noted that circulation numbers for Ugandan newspapers and print advertising spending continue to fall as a result of the growing competition from online and social media. Likewise, Tumusiime (2016:5) observed a declining trend in advertising in Uganda's media organisations, explaining that "print media advertising revenue dropped from 21 per cent in 2010 to 17 per cent in 2015, while radio dropped from 60 per cent to 58 per cent in the same period".

The situation is exacerbated by the country's weak economy and, as Donders, et al. (2018) observed, small economies have more vulnerable media markets. This is because, in small economies, the majority of the population would lack the disposable income to spend on buying newspapers or, in general terms, paying for news/information. Uganda is still a low-income nation, according to the World Bank. Uganda's GDP in US dollars is valued at \$ 45.56 billion and the GDP per capita is \$ 964.2 (The World Bank, 2022). Worse still, about 30 per cent of Ugandans were poor in 2019/2020 (The World Bank, 2023). This means most Ugandans lack disposable income and are more likely to consider a newspaper a non-

essential commodity. Indeed, when Tumwine, et al. (2014) studied newspaper copy sales and the performance of the print media in Uganda, they discovered that the purchasing behaviour of the population depended upon several factors, but mainly covered price:

“...in the event of a cover price increase, some readers stick to their most favourite newspapers while others access newspapers through copy sharing and hiring (two people combining to buy a copy and/or reading a newspaper at a (small) fee to the vendor and return it regardless of the equivalent improvement in the product offers (content) as they only look at the price offers (Tumwine, et al., 2014: 147)

The poor masses also remain unattractive to advertisers. This explains why the “Ugandan government dominates the advertising market, which means the media has to straddle the thin line of courting politicians in government on the one hand and maintaining editorial integrity on the other” (Media Innovation Centre, 2021:10).

Scholars conclude that the newspapers’ decreasing economic profitability negatively impacts the contribution the news media can make to society (Donders, et al., 2018) in terms of serving as the voice of the voiceless and strengthening democracy. There is a declining quality of news content – what Tumusiime (2016) called simplification of content – due to increased staff sackings (downsizing) and other cost-cutting measures in newsrooms. “Quality decreases if media firms have smaller newsrooms and if their employees receive poor salaries” (Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021:2). As a result, Kigambo (2020:5) noted that “newspaper reporters constantly complain of being overworked and underpaid since they now have to file copy to different platforms: the traditional paper, its digital equivalent and sister media outlets (TV and Radio) as well”. Kigambo argues that many journalists nowadays “often rely on sponsorship to make reporting trips with the concomitant problem

that their coverage may be influenced/limited,” adding that corruption has also increased among journalists. There is also the likelihood of increased self-censorship as media editors and owners endeavour to appease the few advertisers that still spend their money on legacy media because, as Nassanga (2009; cited in Media Innovation Centre, 2021:10) argues, “media content is predominantly targeted at meeting the interests of advertisers at the expense of public interest”.

1.4.4. Emerging Business Models

Today, as more news media are purchased by conglomerates, or are forced to close their doors, amidst the digital disruption, the economics of the profession are being scrutinized more closely and so, the last several years have witnessed increased discussion of new business models for the mass media, specifically for media that provided their audiences with news (Brown, 2011). While many scholars are now concerned about monetizing digital media operations, some studies have delved into alternative revenue models for the besieged legacy media, each aiming to chart a sustainable path forward. Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) agree that an appropriate business model can be the best way to revitalize media companies.

Before the mid-nineties, news media companies had a clear business model, which had lasted for more than two centuries (Karimi & Walter, 2016). In the traditional model, newspapers sold information at low prices (below their costs), and advertising revenues covered the remaining costs and provided a profit. This model is waning majorly due to digital disruption. Wilding, et al. (2018) advise newspaper companies to diversify into other fields to create new revenue streams. Nel (2010) concurs that public interest journalism is expensive but can be financed if companies can find a variety of sources of income such as events, e-commerce,

consulting, training, distribution, printing or audio-visual production, on top of subscription and advertising.

The diversity of types of media content and media users' needs and preferences indicate that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is unlikely to ensure media survival – or, better, reform and renewal; so, the best way forward may be a hybrid model involving diversification to create multiple revenue streams developed to suit each medium and its operations (API, 2022). In the United States, for instance, NAB (1995-2015) reported that television networks that drew revenue from both subscribers and advertisers appeared to be more resilient than those that depended on just one source or the others.

Nevertheless, some of the most discussed business models include the implementation of paywalls (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017; Holm, 2016 & Myllylahti, 2017), the exploration of micropayments (Geidner & D'Arcy, 2015), the repurposing and reuse of archives (MacNamara, 2010), crowdfunding initiatives (Ladson & Lee, 2017), the incorporation of personal data and sharewalls (Evens & Van Damme, 2016), the pursuit of non-profit journalism models (Tumusiime, 2016), and even the sale of personal data collected about media users, encompassing their interests and online information-seeking patterns (MacNamara, 2010). In the ensuing discussion, therefore, this researcher analyzes three prominent models that have taken centre stage in scholarly discourse: Subscriptions and paywalls; public funding; and the paradigm of non-profit journalism. Each of these models represents a distinct approach to addressing the complex challenges posed by the digital era and presents unique opportunities and considerations for legacy media organizations seeking to adapt and thrive in this rapidly evolving landscape.

1.4.4.1. Subscriptions and Paywalls

The digital advertising ecosystem has faced unprecedented challenges, forcing media publishers to embark on a strategic shift, redirecting their focus towards their readers. The objective was clear: generate revenue directly from the audience through subscriptions and memberships. This marked the inception of the paywall concept (Bilton, 2018). A paywall is a web page that restricts visitor access to further content unless the visitor pays for a subscription (Don, 2019). First launched by The Wall Street Journal in 1996 (Simon & Graves, 2019, as cited in Williams & Stroud, 2021), two primary implementations of the paywall model have since emerged including the full paywall where all content is securely locked behind a paywall, demanding payment for access; and the hybrid model, which melds free content with fees for specialized or high-volume content, with payment options ranging from subscriptions to micro-payments (Macnamara, 2010). Hybrid or Freemium paywall/subscription model has other forms including where content is free for everyone, but paid members can access certain content a few hours before the general public (Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021).

The metered paywall hybrid model has risen to prominence, offering readers a predetermined number of free articles per month before nudging them towards a subscription. This approach has become particularly prevalent, especially when media outlets feature exclusive news stories (Howard, 2018). It presumes that to succeed in the realm of paywalls, a crucial prerequisite is the provision of unique and compelling content not readily available elsewhere. This principle aligns with the World Association of Newspapers' acknowledgement that charged content must stand out from the crowd (WAN, 2010). Sundelin (2009) concurs that consumers (or readers) “see breaking news and general interest

news as commodities, something that is more difficult to charge for online than offline; instead, they place a high value on deep insights and analysis provided by journalists, and a growing segment is increasingly demanding specialized information”. Research has also shown that individuals with a strong interest in specific content areas, such as finance and sports, are more inclined to pay for online content (PWC, 2009).

Proponents of paywalls argue that they grant news outlets a viable pathway to profitability, reducing their dependence on fickle digital advertising and enhancing their editorial independence. This sentiment finds resonance in the words of Nick Thompson, editor-in-chief of Wired.com, who emphasized the pivotal role of direct monetary relationships with readers in securing journalism's financial future (Bilton, 2018). During the COVID-19 pandemic when governments declared bans on travelling and social events, Owilla, et al. (2022) also discovered that in an increasingly competitive advertising environment, subscriptions provided a more stable revenue stream for newspapers than others, such as single-copy content sales or even advertising.

However, the paywall approach is not without its critics. Some researchers like Wadbring and Bergstrom (2021) express apprehensions about the ability to retain loyal paywall readers. There are concerns that readers may gravitate towards free alternative sites, eroding brand loyalty and posing a challenge to the sustainability of the paywall model (Howard, 2018; Day, 2009). Ethical concerns have also surfaced, with some suggesting that paywalls might pose a threat to the free flow of information (Crawford, 2009). Critics contend that paywalls may inadvertently limit access to information for those unable to afford subscriptions, potentially deepening societal inequalities by restricting access to reliable news sources (Williams & Stroud, 2021:2). Benson (2019) is one of the authors questioning the democratic

cost of urging audiences to pay for the news. According to him, “Even if subscriptions contribute to higher quality news, [if] that news fails to reach a broad audience, it’s not really a solution to the civic crisis of an uninformed, often misinformed, and distrustful citizenry.” However, Kigambo (2020) describes the claim by digital enthusiasts that information has to be free as “hollow”, because “all valuable information has a cost attached to its production”.

A suggestion for paying for online access to the print media in Uganda has failed to take shape (Tumwine, et al., 2014). Certainly, in newspaper publishing, the transition from a free towards a pay model is considered a challenge, specifically because people’s experience-to-pay was not stimulated in the early days of online news offers and, consequently, some people are not willing to pay (Donders, et al., 2018). Newspapers in both Flanders and Norway point to a declining willingness to pay for content majorly because of the extensive free offer of public broadcasters that jeopardise the potential uptake of pay models for news (IBID, n.d). Chyi (2013) and Chyi and Ng (2020) studied the struggle between print and online US newspapers and concluded that not many people are willing to pay for digital information because they perceive online news as inferior goods. Newman, et al. (2021), quoting the Reuters Digital News Report 2021, disclosed that 17 per cent of individuals across 20 Western countries willingly paid for online news content, and marking a consistent growth trajectory over the years. Nevertheless, the team posited that a substantial portion of the audience remains resistant to paying for content as many individuals lack either a strong interest in news or the disposable income to prioritize paid content. Some prefer to sample news from various free sources rather than committing to a single paid provider (Newman, et al., 2021).

1.4.4.2. Public Funding

In an era where the sustainability of digital subscriptions remains uncertain (Evens & Raats, 2018), an increasing chorus of voices is advocating for a shift towards public funding of media as a potential solution. This model seeks to secure the future of journalism by relying on financial support from the public or government entities, thereby lessening the dependency on advertising revenue.

Public funding of media operates on the premise that journalism serves a critical role in democracy and should be safeguarded against economic pressures that can compromise its integrity. Public funding can manifest in various forms, encompassing tax incentives, levies on telecommunications users to bolster news media, financial backing for journalists (Macnamara, 2010), and direct state grants to media organizations. In numerous European nations, newspapers benefit from reduced value-added tax (VAT) rates such as in the United Kingdom, where newspapers enjoy zero VAT (Cage, 2016).

In Uganda, news media organisations lack government support, meaning they always have to compete for the declining commercial adverts. However, Owilla, et al. (2021) advocated structured government support to media houses observing that “Subscription revenue and direct government funding offered better revenue performance for NMOs in East Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to advertising.”

Yet, public funding has serious ethical and professional implications. One primary concern revolves around the potential compromise of media independence. Bátorfy and Urbán (2019) argued that ‘government and state advertising can be a powerful tool for political favouritism, censorship, market distortion and the emergence of an uncritical media pushing the

government rather than the public interest agenda'. In instances where governments demonstrate undemocratic tendencies, there is a legitimate fear that tax incentives and grants could be weaponised to capture the media and stifle independent journalism (Dragomir, 2017). Dragomir argues that governments can “use funding to control media by not financing independent journalism, but choosing to fund instead media outlets that advance the government agenda and the interests of its allies and supporters, either political groups or businesses”.

Even in democratically-elected governments, allocating substantial additional funds from taxpayers to support media can be a contentious endeavour. The challenges are amplified in developing nations like Uganda, where economic instability can periodically strain government finances and taxation capacities. In such economically precarious environments, Macnamara (2010) argues that while the concept of public funding garners favour among reformers, its widespread acceptance among the public and political circles remains elusive. Kigambo (2020) and Owilla, et al. (2022:9) argue that government funding “would have to come with checks and balances to ensure that such financing does not compromise editorial independence”.

1.4.4.3. Non-Profit Journalism

With all the stresses and strains on commercial models of news, the idea of non-profit journalism is increasingly being seen as an attractive option (Hermida & Young, 2020). Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) observed that increasingly ‘more foundations are getting concerned over the decline in public interest journalism and have appreciated that it cannot be left to operate on the mercy of market forces’. Lewis (2007) attributed this to the fact that

“high-quality news requires time and money – finite resources that many news organizations are increasingly unable or unwilling to expend.”

Journalists, in particular, are contemplating whether the industry should relinquish the pursuit of profit and instead chart a course towards fresh avenues of sustaining quality journalism (Folkenflik, 2009). Non-profit journalism has since emerged as one of the avenues. Offering a compelling perspective, Holtz, co-author of "Blogging for Business" (2008), advocates for enhancing the quality of publications and providing content free of charge, while sourcing income from alternative channels.

Under Non-Profit Journalism (NPJ), media organisations draw support from private donations, crowdfunding, specialized funds, and foundation grants to underwrite operational costs (Tumusiime, 2016). Donor-supported media institutions have become a pragmatic approach, mirroring a model embraced in several countries, particularly the United States. In the United States, non-profit news organizations witnessed a 73 per cent increase in revenue between 2011 and 2013 (Knight Foundation, 2015). The Knight Foundation (2015) also argued that the profound disruption witnessed in the news industry over recent decades has to support a new ecosystem of non-profit news ventures to fill the void left in local news and investigative reporting. Schiffrin (2019) expounds on this thought, arguing that there are “many worthy media outlets, run by passionate and committed professionals, that simply cannot find a way to make money apart from getting it from donors”.

Donor financing – especially funding from non-governmental sources such as foundations – is far less susceptible to market ups and downs. Customers are more fickle than donors; a shiny new app or service can grab market share overnight. Investors, especially, impact ones, are sheep who travel in herds and are scared easily. Donors, by contrast, are notoriously sticky. They are risk-averse and path-dependent, and once they make sectoral funding commitments, they may be more reliable (Schiffrin, 2019:11).

Lewis (2007:45) argues that most old non-profit news organisations even in the US and many European countries emerged out of the limitations of commercial journalism: “If commercial journalism had been functioning well with great independence, courage and enterprise, many years ago, none of the investigative reporting centres (he studied) would have even been necessary or created. They began expressly to respond to a perceived need for more and higher quality reportage. They have been fulfilling that need, with limited capacity and sometimes difficult financial circumstances with unflinching courage, creativity and perseverance.”

Most of the non-profits are new (startups) but there is a chorus among authors for the established media organisations to pick up the model. Friedlich (2022:1) argues that ‘size matters’ even in journalism, and since it does matter, “the people would be better served by a large-scale legacy news enterprise converted to non-profit ownership and dedicated to public service journalism than by a startup”. As one of the most successful non-profits, Friedlich (pg. 1) cites *The Inquirer*, which “is today the largest US newspaper owned by a non-profit with a newsroom of more than 200 journalists, supported by thousands of community donors”.

Proponents of this model argue that it allows “media companies to deliver news in the manner of a public utility rather than as a market commodity” (Salazar, 2019). Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) posited that this helps “to generate value for several diverse audiences, instead of generating profits for shareholders”. Folkenflik (2009) strongly advocated for this revenue model, arguing that once media houses are liberated from the constraints of profit-making concerns, they can uphold their role as the fourth estate, scrutinizing power dynamics, and championing the public interest with an unyielding commitment. Koniczna and Powers (2016:6) noted the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) is

one among “a growing body of non-profit news organisations founded by former commercial journalists who are concerned about the ability of the market to produce quality journalism”. The others say that ICIJ’s investigative journalism is “impact-oriented” and its reporting led to “inquiries, changes in law or systems being fixed”. This success is because ICIJ is a non-profit entity, the “people who had given them money wanted to see results” (Konieczna & Powers, 2016).

Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) also studied 20 media outlets in Europe, Latin America and the US and discovered that all non-profit media had “made the needs and problems of their users (society) the primary focus of their work; they build communities around high-quality content and put public service ahead of revenue generation”. If, investigative journalism is “inherently more impact-oriented” than other forms of journalism, “investigative non-profits are even more impact-oriented” (Merritt and McCombs 2004; cited in Konieczna & Powers, 2016:7). The Knight Foundation (2013), the funder of various non-profit journalism entities, also reported that several news non-profits it researched produced excellent content accessible to hundreds of thousands of readers, influencing changes in public laws and policies and resulting into the imprisonment of several bad actors. When Konieczna and Robinson (2014:969) studied the Institute of Non-Profit News - INN, a group of 90 non-profit media ventures (at the time) that was formed in 2009, they also noted that “at the core of their missions and their practices lay a commitment to civic journalism and the idea that citizens represent a fundamental component of any venture to provide accurate, significant information about public affairs”.

Lewis, et al. (2005:1) noted that “one of the holes unfilled by commercial news organizations includes the voices of “regular” people, that is, non-officials and non-activists”. Proponents

argue that this void can be filled by non-profit journalism. The US non-profits, such as Texas Observer, which Konieczna & Robinson, (2014) studied provided a voice for the voiceless and the researchers concluded that their communities would then “be better-informed, better connected to one another, and better able to influence policymakers”. Friedlich (2022) argues that “since great scale and great journalism are often not friends, some local news owners had poorly served or largely abandoned their communities in the pursuit of scale and profit”. However, he posits that “non-profit news is often more representative, more responsive, and more closely tied to local communities”.

In Uganda, the print media is 100 per cent commercial. Non-profit journalism is yet to take root in Uganda save for URN news agency (Tumusiime, 2016), which has been active for over 18 years now. By 2016, the URN was being funded by seven European countries and the European Union to cover up to 90 per cent of its operational costs, including staff salaries, and Tumusiime (2016:3) revealed that it had demonstrated that, “shielded from the vagaries of the market, independent journalism can continue to serve the public good”. His research revealed that URN editors and journalists “felt freer, bolder and more independent working for the news agency” since they did not worry about profits and balancing the interests of government and commercial advertisers (pg. 17).

However, it is imperative to recognise that non-profit approaches are not a panacea guaranteeing the enduring health of journalism. Several authors question the sustainability of this relatively novel business model. Folkenflik (2009) argues that acquiring initial funding from private foundations and sustaining this funding can be an arduous task, entailing extensive negotiations. In Uganda, some donor-funded community radios sometimes “are often forced to go off air for lack of funds to fuel generators during electricity outages” The

(Unwanted Witness Uganda, 2014:11). The report shows that ‘shortage of funds has also led to a high turnover of volunteer broadcasters as many of them opt to join better paying commercial stations after benefiting from free training at the non-profit radios’ (pg. 11). Besides, Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) also opined that some restrictive financial legal instruments and bureaucracy in the public sector in some countries may hamper fundraising drives by non-profit media.

Schiffrin (2019) says several donors that have been funding journalism, especially in the Global South are tired and unwilling to provide support for decades to come. Friedlich (2022:1) also argues that while non-profit “news has created meaningful new reporting capacity for journalism, its long-term success and impact will depend upon it becoming a much larger and smarter business”. Konieczna and Robinson (2014) argue that non-profits may not be able to replace traditional news publications (that depended on advert revue) because, likely due to unstable incomes, a large portion of them depends on freelance and user-generated content. Folkenflik (2009) warned that the involvement of wealthy patrons may also introduce complexities by potentially influencing media agendas, and as a result, he averred that, while promising, the non-profit model may not be universally replicable. Earlier, in 1995, the Centre for Public Integrity, the largest non-profit media organization at the time-based in Washington D.C., had stopped raising funds from companies and labour unions because of their direct economic interests in influencing public policy (Lewis, 2007). On the other hand, non-profit organisations supporting journalism are increasingly coming under pressure from foundations and others to show a return on their investment (Konieczna & Powers, 2016). To deal with these challenges, Schiffrin (2019) calls for the creation of a global media fund to help non-profit media outlets struggling with viability concerns.

Nonetheless, it is also important to note that non-profits can also diversify their revenue streams. Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) discovered that in terms of revenue models, some non-profits have been innovative, citing the example of the Texas Tribune of the US which has developed a diverse and balanced portfolio of revenue sources that includes donations of 3 per cent, grants 25 per cent, events 22 per cent, and advertising 18 per cent. Other non-profits have adopted collaborative models to share the cost and risks of their investigative journalism (Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021). For instance, while non-profit, the Baltimore Banner sells digital subscriptions to support its journalism, borrowing a business model from successful for-profit news (Friedlich, 2022). Diversification can also be in terms of being financed by more than one donor. Schiffrin (2019) also argues that an organisation with a diverse pool of donors is likely to be more sustainable than one relying on customers.

1.4.5. Content Strategies in the Face of Digital Disruption

Besides the revenue streams, authors have observed that technological disruption requires more dynamic solutions including the need for media houses to look at viability from a holistic standpoint and broaden the perspective from the isolated search for new sources of income (Soloviev, et al., 2010). While the conversation on media sustainability has focused largely on economics – the question of whether a news outlet can drive enough revenue to turn a profit and sustain itself – Deselaers, et al. (2019) have identified four other dimensions. The four dimensions needed for creating long-term viability are politics, technology, content and community. The political dimension looks at a country's political and legal frameworks, both national and local, that affect the media sector. The content dimension focuses on the journalistic side of the endeavour, from media practitioners to the content they produce. The technology dimension looks primarily at (digital) delivery systems, from the production workflows that cut costs to users' access to the internet. The community dimension considers

the media outlet's audience – its general makeup and its relationship with the outlet, especially when it comes to trust and emotional attachment. Having discussed the economic dimension under the business models, this study will now look at the content dimension, specifically the quality of content produced, because this is in the direct control of the media organisations, for whom the study seeks to offer solutions to the digital disruption.

In the endeavour to diversify their revenue sources to supplement the declining revenues from advertising, many media organisations “are designing a specific competitive strategy suited to its market...and focused on quality rather than quantity” (Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021:10). This follows a realization that audiences are willing to pay for content if they consider it relevant, noteworthy and interesting (Picard & Dal-Zotto, 2006). To attract financial support, Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) advise that news media organizations need to create value for users by providing information that is relevant to their daily lives, helps them solve problems, and provides a counterweight to the politically and economically powerful. Chyi & Tenenboim (2019) argue that the key is to make the content noteworthy, relevant, and interesting for readers. Lewis (2007) concurs, noting that never in our lifetime has there arguably been a greater public need for independent, high-quality journalism in the world.

Parasuraman, et al. (1985) posited that product quality enables an organisation to meet or exceed customer expectations viewed as desires and wants of consumers, what they feel a service provider should offer rather than would offer. They argued that quality is key in boosting market share and return on investment, lowering manufacturing costs and improving productivity. The 21st century has witnessed higher degrees of globalization and technological advancements and, as consumerism increases beyond the Global North, the

public now demands higher quality in products and services than ever before. Therefore, firms that focus on offering quality products often develop both an intrinsic culture and an extrinsic reputation, which tends to be very enduring and difficult to copy (Kamukama, et al., 2010). WAN (2010) concurs, arguing that content quality is more important than other strands of marketing in media and thus in an industry where a product defines what it is, what it does and what it stands for, other strands of marketing fall into second position.

Thus, quality provides the means by which firms may enhance differentiation strategies and helps them to increasingly distance themselves from competition (Wiley, 1994). Quality is not an end in itself, but a means to an end and its improvement attracts new customers, enhances retention and loyalty of existing customers, and lures customers away from a competitor whose product quality is perceived to be low (Voss, et al., 2005). Therefore, quality content is a key element to grow sales and revenue. “In fact, without journalists producing content that raises the demand for daily readership, any mechanical encouragement of readers’ loyalty will ultimately fail and price can only achieve so much” (Tumwine, et al., 2014:139).

Tumwine, et al. (2014) investigated factors that influence newspaper copy sales and their impact on the financial performance of print media companies in Uganda. Through questionnaires filled by 694 newspaper readers and 16 managers of print media companies, the trio recommended that if print media wants to boost their financial performance, it is important to improve on product offers – the content of a newspaper – first, and then appropriate cover price, select the distribution channel that reaches the readers easily and choose the brand values that trigger the buyers to buy. Likewise, Donders, et al (2018) argue that the media must create and offer content that people are willing to pay for (or that

philanthropists are willing to support). To serve the audience is the cornerstone of journalism (Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021). It pays to focus on creating quality content that attracts loyal readers while staying lean and keeping costs low (Flannery, 2019).

Across Africa, confidence in the media seems to be declining, potentially due to concerns over bias, hate speech, and disinformation (Conroy-Krutz, 2020). Chyi (2013) and Chyi and Ng (2020) studied the struggle between print and online US newspapers and concluded that not many people are willing to pay for digital information because they perceive online news as inferior goods. Chyi argues that the key is to make the content noteworthy, relevant, and interesting for readers. Picard and Dal-Zotto (2006) support this view, pointing out that the editorial part of the organization is the most strategically important for the newspaper business. Therefore, amidst fake news circulating on social media, there will be a continued interest and willingness to pay for quality content and that can help to enable funding models for newspapers (Donders, et al., 2018).

Different news media organisations have adopted different strategies for using content as a differentiator in the market. With the waning commercial commitment to serious news coverage, more dramatic and urgent now than ever, the public need for higher quality reportage and a better-informed citizenry has substantially increased (Lewis, 2007). Since one of the fundamental characteristics of any kind of trusting relationship is risk-taking (Vanacker and Belmas, 2009), media houses should be gathering information “in ways that make readers want to go through the effort of receiving it” (Meyer, 2004: 229 cited in Konieczna & Robinson, 2014).

Therefore, content strategies should emphasise trust, which Deselaers, et al. (2019) say is the currency of media viability. Trust can be monetised, but Deselaers, et al. say it is a fragile commodity. Newspapers and other NMOs can pursue quality by focusing on emphasising truth and public interest journalism – journalism that aims to expose abuse of power in government, corporate corruption and social injustices (CJP, 2023) – which helps to build trust and credibility. “Repairing the public’s trust in the media generally might be a more assured pathway to their salvation than more money can buy” (Kigambo, 2020:11). Konieczna and Robinson (2014) concur, arguing that in terms of the relationship between the journalist and the news consumer, trust implies a future promise, a level of risk-taking, an intentional action, a valued commodity, and a sense that the reporter is going to provide an essential public good: relevant and significant, accurate and truthful accountings of the news.

Molly and Brent (2006) advocated for exclusive stories, observing that unique content provided by qualified columnists with reliable news in it, increases the number of buyers for a newspaper. In the same vein, Seaman (2019:1) makes a case for making “news analyses a daily part of print media content and stopping archive journalism – news reporting about what is no longer “new” and done for record or future reference purposes”. He argues that newspapers that practice archive journalism do so out of the thinking “that what is archive content to an urban audience (who dominate internet access and use in Uganda), may still be news to an offline audience in a remote or hard to reach area of the country” (pg. 1). However, he posits that by focusing on news analyses, newspapers can still serve ‘cold’ news yet manage to serve the needs of the two reader segments.

Donders, et al (2018) studied steps local media groups in Norway were taking to survive the digital disruption and pointed out that strong, trusted domestic content was a key feature

distinguishing them from international platforms. One media house's strategy was to be the readers' first choice for local content both in print and digital while others paid attention to publishing content that addresses the interests of the younger audience as a strategy for future sustainability.

1.4.6. Summary

In summary, the reviewed literature has indicated that scholars have no consensus on a single business model necessary to sustain quality public interest journalism amidst the ongoing technological disruptions, especially for the legacy print media operating in a poor country like Uganda. The literature has highlighted the urgency for news media organisations especially newspapers to diversify revenue sources with a one-size-fits-all model unlikely to take root. However, the literature shows some experiences, which may serve as examples for other media houses. A lot of the available literature is from research conducted in the US and/or Europe, whose findings, although relatable, may not automatically apply in Uganda's context, where the reading culture is not only low (Kasozi, 2018), but is also dipping in the face of social media. Therefore, the current study used a qualitative approach to search for revenue streams that can serve as examples for legacy media in Uganda.

1.5. Statement of the Problem

Before the mid-nineties, news media companies had a clear business model, which had lasted for more than two centuries (Karimi & Walter, 2016). In the traditional model, which is waning majorly due to digital disruption, newspapers sold information at low prices, and advertising revenues covered the remaining costs and provided a profit. The Internet changed the rules of the game because citizens found new outlets of free news and advertisers discovered more effective online channels (Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021).

As a result, the legacy print media has witnessed a sustained reduction in copy sales and advertising revenues. Despite substantial investments by print media companies in digital journalism, the returns from digital media have failed to match the revenue once enjoyed by

traditional print newspapers. The growth rate of digital media revenue remains slow, with e-paper sales remaining uninspiring. The prevailing trend among digital news consumers is a strong preference for free information and news content.

For an extended period, converged media companies in Uganda have leaned heavily on the diminishing revenues generated by newspapers to finance their digital and other operational endeavours. However, this dependence has proven unsustainable, given the challenging circumstances outlined above. The traditional financial model of newspapers, which primarily relied on advertising revenue supplemented by copy sales, has faltered. Presently, newspapers find themselves grappling with the formidable challenge of financing quality journalism. The media has responded to this contraction with cost-cutting measures, downsizing newsrooms, closing upcountry bureaus and reducing investment in costly good journalism endeavours, especially investigative journalism, which takes a comprehensive, exhaustive look at issues that have a significant impact on the lives of the public (Protess, et al., 1991), and which was key in fighting political corruption, crime, human rights abuses, and social justice issues (Kimberlee, 2021).

Therefore, there is a need to investigate the impact of digital transformation on legacy media in Uganda and explore business models capable of sustaining the future of good journalism. This study endeavoured to delve into these business models, particularly in the context of Uganda, where legacy media faces the twin challenges of dwindling copy sales and advertising revenues. To achieve this, the New Vision Newspaper served as a pertinent and illustrative case study, offering insights that could potentially shape the trajectory of legacy media in Uganda and beyond.

1.6. Objectives

1.6. 1 Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of digital transformation on legacy media in Uganda, using New Vision newspaper as the case study.

1.6. 2 Specific Objectives

1. Evaluate the impact of digital transformation on the New Vision Newspaper
2. Explore viable revenue streams for New Vision
3. Assess New Vision's content strategy and its effectiveness in attracting newspaper readers

1.6. 3 Research Questions

1. What is the impact of digital transformation on New Vision newspaper?
2. How effective are the new business ventures New Vision has implemented in response to the digital disruption and what other viable ones can be adopted?
3. What content strategy has New Vision developed and how effective is it in attracting newspaper readers?

1.7. Methodology

1.7.1 Research Approach

This study used qualitative research methodology to investigate the impact of digital transformation on legacy media in Uganda. Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2009), is about examining the views of different people about a particular research problem. Patton (2002) notes that under qualitative studies, the researcher engages other people to understand their experiences and insights, as well as examine appropriate documents, about a particular topic. Plant (2005) explains: “Qualitative researchers are interested in perceptions, values, and points of view...they record stories, feelings, anecdotes, and conversations”. For this research focusing on investigating the impact of digital transformation, the qualitative approach was relevant to allow analysis of the meanings the different participants brought to the topic. This enabled making recommendations for sustainable and innovative business models that New Vision newspaper can adopt to thrive in the digital age.

1.7.2 Research Design

According to Borg and Gall (1999), qualitative researchers tend to focus on examining individual cases because each person, group, culture, or society is expected to possess a unique collection of values, emotions, and convictions that can only be unearthed through an in-depth examination of that particular individual, institution, or group. Therefore, the study used a case study design. The case study research is “an in-depth enquiry into one particular instance, unit or ‘case’, usually conducted over a limited period” (Plant, 2005: 68). New Vision newspaper served as the case study for this research.

Case studies offer an opportunity to learn from experiences and are valuable data sources for researchers given the complexity and diversity of educational settings and purposes (Leymun, et al., 2017). This is because the case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings and is particularly useful to employ when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context (Crowe, et al., 2011). It also helps to identify solutions to potential problems by learning more about what has worked well, what has not, and what should be changed (Crowe, et al., 2011).

Therefore, using New Vision, the largest circulating newspaper in Uganda, as the case study was inevitable to research its business and recommend viable solutions for the declining copy sales and revenue. The intention in case study research “is not to generalize findings” but to question, observe and study to write a report to provide knowledge about the ‘instance’ (Plant, 2005:68). However, since a case study is ‘strong on reality’ the findings could enable other people to increase understanding of a particular case (Plant, 2005:68). Therefore, using case study research was key to understanding the viable business models that are available for adoption by New Vision to sustain good public interest journalism.

1.7.3 Methods of Data Collection

Plant (2005:102) explains that if data generation is dependent on just one research method, an inadvertent fault in its design may undermine the trustworthiness of the findings. To avoid this, the researcher used two methods – documentary analysis and interviewing – to collect data. This being primarily a qualitative inquiry, the choice of the methods was also dependent

upon getting those tools of data collection that would ease the interpretation of reality about New Vision's business models.

1.7.3.1 Documentary Analysis

Borg and Gall (1989) describe documentary analysis as a method for generating data from secondary sources. The process involves a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating printed and electronic documents to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 in Bowen, 2009). 'Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation – the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (Denzin, 1970:291). Yin (1994) observes that it is important for a researcher who uses the qualitative approach to gather information from various sources and methods, such as participant or non-participant observation, interviews, and physical artifacts. 'By triangulating data, the researcher attempts to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility' (Eisner, 1991:110). "By examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study" (Bowen, 2009:28). According to Patton (1990), "triangulation helps the researcher guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias" (cited in Bowen, 2009:28).

Using documentary analysis helped the researcher to generate a secondary data set from New Vision's financial statements and editorial policy to address the first three research questions, which are: What has been the impact of digital transformation on New Vision newspaper? How effective are the new business ventures New Vision has implemented in response to the digital disruption and what other viable ones can be adopted? What content strategy has New Vision developed and how effective has it been in attracting newspaper readers?

1.7.3.2 In-depth interviews

This researcher also used semi-structured in-depth interviews to get more answers to the above three research questions. The interview method is "... an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, (that) sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production" (Kvale, 1996:14). It involves asking people questions including about their activities and getting responses in form of their views (Deacon, et al, 1999). Through interviews, the researcher learns about events and interactions that cannot be directly observed (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

However, semi-structured interviews differ from structured interviews in the sense that the former are not standardised; for example, participants can be asked varying questions (Gray, 2004:6). For this research, New Vision editors and managers, as well as media researchers and veteran print journalists were interviewed.

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) explain that the rapport that develops between the interviewer and interviewee enables the researcher to get more accurate responses to sensitive topics. Kajornboon (2005) adds that in-depth interviews offer participants the opportunity to get involved and discuss their views.

Therefore, this method was helpful as it offered participants adequate time and space to get engaged and discuss their views on the impact of digital transformation on New Vision newspaper as well as the performance of its various business models and content strategies. It also offered the researcher room to probe deeper into the participants' assertions by asking for explanations, but also explain or rephrase some of the questions whenever the participants seemed unclear about the issues asked. Gray (2004) explains that semi-structured interviews

also offer opportunities for probing, yielding highly personalised and rather confidential data, which aligns well with this study whose intention, among others, was to dig deep into New Vision's business and content strategies and operations. This helped the researcher to get much detail to answer the research questions.

1.7.4 Sampling Technique

I used purposive sampling, which is a 'strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately to provide important information that cannot be gotten as well from other choices' (Maxwell, 1996:70 cited in Plant, 2005:100). Wimmer and Dominick (2003:84, 88) explain that "sampling is done because of time and resource limitations in examining an entire population...and it involves identifying subjects who meet certain characteristics". This saves a lot of time, which would otherwise be wasted by, for example, interviewing people who lack information about the topic. Bailey (1994:96 cited in Alina 2013:34) explains that "a researcher using purposive sampling engages his/her own judgement in choosing respondents and settles for those who are relevant to the study".

The New Vision Printing and Publishing Company has more than 500 employees (Vision Group, 2023), the majority of whom are reporters. There is a team of editors and finance, sales and circulation managers. The researcher interviewed 10 of these editors and managers. These editors and managers were well-informed about the topic and therefore provided vital insights for the study. Among the experts, the study benefited from the input of three media scholars who have previously worked in/edited newspapers. The research tapped into these experts' vast knowledge and experience about the newspaper industry in Uganda and sought their views on viable business and content models for adoption by New Vision amidst the raging digital disruption.

1.7.5 Ethical Considerations

This researcher referred to the people from whom he collected data as ‘participants’ as opposed to ‘subjects’ or ‘respondents’ intentionally to recognise their ‘active agents’ role rather than ‘passive recipients’ as well as their autonomy in contributing to the research, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty (BPS, 2010: 5-6).

The researcher made sure that he protected the interests of the participants by first, securing approval from The Aga Khan University Graduate School of Journalism and Media Studies ethics review committee (see Appendix 3 for the approval form). Written consent was sought from each eligible participant after a clear written explanation, followed by oral clarification, of the research project and its objectives as well as the participants’ rights and responsibilities, as well as how data would be processed and used. In the introductory letter, the researcher also made it clear that the participants could withdraw from the research at any time, and that their responses would be kept private before presenting them anonymously in the research report.

There was also the possibility of a conflict of interest since the researcher was evaluating an organization where he works as a News Editor. However, their journalism experience helped them to remain open-minded and detach their opinions from the views of the participants.

1.8 Scope & Limitation of the Study

1.8.1 Scope

The digital revolution has impacted all types of traditional media, the study concentrated on its impact on New Vision. In looking at the impact of digital transformation, the research

mainly focused on two variables: circulation and revenue. The scope also incorporates in-depth interviews from New Vision editors, finance and circulation managers, as well as media researchers and academicians with experience in Uganda's print media.

1.8.2 Limitation

Being a case study, the research focused on New Vision newspaper, the only English newspaper where the government of Uganda holds majority shares. As a result, findings may not be easily generalisable to the broader newspaper industry or media industry. Findings may also not apply to other legacy media outlets like TV or radio or even other newspapers, especially privately owned ones.

It may also be difficult to replicate this study to verify results because it was conducted under a unique context and conditions; for instance, the researcher is an editor at New Vision and did the research for his Executive Master's capstone project, which was intended to find solutions for challenges in media workplaces. The biggest challenge as a news editor was how to get funding to sustain public interest journalism amidst the dwindling copy sales and advertising revenue. It may be quite difficult to replicate these conditions.

There is also the likelihood of subjectivity since the findings, conclusions and recommendations emerged from the researcher's interpretation of the views of the participants. This can introduce bias, especially where there is a preconceived agenda or perspective. Besides, the study was time-consuming as it involved extensive data collection, interviews, and analysis. This was a serious constraint because the researcher had been assigned limited time to conduct this research.

However, aware of these limitations, the researcher carefully considered the research questions, objectives and methods to guide the research process. The research has yielded

valuable findings and recommendations that New Vision can utilize to sustain funding of good quality public interest news content.

1.9 Structure of the Document

Chapter one sets the pace, offering the introduction and background and a review of the current literature in line with the topic of the study. The chapter also gives the rationale, problem statement and objectives of the study as well as the research questions. The methodology is also discussed, highlighting the qualitative research approach and the two methods of documentary analysis and interviewing used to collect the data. The chapter also highlights the ethical considerations as well as the scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two uses a descriptive style to analyse and present the findings of the study. Data from the different participants, triangulated with the analysis from the documents is presented to respond to the research objectives under four themes based on the different research questions. Chapter Three presents a discussion of these key findings using the reviewed literature, from which it draws conclusions and makes recommendations. At the end is the project document which presents the project proposal that New Vision, the case study for this research, can implement to overcome some of the challenges especially pertaining to the sustainability of high-impact public interest journalism.

1.10 Chapter Summary

Chapter One has outlined the introduction, background, problem of the study, objectives, research questions and the rationale, scope and limitations. The chapter has also presented the related literature reviewed as well as the methodology and data collection techniques. The literature review has shown that the dwindling newspaper advertising revenue is threatening not only the survival of public interest journalism but also democracy, which makes the

identification and implementation of viable media business models an urgent task. Diversification has been highlighted, with the reviewed literature supporting the creation of numerous revenue streams for media houses.

Chapter two will present the research findings and chapter three will discuss these findings and offer conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1. Introduction

The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of digital transformation on legacy media in Uganda, using New Vision newspaper as the case study. Data was collected through documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with participants selected through purposive sampling. The documents analysed are the New Vision board of directors' financial reports covering from Financial Year (FY) 2011/2012 to FY 2022/2023. New Vision is listed on the Uganda stock exchange, which makes it mandatory for the company to make public its financial performance. The Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa (ABC) reports and New Vision Editorial Policy 2014, the company's guiding policy on journalism practice, are the other documents that were analysed. The study interviewed 13 participants including New Vision senior editors and finance/circulation managers as well as media scholars with experience in print media. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The transcriptions were saved without the participants' names but given alphabetical letters – ranging from PA to PM, where 'P' stands for participant.

This chapter uses a descriptive style to analyse and present the findings of the study. Data from the different participants, triangulated with the analysis from the documents is presented to respond to the research objectives under four themes based on the different research questions.

2.2 Findings

2.2.1 Impact of Digital Transformation on New Vision

Research objective one sought to evaluate the impact of digital transformation on New Vision newspaper. Editors said the digital revolution has impacted the media house both positively and negatively. One editor recalled how digital technology improved the speed and efficiency of news content gathering and distribution/publication. The editor explained that about three decades ago when reporters and editors were still using the fax machine to send and receive news stories and pictures from the field, respectively, there were delays in processing the content, unlike today when computers and smartphones are used.

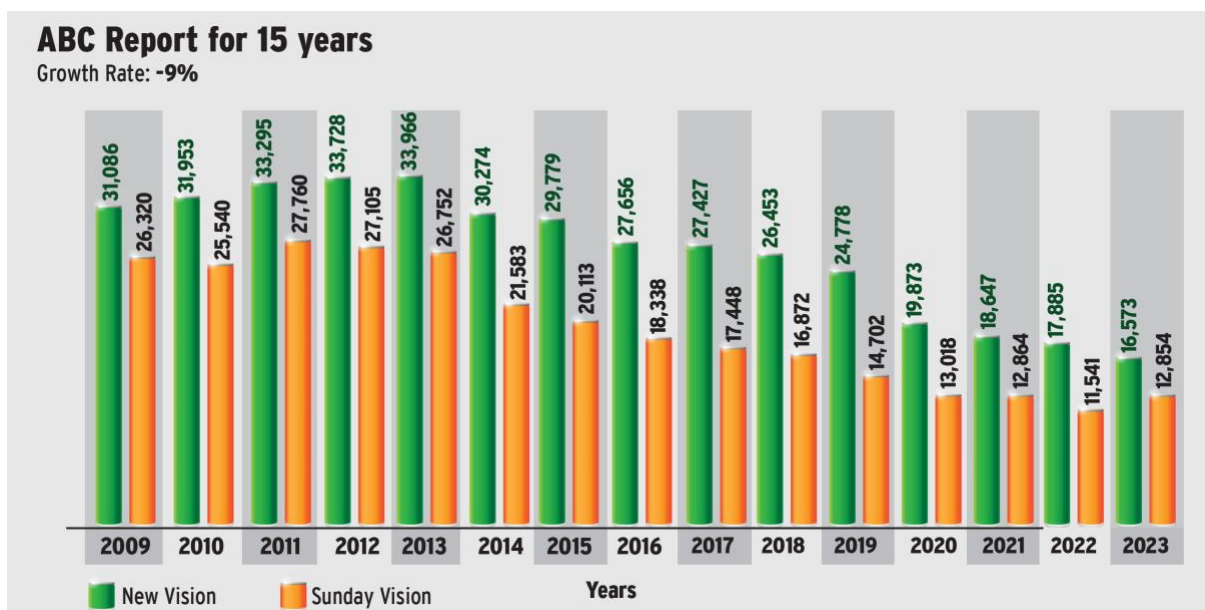
“For some of the reporters who worked very fast, they would take like 10 hours to send stories from upcountry. The fax services were rare in many places. It would also depend on the power supply; somebody could fail to send a story even for a week because the facilities were so scanty in those areas, but now, the reporters keep filing the story as the event is going on, giving timely updates. One can even send a story from the comfort of their home on a phone and the story gets published so fast on the online platforms, which was very difficult before digital technology,” (PJ).

However, New Vision editors and managers said due to this improved speed and efficiency in news gathering and circulation of content online, the newspaper no longer has a monopoly on breaking news, thanks to the growing number of bloggers and other players on social media and other digital platforms. Digital technology has enabled almost everybody with access to the internet to circulate information about whatever breaks out in real time even before it gets into the mainstream media to be verified by professional journalists.

“People, even non-journalists can get information and distribute it in its raw form. And a lot of people get access to that information; so, by the time the story is published in the newspaper, a lot of people have ideas about it or have heard about it. A lot of people may not even have the right facts, but in their mind, they think they know it and are not willing to pay an extra coin to get the real content verified by the professionals in the newspaper,” (PL).

This resulted in the dwindling of newspaper copy sales as more readers began migrating to online platforms since the newspaper no longer broke news. One of the managers noted that this has resulted in “virtually the collapse of the print media”. The manager said at the onset of FM radios, all New Vision editors and managers blamed the decline of print on the detailed morning reviews of newspapers, which compelled the then Managing Director to write to some radio stations to stop massive reviews of the newspaper. “It was not then anticipated that there would come digital technology in the form of a phone where masses would access free content in any form they wanted,” the manager said, adding that the sharpest decline for New Vision started in 2014 and has continued to date exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The manager shared statistics from the ABC reports that showed that the newspaper’s copy sales kept increasing up to the year 2013, from which the drops started. A continuous decline in New Vision daily and Sunday Vision copy sales have been recorded from 33,966 and 26,752 in the year 2013 to 16,573 and 12,854 in the year 2023, respectively. This decline is well illustrated in the following chart.

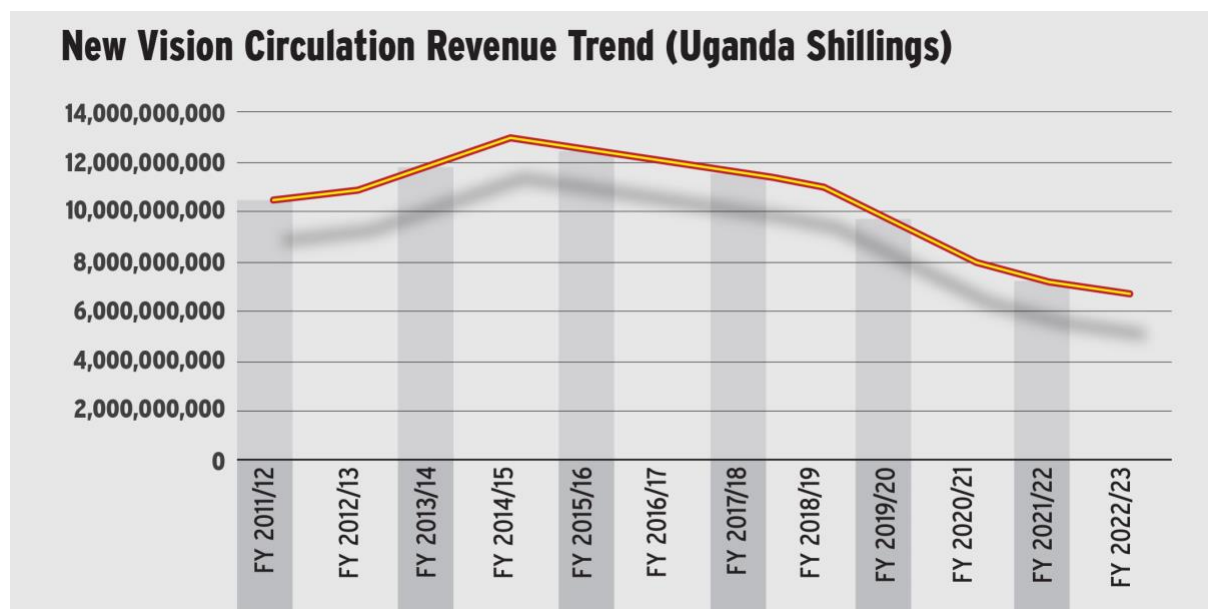
Figure 1: New Vision Daily Circulation Figures



(Source: ABC reports 2009 – 2023)

These dwindling copy sales have affected the company’s revenue earnings from newspaper circulation. Data from the company’s financial reports showed that overall circulation revenue enjoyed an increasing trend between the Financial Years (FY) 2011-12 to FY 2014-15. Since FY 2016-17, the company has had an average annual decline rate of 4 per cent in the overall revenue because of the dwindling copy sales due to the digital disruption exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. This is illustrated in Chart 2 below.

Figure 2: New Vision Circulation Revenue Trends in Uganda shillings



(Source: New Vision Board Financial Reports)

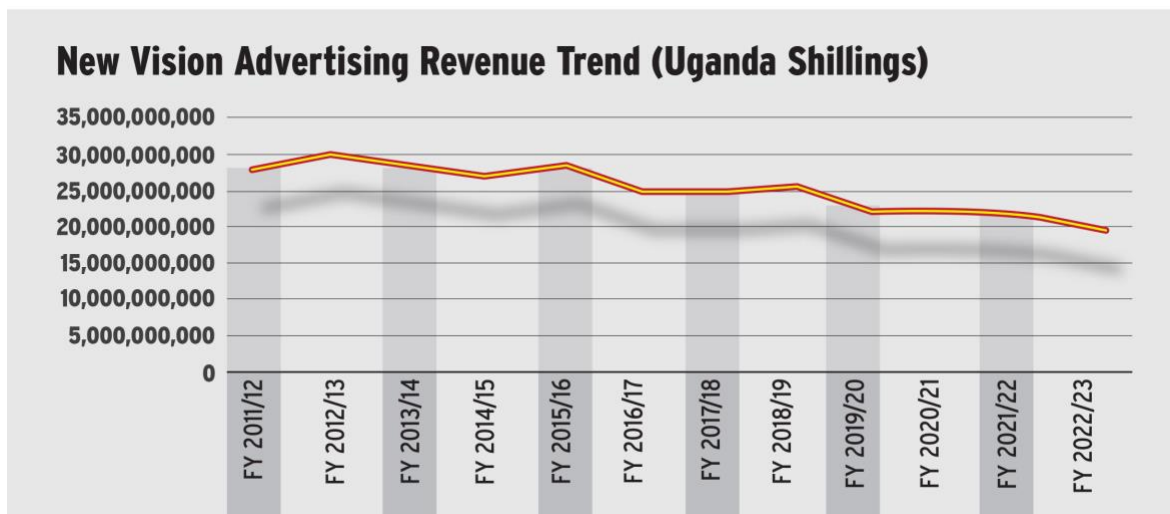
New Vision managers said the reduced number of people buying and reading the newspaper has also reduced advertisers’ interest in the print as many of them are now migrating to the growing digital platforms where they can access a bigger number of audiences. Those who still advertise in the newspaper have reduced the size of their adverts as they use the newspaper to excite the readers to go to their websites. A good number of advertisers are also resorting to native advertising in the form of supplements and advertorials whereby they

demand that the newspaper publishes positive articles about their projects/work which they can pay for. Unfortunately for the newspaper, however, this comes at an extra cost since the newspaper has to pay the writer for the number of articles published as well as meet the costs incurred when gathering the content. A manager said it costs a lot of time and financial resources to gather the content and keep refining it to match the advertiser’s interests, which usually involves back-and-forth editing processes. All these factors have conspired to reduce the newspaper advertising revenue.

“There was a ritual of increasing advertising rates every year. That ended in 2014. The prices stopped increasing because someone who wanted 60 pages to run job adverts, for instance, now asks for a quarter page to just put the list of the jobs and advise interested applicants to get the details from his website. So, you can't increase the price for someone who's just looking for a quarter page. Then of course the migration, some people now prefer advertising on broadcast and online,” (PK).

Financial documents reviewed showed that New Vision print advertising has had a continuous decline from Financial Year (FY) 2013/2014, while recovery efforts that had started in FY2018-19 were frustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic that saw a decline from Uganda shillings 31.6 billion in the FY 2021-22 to Uganda shillings 22.9 billion in the FY 2022-23. This is an average annual decline rate of 4 per cent as indicated in Chart 3 below.

Figure 3: Print Advertising Revenue Trends in Uganda Shillings



(Source: New Vision Board Financial Reports)

In attempting to respond to these challenges, editors said New Vision has invested in various digital journalism platforms, including websites, e-paper (the online version of the newspaper which readers can access after paying subscription fees) and the Vision Digital Experience (VIDE) mobile app that is accessible on internet-enabled smartphones. However, they observed that the reader subscription to digital platforms remains low as most people are not yet willing to pay for digital content because there's a lot of free information online. One manager observed that the ageing population is reluctant to adopt the e-paper; they are still stuck to the hardcopy, yet their numbers are shrinking because of the low life expectancy in Uganda (63.7 years, according to the 2014 census). On the other hand, the style of news consumption of the youth is unique in that they are not into reading a newspaper cover to cover; they look out for specific content like sports, which they can easily find on various free websites. As a result, the manager noted that the youth are reluctant to pay for e-paper yet they make up the biggest part of the population.

“The e-paper is not a very favourite product for our audiences; it doesn't have a good uptake. Although we did set it up but the subscription there doesn't compensate for the drop in the copy sales of the physical newspaper. While the people (telecom companies) who are in the business of the data are making money, it is extremely difficult for us who are in the media houses to monetise the online content and therefore the revenues have been going down and down and down. You find that you have to give out free information yet you need to fund the journalism,” (PG).

Financial managers also noted that the revenue accruing from digital advertising is small, compared to what the company used to earn from print. Explaining that advertisers pay less for digital adverts, one manager noted that “we are dropping from big money to very little money; so, in the process, the media house is having a crisis of a revenue shortfall yet the expenses are quite high for the digital transformation”. The manager explained that developing a digital system requires a lot of money yet even the annual subscription for the

off-shelf systems is quite expensive. So, the company is experiencing a growth in costs at a time when revenue is dropping and yet circumstances dictate that it invests in digital platforms to be visible in spaces where the audiences are migrating to.

Editors said the company has responded to the reducing circulation and advertising revenues by reducing expenditure on newsroom operations and downsizing the staff, laying off experienced journalists in a bid to cut costs. This is coupled with increasing the story count targets for staff reporters in a bid to have many stories to feed the online audience. They said this is likely to undermine the quality of journalism –manifesting in stories that lack depth and context. Participants think this will (if not yet) affect the fourth estate role of the media house that requires that the newspaper holds authorities to account through, for instance, investigative journalism and analytical reporting.

“The company is now downsizing the human resource, but when you’re downsizing, your ability to gather content is also impacted. There is also a deliberate effort to continue cutting expenses on newsgathering. The quality is affected but we sympathize with them; what can they do? They don’t have the money. The money is not coming in as it used,” (PC).

2.2.2 Viability of New Vision Revenue Streams

Research objective two sought to explore viable revenue streams for New Vision. Data from the participants and the documents reviewed showed that New Vision has taken the diversification model to expand its revenue sources, with at least seven new revenue streams created in the past decade. The company, managers said, began as a newspaper publishing government corporation in 1987. It has since expanded and set up seven radio and six TV stations, besides venturing into commercial printing, publishing, digital media, events, and most recently, outdoor advertising as well as selling of archives. New Vision is majorly owned by the government and one would expect it to have limitations in terms of the areas it

can invest. However, managers observed that the Act of Parliament that set up the company is favourable in that it gives management leeway to venture into various business fields even though its original function as a government corporation was newspaper publishing.

“We are also making money from the YouTube videos. Broadcast advertising is also a new area. We are selling our digital archives, the photos and other things in our digital gallery. We've also gone into education; so, we are doing education publishing although we haven't digitized it yet to sell online education content,” (PE).

The company has also benefited from funding from non-profit organizations to do public interest journalism and investigations. Participants said in 2019, one of the editors wrote a proposal and secured over Uganda shillings 1.5 billion from the Democratic Governance Facility, DGF - a multi-donor facility established by Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the European Union. The funding supported the publication of investigative stories about human rights abuses and offered a voice to the victims of social injustice. They cited another science journalism project funded by the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), which they said enabled the publication of several analytical stories incorporating the voices of common people, especially in the sectors of health and agriculture. Another manager cited the Green Schools project that is funded by the Swedish Embassy in Kampala, explaining that it has facilitated the publication of explanatory stories about climate change in a pullout created in Sunday Vision. The manager noted that the pullout has helped improve Sunday Vision copy sales because the project has a component of supplying free copies to several schools for educational purposes.

However, managers observed that the funding from non-profit organizations was not sustainable. They noted that some funders offer one-off project sponsorship and never come

back. This is exacerbated by the Uganda government's increasing restrictions on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which managers said has forced several NGOs to close or change focus. For example, they said the second phase of the human rights project collapsed prematurely after President Yoweri Museveni suspended the funder (DGF's) activities in 2021. The president accused the DGF managers of operating a big fund without proper government oversight.

Managers also criticized the unsystematic way New Vision has been sourcing funding from non-profit agencies. They reported that it is the individual editors or journalists who write story grant proposals for funding as and when they get time. This affects the inflow of grants to sustain impactful journalism. As a result, participants observed that when one project ends, it can take the newspaper a year or two years before it gets more funding to get another grant. One editor observed that in circumstances when the company is cutting journalism expenses due to dwindling revenue, grants have come in handy to support good journalism but this is being hindered due to a lack of an efficient system for sourcing and managing journalism grants.

“We have like two editors who have written funding proposals but it looks like one of them gave up after the DGF (Democratic Governance Facility) project collapsed. The other one who is consistent is also overwhelmed because he also handles the day-to-day operations of the paper,” (PA).

Managers said New Vision's legal status also affects its opportunities to get funding from non-profit organizations. New Vision has the government as its majority shareholder with 53.3 per cent shareholding. The rest of the shares are owned by the public. One of the managers noted that being a company majorly owned by the government affects New Vision's chances of getting grants from non-profit organizations. The manager explained that

they have approached many organizations to sponsor education material for schools in hard-to-reach areas but some of them reject the proposals on the account of New Vision being a ‘government company’.

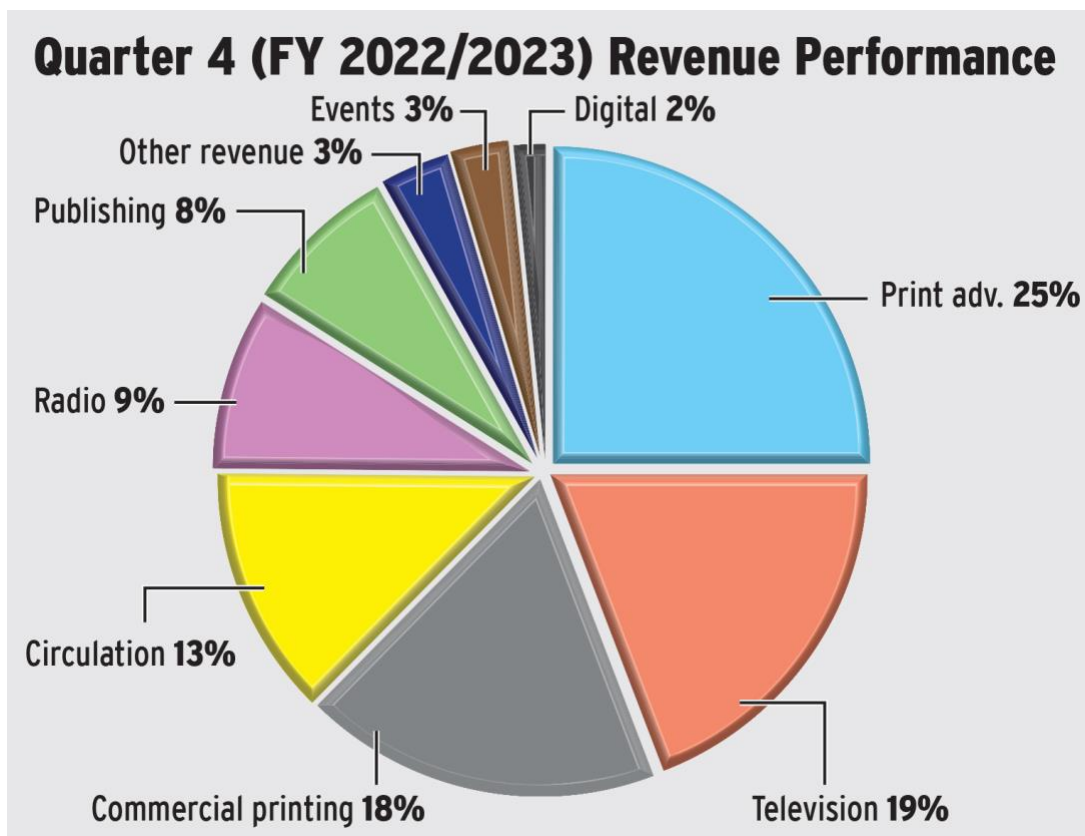
“Donations can work but is it sustainable? That is another key question. As New Vision, I think we need to register a foundation. Wherever we go for sponsorship, people tell us that we are the government. They want to deal with an NGO,” (PA).

It is also important to note that while some of these revenue streams have been successful, several others have failed or delayed to break-even. Participants identified the successful ventures including commercial printing and publishing, especially education material, which they said has attracted some big orders from the government Ministry of Education and Sports but also leaves some books to sell on the open market. They also noted that generally, TVs and radios, especially those broadcasting in local languages, attract good advertising because the managers were able to cut out special niches for each of the channels based on the tribal regions they serve. However, the participants observed that English TV and radio channels are greatly affected by the stiff competition in Kampala. So, they have found it hard to break even and make a profit. The website is not working well. Subscription for the e-paper is also low. As a result, these struggling business outlets continue depending mainly on New Vision newspaper as the cash cow, whose revenue is also declining by the day. Participants also said the events business has a low return on investment because of the heavy expenses involved.

“The sustainability of the new alternative ventures is hard. The print media is used for daily revenue. You churn out newspapers, you pick money. But now we promote an event for a month and have to pay big musicians, hire a venue etc. So, the operational costs are high and the profit margin at times is not good. So most of the alternative business ventures, whereas they have a massive appeal; their profitability is low in an era where we need instant money. Even special publications like education materials are too costly. Some of the electronic English platforms have been making losses. They don't bring in money as expected,”(PE).

The information from the participants was triangulated with that from the New Vision financial statements. The analysis of documents revealed that, despite a continuous decline in revenue, the newspaper remains the primary revenue generator for the company. In contrast, the seven radio stations collectively contribute only 9 per cent to the overall revenue of the company. For instance, for Quarter 4 of FY 2022/2023, the newspaper contributed 38 per cent of the company’s total revenue, with 25 per cent coming from print advertising and 13 per cent from circulation. On the other hand, the six TVS contributed 19 per cent, commercial printing at 18 per cent, radios at 9 per cent, publishing at 8 per cent, events at 3 per cent, and digital at 2 per cent. This is illustrated in the pie chart below.

Figure 4: New Vision Quarter 4 (FY 2022/2023) Revenue Performance



(Source: New Vision Board Financial Report 2023)

Participants noted that revenue from the newspaper continues to support the funding of many other business ventures that are not making as much revenue to break even. They overserved that the company has over-diversified to a level whereby some entities end up undercutting others by directly competing for the same advertisers and yet they carry the same brand names. They gave the example of Bukedde TV1 and Bukedde TV2, both of which broadcast in Luganda (the dominant local language in Kampala, Uganda's capital) and use the same offices and studios. The two TVs also share presenters. Bukedde TV1 news bulletins are also relayed on Bukedde TV2. Participants noted the need for the strategic closure of underperforming business ventures, which, lacking profitability, keep depleting the financial resources of the company's primary revenue stream – the newspaper.

“Some of the financial struggles of New Vision can partly be attributed to the draining that has happened to them occasioned by the new channels. It does not make sense to have so many TV channels and some cannot sustain their staff. Most of these new channels have over the so many years been supported by the revenue from New Vision newspaper. It would make business sense if some channels that are not making a profit are suspended so that concentration can go to the few channels that are either promising or that have already broken even. Continuing to have so many platforms which don't make economic sense may be a burden and may erode whatever benefit or whatever profit that the newspaper has made,” (PM).

In assessing the performance of diverse revenue streams, participants engaged in deliberations concerning potential new avenues to sustain public interest journalism financially. Proposed revenue streams encompassed government funding, the implementation of a paywall, and the integration of non-profit agency funding, as well as the establishment of a journalism training institute, consultancy firm and a news agency, and the provision of transport and courier services. A subset of participants advocated for government financial support to New Vision, given its predominant shareholder status with a 53.3 per cent shareholding.

“New Vision plays roles that the government should be playing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was New Vision, which was running prevention campaigns on its own. We have pullouts promoting agriculture and education. These are government services. So, you may need the government to come in and support,” (PA).

Nevertheless, the participants acknowledged the potential challenges associated with relying on government funding in the foreseeable future, given the existing financial constraints faced by the Government of Uganda. Emphasizing the precarious financial situation of the government, editors underscored the need for cautious consideration when contemplating direct funding. It was observed that direct financial dependency on the government could further compromise the newspaper's editorial independence, raising concerns about the potential consequences on the integrity of the media house and the quality of its journalism.

“I don't think it is viable to try to get money from the government. First of all, it may limit what we write about the government but the government is also hard-pressed. You see even their own public broadcaster, the UBC (Uganda Broadcasting Corporation), is hard-pressed already. The government can only help by paying promptly for advertising services. When they consume media services, they should be able to pay instead of thinking that this is their platform, which they can use freely and pay at leisure,” (PE).

While paywall models have gained traction in some global contexts, participants in this study opined that the adoption of such a strategy might encounter delays in Uganda because of the availability of free, easily accessible, timely information on social media and other digital platforms, which makes it hard to convince readers to subscribe for online news content. This reality, coupled with high levels of poverty, poses a hurdle to the timely realization of favourable financial outcomes through the implementation of a paywall model in Uganda.

“The paywall may bring in some money but not a lot. Even myself, a former journalist, I found myself in a situation where you see a story, someone gives you a teaser of one paragraph or two paragraphs, you read it then they tell you that to proceed, they want you to pay, but what do you do? You just go to the available free alternative media with a related or similar story. So, building up that paywall may not make business sense. In future, could be, but not now,” (PM).

Participants in the study also underscored the challenges posed by inefficiencies in management and prevalent corruption, identifying these as some of the major obstacles impeding New Vision's endeavours to enhance its financial prospects. Notably, participants pointed to commercial printing and advertising as two specific areas where corruption could potentially undermine business operations. The editors emphasized the urgent need for the company to enhance managerial efficiency and implement measures to curb corruption, as the persistence of such challenges is detrimental to the overall functioning of the company.

“The company itself needs to ensure that management is efficient. The company is losing money because of some corrupt elements. Like in the commercial printing department, there is information that some of the people who come to do business with New Vision are diverted and taken to Nkrumah (the epicentre for private printers in Kampala), where our own people have set up businesses or get bigger commissions. There was a young lady who was working for New Vision. Before she left, she told me several advertisers were being diverted from New Vision to the online publications and you know many of those online publications are set up by journalists who also work in established media houses like New Vision, so, they would connive with the sales personnel to divert advertisers. That’s money lost. That’s corruption,” (PG).

2.2.3 Assessing New Vision Content Strategy

The third research objective sought to assess New Vision’s content strategy and its effectiveness in attracting newspaper readers. Assessing this strategy was important because, on the market, newspapers sell news content as their ‘product’ whose quality can determine the success or failure of the newspaper.

For this objective, I analysed the company’s editorial policy. Analysis of the findings was, however, boosted by the information from oral interviews with the New Vision editors and managers. The Editorial Policy are the “published rules which provide immovable benchmarks for all media practitioners at Vision Group to inform, educate and entertain audiences and the public responsibly and professionally” (Vision Group, 2014:4). The

editorial policy and interviews form the basis of the subsections of the data analysed under this theme.

When analyzing the Editorial Policy, four major thematic areas emerged as the findings. These are quality content, exclusive/unique content, editorial independence, public interest journalism, and analytical reporting. These findings are expounded in the following table.

Table 1: Results from the Editorial Policy

THEME	FINDINGS
Quality content	The policy requires journalists to maintain a high standard of editorial excellence through production of quality content, emphasizing key journalism tenets such as truth, accuracy, objective reporting, fair and balanced news, as well as multi-sourcing
Exclusive/unique content	The policy requires each Vision Group media platform to have functional investigation desks to generate exclusive in-depth content using secret and open sources as well as documents. It requires editors to collaborate with the company’s legal team to ensure investigative stories are based on defensible evidence before they are published.
Editorial independence and public interest journalism	Although New Vision is majorly owned by the government, the policy guarantees editorial independence and public interest journalism. The policy empowers journalists to play the fourth estate role by, for instance, putting those in power to account, exposing

	<p>abuse of office and power, corruption and social injustices, and other selfish acts that put the public at a disadvantage. Section 1.1.6 states: “Vision Group shall point out any weaknesses and failures of any public policy and voice public opinion and criticisms constructively, fairly, and objectively without becoming an institutional opponent of the government and its interests. This does not hinder unearthing and exposing inefficiency, wastage, abuse of office and corruption in any Government department.”</p>
<p>Analytical reporting</p>	<p>The policy requires New Vision to do deeper analyses and bars journalists from relying on press releases or conferences alone to develop content unless there is overwhelming news value. It asserts that press releases/conferences must be treated as tips to be followed to produce balanced, fair, and objective stories.</p>

Participants said maintaining high journalistic standards of truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance is key for the newspaper in the digital dispensation where fake news floods social media and people search for reliable news sources to turn to whenever there are controversial issues. Editors observed that accuracy and objectivity help to build credibility for the newspaper and keep or attract some readers.

“Multi-sourcing is key so that when I read a story, I find it complete. Getting many stakeholders to comment on stories is important. Writers need to continue making a lot of effort to get comments from stakeholders. People will find the stories interesting,” (PM).

Participants emphasized the significance of New Vision's commitment to analytical reporting in the contemporary media landscape. In light of newspapers losing their role as newsbreakers, participants noted that a shift toward in-depth analyses is crucial. There was agreement among participants with the Editorial Policy's assertion that newspaper journalists must move beyond relying solely on press releases or conferences to write stories unless there is overwhelming news value. The consensus among participants was that New Vision could continue shaping the public agenda by identifying significant issues that capture widespread attention, dedicating focused coverage, and commissioning a series of stories. They argued that, despite discussions on certain topics occurring on social media, discerning individuals still turn to newspapers and mainstream media for comprehensive debates and informative analyses.

“Issues to do with the environment and land are big issues that people are following especially because of the rampant land evictions. Issues to do with infrastructure, especially roads. Issues to do with the provision of services to the communities, these are stories that New Vision needs to pick up and I think they will attract interest because the community in the respective areas will be interested to know,” (PL).

While the editorial policy provides New Vision journalists with the opportunity to deliver balanced and objective news, despite the newspaper's affiliation with the government, participants observed that certain content topics fare better in attracting readers to the print newspaper than others. Specifically, they identified news related to financial opportunities as the most appealing to readers.

“Opportunity stories give us mileage. That is where there are direct opportunities for jobs. That gives us mileage. But there are also other opportunities like in farming. Those ones give us more copy sales. The other one is content to do it with health; it resonates with our audiences,” (PA).

“Stories that offer hope sell. We are in a depressed economy. There is a lot of unemployment and other challenges, a lot of conflicts, land evictions etc. People are also looking for what gives them hope,” (PM).

Participants in the study also highlighted that the newspaper strategically relies on political analyses and education news as additional crucial content topics that capture readership. They attributed this trend to the distinctive political landscape in Uganda, marked by the absence of a peaceful transfer of presidential power since gaining independence on October 9, 1962, with the current president having ruled for 37 years. Participants pointed out that these unique circumstances keep the public consistently politically engaged, fostering continuous discussions on political matters between general election cycles.

Given this context, participants noted that individuals from both political sides – the pro-government and the opposition – constantly seek political analyses to comprehend developments in the country. According to participants, this demand from readers explains the success of "The House", a weekly pullout featuring analyses of parliamentary developments, published in Saturday Vision. Participants attributed the popularity of this pullout to its ability to provide insightful perspectives on the dynamic political landscape in Uganda.

On the other hand, the newspaper features a weekly education pullout titled "Mwalimu", complemented by regular education news stories published almost every day. Participants highlighted that these education-focused segments also garner substantial readership. Similar to politics, this can be attributed to the distinctive challenges faced by Uganda's education sector, characterized by outdated theory-based curricula, the deterioration of public education institutions, and the prevalent issue of exorbitant, unregulated fees in private schools.

Participants underscored that due to these challenges, parents are consistently seeking solutions, such as identifying well-performing yet affordable schools and institutions that offer practical skills in addition to the theoretical syllabus. The newspaper has responded to these needs by introducing specialized question-and-answer pullouts tailored for various education levels among other offers. Participants noted that these pullouts have gained popularity among the public and NGOs, with the latter often purchasing them for distribution in schools situated in hard-to-reach districts.

Editors additionally recognized the significance of the company's mission, compressed in its commitment "to generate and distribute content that is valuable and advances society". A participant noted that this mission has empowered the editorial team to conceptualize and develop niche products and special pullouts tailored to specific segments of the population, including children and the youth. These specialized segments, designed to cater to distinct demographics, have proven to be appealing to readers. One noteworthy example highlighted by participants is the *Toto* magazine, inserted into the Wednesday issue of the newspaper, specifically curated for children aged 3 to 7 years. This targeted approach, focusing on age-appropriate content, has endeared the newspaper to a considerable number of young readers.

"We have others like the 'Harvest Money' pullout for farmers; it brings in some readers. 'Harvest Money' actually also feeds pensioners and people planning to retire. There is the 'PAKASA' pullout for business opportunities, which has helped to attract the youth. The special pullouts are the ones driving copy sales mostly. Green Uganda (sponsored Pullout on Climate Change) gives 5000 copies, which we supply to schools," (PA).

Ironically, stories falling within the fourth estate genre of journalism, such as investigations into corrupt public officials, have encountered challenges in garnering substantial readership. Despite their inherent role in holding authorities accountable, participants noted a growing

sense of pessimism among many Ugandans. This skepticism has intensified as several high-profile figures exposed in corruption scandals have managed to evade legal consequences. Participants observed that this prevailing perception of certain individuals in government being immune to accountability, contrasted with the perceived targeting of the majority of smaller actors, has contributed to public disillusionment.

Editors further noted that although there is initial interest in reading about prominent government officials implicated in corruption, the ultimate resolution of such scandals often lacks significant punitive actions. This pattern of perceived impunity tends to frustrate the public, leading to a sense of resignation. Consequently, readers tend to view corruption stories with skepticism, diminishing the likelihood of purchasing the newspaper for such content. However, participants noted that the newspaper's consistent efforts in investigating and publishing corruption stories have played a crucial role in maintaining its credibility. This persistent commitment has effectively countered the public perception that New Vision merely serves as a mouthpiece for the government. Moreover, participants suggested that this commitment to journalistic integrity could be a contributing factor to the majorly government-owned newspaper's ability to surpass competition from independently-owned newspapers. This resilience has allowed New Vision to maintain its position as the leading newspaper in the country over the years.

“The advice we have been getting from people involved in the distribution of content is that depressing stories, do not sell. People are already depressed; so, if you consistently publish depressing stories, people are not going to buy. These stories include corruption scandals. By the way, those stories of corruption do not sell. Somebody is struggling to get lunch, and then he sees others stealing billions of shillings, they are not interested in reading. Yet, from the media side, you would imagine that people want to know and that is your role as the media,” (PM).

2.3 Summary

These findings from the interviews and documents suggest that the digital revolution has had both positive and negative impacts on New Vision. While digital technology improved the speed and efficiency of news gathering and distribution/publication, it has killed the newspaper's power to break stories, culminating in dwindling copy sales and the resultant reduction in revenue from both newspaper circulation and advertising. Yet New Vision is facing another problem of failing to monetize its digital content since few people are willing to subscribe to online news. In response, the company has embarked on a cost-cutting drive, by downsizing the newsroom staff structure and reducing expenditure on newsroom operations, which may end up undermining the quality of the paper.

The New Vision has embarked on diversifying its revenue streams in a bid to make up for the lost print circulation and advertising revenue. From a single English newspaper launched in 1987, the company has now established seven radio and six TV stations. Other revenue streams include commercial printing, publishing, digital media, events, outdoor advertising and selling of archives. The company also gets funding from non-profit agencies to do investigative stories although the sustainability of this revenue stream is questioned as it is still managed haphazardly. The company is also struggling to make a profit from several ventures, especially the English radio and TV stations, whose operations are funded from the declining newspaper revenue yet the findings show that the paywall model is unlikely to succeed in Uganda.

The findings have also shown that, among other interventions, New Vision is banking on publishing quality content to sustain the newspaper in the face of digital disruption. As such, the newspaper editorial policy emphasizes key journalism tenets especially accuracy, which

editors think is key to building credibility of the paper in times when readers are faced with fake news on the various digital media platforms where the gate-keeping function is non-existent. There's also a growing focus on publishing analyses, especially political analyses, and news that offers hope and opportunities, education content, and human-interest news, as well as special pullouts for children and the youth.

The next chapter presents a discussion of these key findings using the reviewed literature to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion and analysis of the key findings of the study. The chapter also concludes the key findings and offers recommendations.

3.2 Discussion of the Findings

3.2.1. Impact of Digital Transformation on New Vision

Research objective one sought to investigate the impact of digital transformation on the New Vision newspaper. The results showed both positive and negative effects of the digital revolution on New Vision. Digital technology significantly enhanced the speed and efficiency of news gathering and distribution/publication. However, it also meant that the newspaper would rarely break news anymore, leading to a decline in copy sales and subsequent reduction in circulation and advertising revenue.

This shift is predominantly attributed to the growing number of peripheral online/social media content producers, as highlighted by Media Innovation Centre's (2021) media landscape mapping that identified 23 digital native news media organizations in Uganda as of May 2020. The Media Innovation Centre reported a continuous decline in print circulation numbers for Ugandan newspapers and a steady reduction in print advertising spending, primarily due to heightened competition from online and social media. Tumusiime (2016)

also observed a general decline in advertising across most of Uganda's legacy media organizations.

In response to the challenges of diminishing copy sales and revenue, New Vision has strategically invested in various digital journalism platforms such as websites, the e-paper, and the Vision Digital Experience (VIDE) mobile app. However, the findings indicate that subscription rates to these digital platforms remain low, posing an additional challenge of monetizing digital content. Consequently, the company has initiated a cost-cutting drive, including downsizing the newsroom staff structure, letting go of experienced journalists, and reducing expenditure on newsroom operations. This approach, however, raises concerns about potential compromises to the quality of the newspaper.

Scholarly literature, including insights from Owilla et al. (2022), Tumusiime (2016), Medina-Laverón et al. (2021), and Donders et al. (2018), underscores the potential repercussions of such cost-cutting measures. Downsizing may result in a decline in the quality of news content, referred to by Tumusiime (2016) as the simplification of content due to increased staff layoffs and other cost-cutting measures. Additionally, Medina-Laverón et al. (2021) and Donders et al. (2018) emphasize the negative impact of decreasing economic profitability on the contribution of news media to society.

3.2.2. Viability of New Vision Revenue Streams

Research objective two sought to explore viable revenue streams for New Vision. The findings reveal that the organization has adopted a diversification revenue model to offset the decline in revenue from print circulation and advertising. Originally established as a single

English newspaper in 1987, New Vision has strategically expanded its operations to include seven radio and six TV stations. Additional revenue streams encompass commercial printing, publishing, digital media, events, outdoor advertising, and the sale of archives.

This diversification strategy aligns with the recommendations of Wilding et al. (2018), advocating for newspaper companies to explore alternative revenue sources. Nel (2010) concurs that public interest journalism is expensive but can be financed if companies can find a variety of sources of income such as events, e-commerce, consulting, training, distribution, printing or audio-visual production, on top of subscription and advertising. API (2022) highlighted that the array of media content types and the diverse needs and preferences of media users suggest that a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy is improbable in guaranteeing the survival, reform, and renewal of media. Therefore, a more viable path forward might entail adopting a hybrid model, involving strategic diversification to establish multiple revenue streams tailored to accommodate the unique characteristics and operations of each medium.

However, the study has also established that while revenue diversification is needed to address the current financial challenges, New Vision has spread itself thin, for instance, by opening so many media outlets some of which have not turned a profit for more than a decade. Therefore, the company is struggling to see economic returns from a number of its business ventures.

While some of the revenue streams have succeeded, several business ventures, despite being part of the revenue diversification strategy, exhibit delayed profitability or outright failure.

These loss-making ventures continue to depend on New Vision newspaper, yet its circulation and advertising revenue keep dwindling. Successful revenue streams include publishing, especially educational materials and vernacular TV and radio stations. The loss-making ones include English TV and radio stations. On the other hand, events have a low return on investment because of the high costs involved. The study has shown that it would be prudent for the company to close some of the business ventures that have failed to break even for close to a decade and therefore continue draining the company's cash cow – the newspaper. The digital platforms, including the websites, the e-paper and mobile news app, are yet to turn a profit but the study has shown that they are a strategic investment because that is where the majority of the audiences are migrating to. Additionally, the study highlights the issue of corruption as a significant concern requiring immediate attention from New Vision's management.

Non-profit funding:

The study also observed that New Vision has been a beneficiary of funding from non-profit agencies to do investigative stories. Indeed, authors have observed that with all the stresses and strains on commercial models of news, the idea of non-profit journalism is increasingly being seen as an attractive option (Hermida & Young, 2020). Medina-Laverón, et al., (2021) posited that an increasing number of philanthropists, foundations and public institutions have manifested some concern about the decline in public interest journalism and have realized that market forces cannot always provide it. The Knight Foundation (2015) also argued that the profound disruption witnessed in the news industry over recent decades has to support a new ecosystem of non-profit news ventures to fill the void left in local news and investigative reporting. Schiffrin (2019) expounds on this thought, arguing that there are many worthy

media outlets, run by passionate and committed professionals, that simply cannot find a way to make money apart from getting it from donors.

The study's findings have shown that most of the stories New Vision does using funding from non-profit agencies are investigative public interest stories that highlight human rights abuses, provide a voice for the voiceless and expose the corrupt, thus enabling the newspaper to play the watchdog role of media. This finding corroborates what authors like Salazar (2019) had proposed as it allows media companies to deliver news in the manner of a public utility rather than as a market commodity. This helps to generate value for several diverse audiences, instead of generating profits for shareholders (Medina-Laverón, et al., 2021). Folkenflik (2009) also made a similar observation, noting that once media houses are liberated from the constraints of profit-making concerns, they can uphold their role as the fourth estate, scrutinising power dynamics, and championing the public interest with an unyielding commitment. Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) also studied 20 media outlets in Europe, Latin America and the US and discovered that all non-profit media had made the needs and problems of their users the primary focus of their work; they build communities around high-quality content and put public service ahead of revenue generation. When Konieczna and Robinson (2014) studied INN, a group of 90 non-profit media ventures (at the time) that was formed in 2009, they discovered that at the core of their missions and their practices lay a commitment to civic journalism and the idea that citizens represent a fundamental component of any venture to provide accurate, significant information about public affairs.

Just like New Vision's human rights news project funded by DGF, Lewis et al. (2005) argued that non-profit journalism helped to bring voices of the ordinary people, who are non-officials and non-activists, which was one of the holes unfilled by commercial news organisations. Konieczna & Robinson (2014) also noted that the US non-profits, such as Texas Observer, could provide a mouthpiece for those who are voiceless and this helped to build communities that are better informed, better connected to one another, and better able to influence policymakers. Friedlich (2022) posited that non-profit news is often more representative, more responsive, and more closely tied to local communities since great scale and great journalism are often not friends, some local news owners had poorly served or largely abandoned their communities in the pursuit of scale and profit.

However, the findings of this study show the way New Vision sources funding from non-profit agencies is not coordinated whereby it is the individual editors/journalists who write proposals as and when they get time. This affects the inflow of grants to sustain impactful journalism. The sustainability of this model is also affected by funders who offer one-off project sponsorship and never come back. The study also discovered that in Uganda, the sustainability of this business model is also undermined by the government's increasing restrictions on Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) that have seen many of them closing shop or shifting goalposts. New Vision's legal status as a company majorly owned by the government also affects its opportunities to get funding from non-profit organizations.

This aspect was previously emphasised by Konieczna & Robinson (2014) who argued that numerous legitimate questions arise regarding the sustainability of non-profit business models. The Unwanted Witness Uganda (2014) also reported that in Uganda, some donor-

funded community radios sometimes go off-air during power outages because they have no finances to fuel their generators and experience a high turnover of volunteer journalists who move on to other paying stations after gaining experience. Medina-Laverón et al. (2021) noted that government red tape also makes it difficult to solicit domestic donations, just as it happened to New Vision when its human rights news project ended prematurely after government restrictions forced the DGF to close.

However, despite the challenges of sustainability, the study has shown that a hybrid business model involving support from non-profit agencies is important to sustain quality public interest journalism that provides a voice for the voiceless and puts officials to account. In the prevailing difficult financial circumstances, New Vision can sustain higher impact journalism if assured of funding from non-profit agencies.

Government funding:

The study observed that New Vision does not receive funding from the government despite it holding the majority shareholding (53.3 per cent) in the company. Tumusiime (2016) also noted that Ugandan media lack substantial government support, which requires media outlets to navigate political and economic terrain autonomously. Besides, the findings show that while government funding may help to cushion New Vision in the current economic challenges, it is a ‘double-edged sword’ model as it may also undermine the newspaper’s independence and affect the quality of journalism.

For instance, Bátorfy and Urbán (2019) argued that government and state funding can be a powerful tool for political favouritism, censorship, market distortion and the emergence of an uncritical media pushing the government rather than the public interest agenda. Dragomir (2017) also argued that in instances where governments demonstrate undemocratic

tendencies, there is a legitimate fear that tax incentives and grants could be weaponised to capture the media and stifle independent journalism. Kigambo (2020) and Owilla, et al. (2022) argue that government funding would have to come with checks and balances to ensure that such finances do not compromise editorial independence or distort the media market.

Paywalls:

While paywalls have taken root in many parts of the world, the research observed that in Uganda, this model may take time to yield favourable financial results. This is mainly because of the proliferation of free news online. Already, authors Wadbring and Bergstrom (2021) had expressed apprehensions about the ability to retain loyal paywall readers. Tumwine et al. (2014) noted that a suggestion for paying for online access to print media in Uganda has failed to take shape. Howard (2018) and Day (2009) also expressed concerns that if asked to pay for content online, readers may gravitate towards free alternative sites, eroding brand loyalty and posing a challenge to the sustainability of the paywall model. Donders et al. (2018) explained that the transition from a free towards a pay model is considered a challenge, specifically because people's experience-to-pay was not stimulated in the early days of online news offers and, consequently, some people are not willing to pay.

However, the study has revealed that while, generally, generating revenues directly from the audiences through subscriptions and paywalls is difficult, the newspaper may succeed if it adopts a mixture of free content and puts the most important, specialised or exclusive content behind the paywall. This is what authors like Macnamara (2010) and Medina-Laverón et al. (2021) called the hybrid or freemium model, which offers free content with fees for

specialised or high-volume content, with payment options ranging from subscriptions to micro-payments. Howard (2018) concurs that to succeed in the realm of paywalls, a crucial prerequisite is the provision of unique and compelling content not readily available elsewhere.

This principle aligns with the World Association of Newspapers' acknowledgement that charged content must stand out from the crowd (WAN, 2010). Sundelin (2009) concurs that consumers (or readers) see breaking news and general interest news as commodities, something that is more difficult to charge for online than offline; instead, they place a high value on deep insights and analyses provided by journalists, and a growing segment is increasingly demanding specialised information. PWC's 2009 research also showed that individuals with a strong interest in specific content areas, such as finance and sports, are more inclined to pay for online content.

3.2.3. Assessing New Vision's Content Strategy

The third research objective sought to assess New Vision's content strategy and its effectiveness in attracting newspaper readers. The findings have shown that, among other interventions, New Vision is banking on publishing quality content to sustain the newspaper in the face of digital disruption. As such, the newspaper editorial policy emphasizes the key journalism tenets especially accuracy, truth, fairness and balance, to build credibility and public trust in the newspaper in times when readers are faced with fake news on the various digital media platforms where the gate-keeping function is non-existent.

This is in line with the content and ‘community’ dimensions, which are some of the four dimensions that Deselaers et al. (2019) suggested for legacy media houses to consider, for sustainability purposes. The authors explained that the content dimension focuses on the journalistic side of the endeavour, from media practitioners to the content they produce while the community dimension considers the media outlet’s audience, its general makeup and its relationship with the outlet, especially when it comes to trust and emotional attachment.

Medina-Laverón et al. (2021), Deuze (2005) and Lewis (2010) also posited that digital disruption has increased the public need for independent, high-quality journalism in the world and legacy media houses now have to design specific competitive content strategies focusing on quality rather than quantity. According to WAN (2010), content quality is more important than other strands of marketing in media and thus in the media industry where a product defines what it is, what it does and what it stands for, other strands of marketing fall into second position. This is the reason why Tumwine, et al. (2014:139) noted “Without journalists producing content that raises the demand for daily readership, any mechanical encouragement of readers’ loyalty will ultimately fail”.

Similar to the emphasis on quality content, New Vision prioritizes the publication of exclusive material through investigative reporting and analytical writing, particularly political analyses. This strategic focus emerged in recognition of the newspaper's evolving role, acknowledging its transition away from being the primary source for breaking news. Meyer (2004:229 cited in Konieczna & Robinson, 2014) also rooted for investigative journalism as one of the content strategies for newspapers struggling with digital disruption, adding that media houses should be gathering information “in ways that make readers want to go through

the effort of receiving it”. Seaman (2019) also makes a case for making news analyses a daily part of print media content and stopping “archive journalism” – news reporting about what is no longer “new” and done for record or future reference purposes. He argues that by focusing on news analyses, newspapers can still serve ‘cold’ news while still catering for the needs of its different audiences and kill two birds with one stone – continue to reap from urban copy sales while reaching out to ‘offline’ audiences?

The study has also shown New Vision’s growing focus on publishing news that offers hope and opportunities, educational content, and human-interest news, as well as special pullouts for children and the youth. The findings show that such stories have helped attract readers to the newspaper because of their relevance to the various segments of the population. Picard & Dal-Zotto (2006) explain that audiences are willing to pay for content if they consider it relevant, noteworthy and interesting. To attract financial support, Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) and Chyi & Tenenboim (2019) also advised that news media need to create value for users by providing information that is relevant to their daily lives, interesting, helps them solve problems, and provides a counterweight to the politically and economically powerful.

The literature reviewed highlighted the need for newspapers to engage in public interest journalism and play the watchdog role as one of the content strategies to survive in the digital dispensation. Medina-Laverón, et al. (2021) posited that such kind of journalism is key and might be recognized, among other things, through prizes and awards. Ramírez-de-la-Piscina, et al. (2014) also defined the social role of the press as being the watchdog on power among other aspects. This study has observed that although many of the investigative stories like corruption *exposés* do not necessarily attract increased readership, New Vision has prioritized

them and this helps in building the newspaper's credibility to remain the leading newspaper in the country despite being majorly owned by the government.

3.3 Conclusions

The findings from the study underscore the double-barreled impact of digital transformation on the operations of New Vision newspaper. On a positive note, the integration of digital technologies has markedly enhanced the speed and efficiency of news content gathering and distribution. The transition from archaic methods, exemplified by fax machines, to contemporary digital tools, has resulted in a paradigm shift, allowing reporters to file stories in real-time, thus facilitating timely updates.

Conversely, the advent of digital platforms has diminished the newspaper's erstwhile ability to break news. The ubiquity of bloggers and the widespread use of social media have democratised information dissemination, enabling non-journalists to circulate unverified content swiftly. Consequently, the newspaper finds itself in a landscape where traditional news outlets are no longer the primary source of breaking stories, leading to a decline in readership as individuals turn to readily available information on social media.

The study further illuminates a distressing trend in the dwindling sales of physical newspaper copies, thanks to the widespread adoption of digital media. The study reveals a significant decline in copy sales, particularly pronounced since 2014 and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This decline has translated into a corresponding reduction in circulation revenue, posing significant challenges to the financial sustainability of the newspaper.

On the side of advertising, digital disruption has induced transformative shifts. Advertisers, enticed by the expansive reach of digital platforms, are diverting their investments from traditional print media. The study reveals a tripartite disruption in advertising, marked by stagnant pricing, the emergence of native advertising where the newspaper incurs additional journalistic costs and migration towards online and broadcast platforms.

Despite the strategic investment in various digital journalism platforms, including websites, e-papers, and a mobile app, the newspaper grapples with low reader subscription rates to these digital offerings. The reluctance of readers to pay for online content, compounded by the prevalence of freely available information, poses a daunting challenge to monetising digital platforms effectively.

The viability of New Vision's revenue streams has also been discussed and findings show a range of ventures initiated over the past decade. The study has demonstrated that diversification of revenue streams into even non-media-related ventures is important to support public interest journalism. However, the effectiveness of these revenue streams varies, and some have faced considerable challenges in achieving profitability.

Despite notable successes in certain revenue streams, such as publishing and broadcasting, some electronic platforms have proven to be substantial loss-makers. Despite its dwindling circulation and advertising revenues, the newspaper remains the primary revenue source for the company. Conversely, some ventures, such as events, face sustainability challenges due to high operational costs and low return on investment.

The study indicates that funding from non-profit organisations, though beneficial, is neither sustainable nor consistent. The precarious nature of one-off project sponsorships and the increasing governmental restrictions on NGOs in Uganda have heightened the challenges associated with reliance on non-profit funding. This is exacerbated by the haphazard manner in which New Vision seeks funding from non-profit organisations characterized by the absence of a clearly laid out plan; as well as the company's connection with the government, which turns off some of the would-be funders.

The issue of over-diversification is brought to the forefront by study participants, with a call for the company to consider closing ventures that are not economically viable. The concern is raised that maintaining unprofitable channels could burden the newspaper, which has historically supported these ventures during their inception and development phases.

In terms of content strategy, the editorial policy of New Vision underscores fundamental journalistic principles, prioritising truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balanced reporting. The thematic areas identified in the newspaper's content strategy encompass quality content, exclusive/unique content, editorial independence public interest journalism, and analytical reporting.

The commitment to delivering quality content, engaging in investigative journalism, and providing analytical reporting reflects a dedication to giving readers comprehensive and credible information. Moreover, the editorial policy upholds editorial independence despite the newspaper's association with government ownership.

The readership performance of specific content topics exhibits variability. Content about financial opportunities, uplifting narratives, political analyses, and education news is identified as particularly appealing to readers and a key attraction. Additionally, human-interest stories, especially those elucidating common societal issues, hold significance in cultivating readership, whereas investigative stories, particularly those involving corrupt public officials, face challenges in garnering readership, potentially due to their disheartening nature.

3.4 Recommendations

In light of the above conclusions, the study has identified several recommendations that can guide New Vision Newspaper in navigating the challenges posed by digital transformation. One is to reconsider the strategy of cost-cutting through downsizing the newsroom. Quality content is the cornerstone of newspapers, and New Vision managers must exercise caution to avoid compromising it. The study proposes that alternative solutions be explored to address the challenges posed by the evolving media landscape. A thorough assessment of the viability of each revenue stream is imperative. The company should consider streamlining its business ventures, focusing on those that exhibit promise or have already achieved profitability. The closure of unprofitable channels could alleviate the strain on the newspaper's resources. Instead, the newspaper should prioritise investments in maintaining the quality of journalism despite cost-cutting measures. Upholding journalistic standards is essential for credibility and fulfilling the crucial role of holding authorities accountable.

The study highlights the issue of corruption as a significant concern requiring immediate attention from New Vision's management. The company should prioritise efficiency in

management and adopt robust anti-corruption measures to safeguard its operations. Instances of corruption, diversion of advertisers, and rumours of inefficiencies within certain departments should be thoroughly investigated and addressed. This is imperative for the company's turnaround, safeguarding its financial integrity and ensuring sustainable growth in a dynamic and competitive media landscape.

While recognising the challenges associated with some existing ventures, the company should explore additional revenue streams. Suggestions from participants, such as government funding, paywalls, a journalism training institute, a consultancy firm, a news agency, and courier services, warrant careful consideration.

Given the significant role that New Vision plays in areas aligned with government interests, exploring funding opportunities from the government should be considered. However, careful attention must be paid to potential implications on the newspaper's independence and journalistic quality. It is advised that the funding should be appropriated in the national budget by Parliament, which has representatives of both pro-government and opposition members, instead of seeking grants from the President or Executive.

While paywalls have been successful in some countries, the study cautions that in Uganda, a gradual implementation with a thorough understanding of the local market dynamics should apply. The study recommends the adoption of the freemium paywall model, which offers free content while the exclusive high-value content is accessed after paying.

The study has also demonstrated that funding from non-profit organisations has the potential to sustain impactful public interest journalism in New Vision. Ironically, this great potential

has not been explored maximally yet. The study recommends streamlining this revenue model by, firstly, setting up a non-profit foundation aimed at funding investigative public interest journalism.

PART II: PROJECT DOCUMENT

PROJECT PROPOSAL: ESTABLISHING A NON-PROFIT MEDIA FOUNDATION

1. Executive Summary

The study has revealed that funding from non-profit organisations has helped New Vision to investigate and publish important stories that fall under the public interest genre of journalism. Its project on human rights which was funded by DGF helped to highlight human rights abuses and provided a voice for the voiceless. This serves to show that this revenue stream is capable of sustaining high-impact public interest journalism in New Vision, which was the concern of this study.

However, the study has also observed that sourcing funding from non-profit agencies is being done haphazardly whereby it is the individual editors/journalists who write proposals as and when they wish and have time. This affects the inflow of grants to sustain impactful journalism. The other big challenge the study noted is the company's connection to the government as the biggest shareholder, which turns off some of the would-be funders. Therefore, as part of the solutions, New Vision should start with mainstreaming the way this funding is managed by registering a non-profit foundation.

2. Project Overview

The foundation should be a not-for-profit foundation that operates independently. Besides some other work that this foundation may get involved in, it should write grant proposals for funding public interest journalism. This is from the realisation that many grant proposals may not be successful. One of the study participants observed that one can churn out 10

proposals and only two get funded. So, there is a need for a team dedicated to scanning across the world for funding opportunities and writing proposals. This will increase the number of proposals and possibly, funding acquired.

3. Objectives

The primary objective of the foundation will be to champion independent journalism by offering financial support in the form of grants to New Vision media outlets and journalists engaged in independent public interest journalism. Concurrently, the foundation will endeavour to strengthen the journalistic community through training programmes, ensuring that journalists acquire the skills necessary for investigative, analytical and ethical reporting.

In a commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion, the foundation will seek to support initiatives that amplify underrepresented voices and perspectives within the media. This includes the facilitation of community-driven media projects aimed at empowering marginalized groups and fostering a more inclusive narrative.

The foundation will actively engage in media advocacy and policy reform, advocating for policies that safeguard press freedom and preserve the independence of media organizations. Collaborative efforts with policymakers should be undertaken to address challenges and cultivate an environment conducive to the development of media.

Recognizing the pivotal role of youth in shaping the future of media, the foundation should seek to support initiatives providing mentorship and internship opportunities for journalism

graduates and aspiring media professionals. This youth engagement and education objective contributes to nurturing the next generation of media leaders.

In the pursuit of informed decision-making, the foundation will conduct monitoring and research on media trends, challenges, and opportunities. By actively monitoring media landscapes, the foundation will identify threats to press freedom and take proactive measures to address them, thereby fostering a resilient and vibrant media environment.

Collaboration and networking stand as integral objectives, with the foundation having to seek to actively facilitate opportunities for collaboration among media organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders. By creating a supportive ecosystem for the exchange of ideas and resources within the media industry, the foundation will endeavour to fortify the collective impact of media entities in promoting a thriving and responsible media sector.

In summary, these objectives are strategically aligned to enhance journalism and contribute to a robust media ecosystem. The multifaceted approach is designed to promote media literacy, support independent journalism, advance diversity and inclusion, engage in media advocacy and policy reform, foster youth education, conduct monitoring and research and encourage collaboration and networking. This will contribute to building a media sector that is informed, diverse, resilient, and accountable as well as that serves the public interest and strengthens democratic principles.

4. Rationale

The media serves as a cornerstone in shaping public discourse and cultivating an informed citizenry, pivotal for a thriving democracy. However, the study has shown that New Vision is

grappling with financial constraints and other resource limitations. This predicament has compelled New Vision to undergo downsizing and cut expenditures on journalistic endeavours, inevitably compromising the pursuit of public interest investigative journalism.

This financial strain undermines the capacity of media houses to deliver high-quality journalism and fulfil their watchdog role effectively. Recognizing this critical gap, the proposed foundation aims to address these challenges and contribute to a robust media landscape. A not-for-profit foundation will facilitate the diversification of revenue streams through philanthropic donations, grants, and partnerships, providing financial resilience in the face of economic uncertainties. The foundation structure ensures independence by reducing reliance on commercial interests. By mitigating financial pressures, the foundation will endeavour to enable New Vision to maintain its editorial integrity, uphold its journalistic standards by avoiding undue influence on content and effectively serve as the watchdog of society.

The overarching goal of this foundation is to support independent journalism that holds those in power to account and amplify diverse voices, ensuring a well-informed citizenry. The foundation's initiatives will encompass supporting investigative journalism, fostering media independence, and reinforcing resources for the newsroom. Therefore, by creating a foundation, New Vision can enhance its commitment to public interest journalism, allowing for the pursuit of stories and investigations that may be financially challenging under conventional business models. By doing so, the foundation aspires to play a pivotal role in enhancing democracy and fostering national development. Empowering New Vision and other media organizations with the means to engage in rigorous journalism not only

safeguards the integrity of public discourse but also facilitates the crucial interplay between vigilant media and accountable governance.

In essence, the establishment of this not-for-profit foundation aligns with the broader vision of nurturing a vibrant media ecosystem in Uganda, where quality journalism thrives, diverse perspectives are embraced, and the public is empowered through comprehensive and unbiased information. The foundation envisions contributing to the enduring principles of democracy and progress by fortifying the pivotal role of the media in shaping a well-informed and engaged citizenry.

In summary, the foundation model provides a mechanism for securing the long-term viability of New Vision. It also underscores New Vision's commitment to social responsibility, which is enshrined in the overall company mission: “To generate and distribute content that is valuable and advances society”. The foundation will allow the company to contribute positively to the community by addressing societal issues through media initiatives and projects.

5. Funding/ Budgetary Mechanism

The foundation's financial support will be derived from a diverse range of contributors, including local and international non-profit organizations, along with benevolent individuals who share a commitment to sustainable development and upholding human rights in Uganda as well as advancing media development.

The study has shown that New Vision has been receiving funds from non-profit agencies like DGF and the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) for different

journalism projects. Building on this, the foundation will conduct comprehensive research to identify potential funders who align with the foundation's mission and objectives and write proposals for impactful journalism projects. These may include local and international non-profit organizations, local philanthropic entities, government grants, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, and individual donors. Organizations like the Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, and UNESCO often fund initiatives aligned with media development and human rights. Some corporations allocate funds through their CSR programmes to initiatives promoting ecological sustainability, transparency, democracy, and free expression.

The foundation will have to connect with local organizations that support initiatives benefiting the community. These foundations often prioritize projects with a direct impact on local populations and may be interested in contributing to environmental and sustainable development, media literacy and human rights initiatives. The foundation will also explore specialized funds that focus on specific themes such as environment, population and development journalism, freedom of expression, or human rights. For example, organizations like the Knight Foundation provide grants specifically for journalism and media-related projects while others like the CABI provide funds for science journalism.

The foundation will also leverage online fundraising platforms to reach a wider audience. Crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter, Indiegogo, or GoFundMe allow individuals and organizations to contribute to causes they believe in.

The foundation can strategically expand its revenue streams by offering consultancy services, thereby bolstering its ability to support its mission and activities. To achieve this, the

foundation must cultivate robust expertise in the fields of media, journalism, and communication. A dedicated team, comprising individuals with the requisite skills and knowledge, should be established to spearhead the consultancy services. This team will undertake thorough market research to identify potential clients and engage with them effectively. Furthermore, a commitment to transparency in financial reporting will be paramount. The foundation will consistently communicate how the revenue generated through consultancy services aligns with and contributes to the overarching mission and objectives of the organisation. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that consultancy services serve as a complementary asset to, rather than a distraction from, the primary focus of advancing the foundation's mission.

These funds will be strategically allocated to various key areas, reinforcing the foundation's mission and objectives. A substantial portion of the funds will be dedicated to providing grants that empower the media organization and journalists to undertake impactful projects, investigations, and initiatives aligned with the foundation's goals. Investment in comprehensive training programs will be a priority, equipping media professionals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to excel in their roles and contribute to the growth and sustainability of the media sector.

A portion of the funds will be channelled into media literacy initiatives aimed at fostering a more informed and discerning public. These programmes will enhance critical thinking and media consumption skills among diverse segments of the population.

To ensure the smooth functioning and impact of the foundation, a portion of the funds will cover operational costs. This includes administrative expenses, outreach efforts, and infrastructure necessary for the foundation's day-to-day operations.

This funding mechanism is designed to create a well-rounded and sustainable financial structure for the foundation, leveraging the collective support of organizations and individuals who recognize the vital role of media in democratic societies.

6. Operation Model

The foundation will function autonomously, serving as a not-for-profit subsidiary of the main company. This autonomy ensures that the foundation can operate with flexibility and pursue its mission independently. While operating independently, the foundation will collaborate synergistically with the main company. This collaboration may involve sharing resources, expertise, and insights to maximize the collective impact on media development.

Funds received by the foundation will be dedicated exclusively to supporting journalism initiatives. This includes funding investigative reporting, media development projects, and other programmes that align with the foundation's mission.

The foundation should be committed to transparency and accountability. Regular reports, audits, and updates will be provided to funders, demonstrating how their contributions are utilized to advance journalism, media excellence, human rights and sustainable development causes among others.

Emphasis will be placed on designing and implementing impactful programmes that directly contribute to journalism excellence. This may involve supporting investigative journalism, media literacy initiatives, and projects aimed at upholding human rights through the power of the media.

7. Structure of the Foundation

The foundation should have a Board of Trustees to supervise the Executive Director, with two major departments. One of the departments should be for grants, charged with the responsibility of conducting research to identify grant opportunities and writing the actual proposals as well as handling other activities like advocacy. The second department will be a small finance and administration team to manage the finances, logistics and human resources of the foundation. The journalistic end will be taken care of by the main company so that once a proposal has gone through, the foundation relays the concept to the New Vision editors and they will be able to supervise the journalists to do their work appropriately.

The executive leadership, working with the board, should clearly define the foundation's mission and vision, outlining its commitment to advancing sustainable development and media excellence, upholding human rights, and fostering a democratic society in Uganda. The executive leadership should develop a comprehensive strategic plan with clearly defined goals, objectives, and key performance indicators and regularly review and update the plan to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities. The board will implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of the foundation's initiatives. Regular reports will be generated to keep stakeholders informed about the progress of projects and outcomes.

8. Personnel

The foundation should be run by eminent individuals, preferably Ugandans of high integrity. Efforts should be made to ensure diversity in expertise, including media professionals, environment and development experts, human rights advocates, legal experts, and representatives from the community. This inclusive approach ensures a broad spectrum of knowledge and perspectives, fostering a leadership team that can effectively navigate the complexities of the media landscape while embodying the principles of integrity and commitment to the diverse needs of the community.

9. Conclusions

In conclusion, the outlined objectives for the non-profit media foundation form a strategic framework aimed at sustaining quality journalism. By providing financial support through grants to New Vision media outlets and journalists, coupled with targeted training programmes, the foundation will be committed to nurturing investigative, analytical, and ethically-driven reporting.

Its dedication to advocacy for press freedom and media independence involves collaborative efforts with policymakers, addressing challenges and cultivating an environment conducive to media development. Additionally, its active monitoring of media trends ensures that it can identify threats to press freedom and proactively address them, fostering a resilient and vibrant media environment. By serving the public interest and a focus on strengthening democratic principles, the foundation strives to make a lasting and positive impact on the landscape of independent journalism and media as a whole.

The foundation's funding mechanism is designed to create a resilient and sustainable financial structure that aligns with its mission of advancing media development, human rights, and sustainable development in Uganda. Drawing support from a diverse range of contributors, including local and international non-profit organizations and benevolent individuals committed to these shared goals, the foundation aims to leverage collective efforts for meaningful impact.

Building on existing funding partnerships and recognizing the success of New Vision in securing support from entities such as DGF and CABI, the foundation will conduct thorough research to identify potential funders who resonate with its mission. Proposals for impactful journalism projects will be crafted and presented to a variety of sources, including local and international non-profits, philanthropic entities, CSR programmes, individual donors, and specialized funds.

The strategic allocation of funds encompasses key areas essential to the foundation's objectives. Grants for media organizations and journalists will empower impactful projects and investigations, while comprehensive training programmes will enhance the skills of media professionals.

Furthermore, the foundation's strategic expansion into consultancy services represents a proactive approach to diversifying revenue streams, reinforcing its ability to support its mission.

In essence, this funding mechanism aims to create a well-rounded and sustainable financial structure that harnesses the collective support of organizations and individuals recognizing the pivotal role of media in democratic societies.

The proposed operation model presents a balanced and effective approach. As an autonomous entity operating as a not-for-profit subsidiary, the foundation is poised to execute its mission with flexibility and independence, ensuring a focused pursuit of media development objectives. The collaboration with the main company adds a layer of synergy, allowing for the efficient sharing of expertise, and insights to maximize the collective impact on media development.

Transparency and accountability are central tenets of the foundation's operational philosophy. Regular reports, audits, and updates provided to funders will offer a clear and detailed account of how contributions are utilized to advance journalism and related causes. This commitment to transparency enhances trust and ensures that the foundation's activities are in alignment with its stated mission.

Overall, the proposed operation model, combined with the focus on quality personnel and impactful programmes, positions the non-profit media foundation to play a vital role in advancing journalism, media excellence, and the broader causes of human rights and sustainable development in Uganda.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction:

I am Francis Kagolo, a student at The Aga Khan University, Nairobi. I am conducting interviews to collect data for my capstone project dissertation, which is one of the requirements of the degree of Executive Masters in Media Leadership and Innovation.

NB: In this study, all the interviewees' responses will be kept confidential and data presented anonymously. You're free to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

TOPIC: Exploring viable business models for legacy media in Uganda: The case of New Vision newspaper

Section 1: Evaluating the Impact of Digital Transformation

- What's your impression of the digital transformation in Uganda's media sector?
- How would you describe the extent of digital transformation within the traditional print media industry in Uganda?
- Can you share your observations regarding how New Vision newspaper has adapted to the digital era?
- What do you see as the primary drivers of digital transformation within the media industry in Uganda?
- In your opinion, how has digital transformation impacted the readership and reach of New Vision newspaper? What about the newspaper's revenues?

Section 2: Revenue Streams of New Vision Newspaper

- Could you outline the various revenue streams that New Vision newspaper has explored in recent years?
- Which revenue streams have been the most successful for New Vision, and why?
- Which ones have not performed as expected, and why?
- Have there been any significant challenges or obstacles in diversifying revenue streams?
- Can you provide insights into how traditional print advertising revenue has changed with the rise of digital media? What about its revenues?
- What challenges and opportunities has New Vision faced in adapting to the changing media landscape?

Section 3: Content Strategy and Readership

- What efforts has New Vision newspaper made to retain readers, especially in the context of digital transformation?
- Could you explain New Vision's content strategy for print?
- How does New Vision newspaper assess the effectiveness of its content strategy?

- Are there specific content types topics that have proven particularly effective in attracting readers in the print?

Section 4: Recommendations for Innovative Business Models

- Based on your insights, what recommendations do you have for New Vision newspaper and other legacy media organizations in Uganda to thrive in the digital age?
- How best can newspapers like New Vision generate funds to sustain high quality public interest journalism such as investigations?
- Are there any emerging trends or successful strategies from other regions or industries that you believe could be applied to traditional print media in Uganda?
- What's your view about sourcing for funds from non-profit entities to fund journalism? Could it offer solution to the dwindling advertising revenue?
- What other revenue streams or business models would you suggest?

Closing:

- Is there anything else you'd like to share that hasn't been covered in this interview?

Thank you for your time and participation.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Title of the Research: Investigating the impact of digital transformation on legacy media in Uganda; the case of New Vision newspaper

Name of the Researcher: Francis Kagolo Email: francis.kagolo@aku.edu

Name of Supervisor: Mr David Aduda Email: david.aduda@aku.edu

I _____ have participated in this research project as one of the sources of data fully aware of my rights and responsibilities and those of the researcher. I received information about the aims of the research and how my contribution will be used. The researcher also explained that the information I share shall be kept confidential and keep my identity anonymous unless I decide otherwise. I am aware that I have the right to withdraw my consent to participate in the research at any stage. Therefore, I permit the researcher to use the information that I have given /I am about to give for research purposes only.

Signature: _____

Name of participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C: AKU Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

REF: AKU-GSMC/ERC/2023/EMMLI 0011

Date: November 13, 2023.

Dear Francis Kagolo (Student No. 580171)

**RE: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON
LEGACY MEDIA IN UGANDA: THE CASE OF NEW VISION NEWSPAPER**

This is to inform you that Aga Khan University - Graduate School of Media and Communications Ethics Review Committee has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your approval period is November 13, 2023, to November 12, 2024, and your application's approval number is AKU-GSMC/ERC/2023/EMMLI 0011. This approval is subject to compliance with the following, under the supervision of your two supervisors:

1. Only the approved documents including the informed consent form and the data collection instruments will be used.
2. Any changes, made on the approved documents that may increase the risks or affect the welfare or safety of the participants or compromise the integrity of the study must be reported to GSMC within the shortest time possible. The amended documents will be taken through a fresh review and the due process of approval.
3. In the event that the research cannot be completed within the one-year approved period, the researcher will request for renewal of approval 30 days prior to the end of the approved period.
4. The researcher will be required to submit a comprehensive progress report when applying for renewal of approval.
5. Submission of an executive summary report to the GSMC's Ethics Review Committee within 90 days of completion of the study.
6. Produce all the data collected using the approved tools as and when required by the Ethics Review Committee within the 90 days of completion of your study.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be required to obtain a research permit and other relevant documents from the appropriate regulatory body in your country.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. George Nyabuga
Associate Dean

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