2024

Media landscape in Africa

Qualitative and quantitative research on African Media in a Post-Covid Environment

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary encapsulates the findings of a comprehensive 2023 study on Africa's media landscape, examining the evolving role of media across the continent amidst diversity and changing dynamics. African media, characterized by cultural, linguistic, and historical richness, significantly shapes public opinion, democratic processes, and economic development. However, it confronts challenges including censorship, resource limitations, and the imperative to adapt to digital transformation. These challenges offer opportunities for innovation, particularly in the digital sphere.

The 2023 study of Africa's media landscape provides critical insights into the evolving role of media across the continent.

The study, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, includes an extensive desktop review, a survey of 209 media leaders across Africa, and focus groups with journalists, editors, and publishers. This approach ensured a nuanced understanding of the media landscape, balancing ethical standards with cultural sensitivity.

Key findings reveal a media landscape grappling with financial sustainability issues and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accentuated the importance of journalists and fact-checking amid misinformation. The shift towards digital platforms is a notable trend, with a need for content tailored to these mediums. Artificial intelligence's (AI) integration into newsrooms suggests a potential revolution in content creation and analysis, although its adoption is gradual.

> Key findings reveal a media landscape grappling with financial sustainability issues and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accentuated the importance of journalists and fact-checking amid misinformation.

KEY FINDINGS

Across the board, **financial sustainability** is identified as one of the most critical issues facing African media and the key to unlocking some of the other problems.

When it comes to revenue generation methods, **events and marketing** were more popular than paywalls and subscriptions.

The **state of African economies and infrastructure** has a direct impact on the ability of newsrooms to increase revenue and adopt AI.

There is a **significant move towards digital platforms** (about 40%), with traditional platforms being used less or not used at all.

Newsrooms are still feeling the **impact of COVID-19 pandemic**. Those that had already adapted to digital platforms in 2020 are rearing better than those that only started thinking digital when the pandemic hit.

Though in general, use of **AI is on the increase**, most media houses surveyed (nearly 63%) report limited or no integration of AI in their newsrooms.

The move to digital and increased use of AI creates a need to **upskilling of journalists**.

Participants anticipate that political interference will remain but there will also be significant transformations in African media, driven by increased internet penetration, the rise of indigenous digital platforms, data-driven journalism, a growing culture of collaborations, intensified fight against misinformation and disinformation and enhanced audience engagement. Challenges in misinformation and trust remain, with a need for media to maintain ethical and trustworthy content.

To thrive, media organizations are advised to invest in digital platforms, explore alternative revenue models, support local content, invest in data analytics, embrace AI, and advocate for press freedom. These strategies are crucial for navigating the dynamic media environment, emphasizing innovation, audience engagement, and adherence to journalistic standards.

To adapt and thrive in the evolving media landscape, participants in the study have suggested **several key strategies** for African media organizations:

| |
|---|
| Digital Platform Investment |
| Explore Alternative Revenue Models |
| Support Local Content and Audience Engagement |
| Invest in Data Analytics and Visualization Tools and Training |
| Seek Collaborations and Partnerships |
| Combat Misinformation |
| Embrace Technological Advancements |
| Advocate for Press Freedom |
| Ensuring security and Promoting ethics - particularly in AI. |
| African media organizations are advised to embrace technological changes, diversify their revenue sources, deeply engage with audiences, and maintain high journalistic standards to effectively navigate the dynamic and changing media environment. |

INTRODUCTION
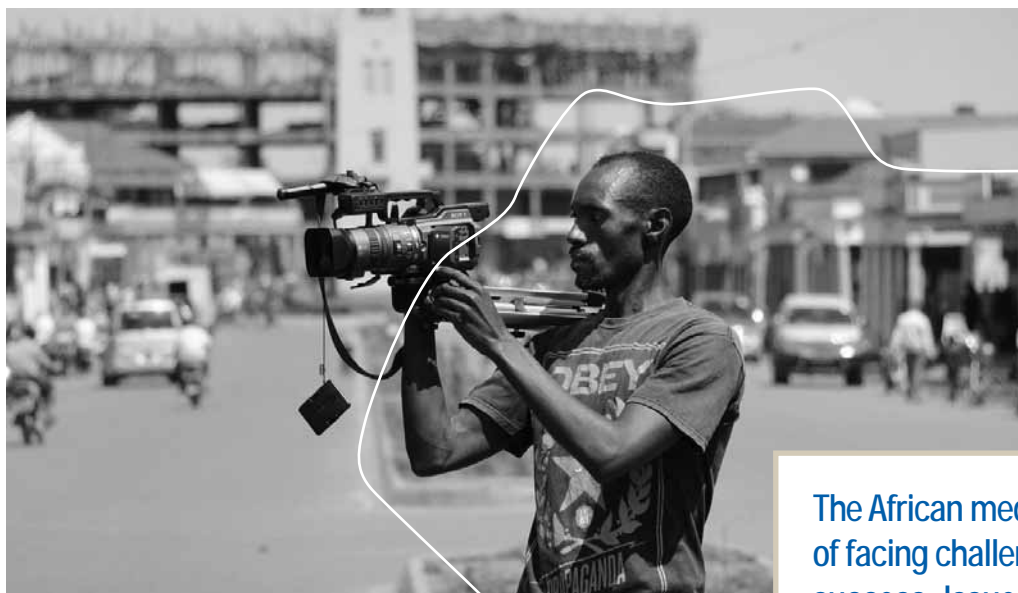
> The African media's story is one of facing challenges and finding success. Issues such as censorship, limited resources, and adapting to the digital era are common.

The study of Africa's media landscape in 2023 is a crucial task, not only for academic interest, but also for understanding the future of the continent. This research shines a light on a media environment that represents the multitude of cultures, languages, and histories in Africa itself. Each aspect of this diversity affects how the media impacts society and how it operates. Understanding these complex relationships is vital because the media doesn't just reflect societal norms; it also influences public opinion, shapes democratic processes, and drives social and economic development.

The African media's story is one of facing challenges and finding success. Issues such as censorship, limited resources, and adapting to the digital era are common.

It is important to note that though African media is facing challenges, it has also overcome many others. In the 1970s, many African countries had recently gained independence from colonial rule. Most impactful publishers were government owned and heavily censored. By the 1990s this had changed, the number of independent media publishers had increased drastically. From that time to the early 2000s, media organizations had to be able to effectively report on corruption, civil wars, and diseases like HIV, AIDS and Ebola. Now across the continent, there are publishers that are world class examples of excellence in investigative journalism, health journalism, narrative storytelling, and conflict sensitive journalism. Journalism in Africa has many times been at

the forefront of supporting democracy through holding those in power accountable. This was in part made possible by international funding from private and governments. According to a report by the American Centre for International Media Assistance, $450 million from private and government money is spend on media development in Africa annually. This amount increases significantly when what China spends on media operations in Africa is included. As African media faces the challenges ahead, some new, others familiar, continued support from funders will play a big part in determining how well and how fast they overcome them.

In today's world, where technology changes rapidly, it's essential to understand how African media is keeping up with these changes. This understanding is crucial for anticipating future trends in media and preparing for them effectively.

The research also looks at the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in African media. AI is seen as a tool that can enhance the work of media professionals, making them more productive and creative. It can customize news and stories to individual preferences and make media operations more cost-effective.

The research therefore aims to understand how media can evolve in ways that support democracy, cultural representation, and sustainable development. It provides valuable insights for a range of people who have a stake in the future of media in Africa.

This research is beneficial for various groups including policy-makers, media professional, media support organizations, foundations, media investors and civil society seeking to advocate for free and fair sustainable media.

METHODOLOGY

In this report, at the request of Bloomberg MEA team, we embarked on an explorative journey to understand the dynamic and multifaceted state of media across the African continent in a post-COVID era. We recognize the crucial role media plays in shaping societies and influencing public discourse.

The predominant platforms in this research are print and digital, featuring a blend of traditional media outlets and emerging startups. We reached out to at least 400 media leaders across Africa. This included editors, executives, and senior journalists. Of the 400, 209 media leaders from 22 English-speaking African countries and 7 French-speaking countries responded to the survey. In addition, 178 media leaders were invited to attend our three focus groups (one for journalists and editors, the second for academics and civil society and the third for publishers and executive). Of those invited, 59 attended the focus groups.

Our methodology, rooted in both quantitative and qualitative approaches, seeks to capture the complexities and regional nuances of media practices, challenges, and opportunities in Africa.

Our research started with a desktop review of existing media research. This foundational stage involved collecting and analyzing a plethora of academic studies, industry reports, and articles. The objective was to construct a preliminary understanding of the African media landscape, which would serve as the bedrock for our subsequent research phases.

Informed by insights garnered from the desktop review, we designed a comprehensive survey targeting senior media leaders across the continent. The survey aimed to delve into their perspectives on current challenges, opportunities, and trends within the media sector. To ensure a broad and representative sample, we engaged with local researchers in East, West, Central, and Southern Africa, leveraging their expertise to identify potential survey participants. This approach allowed us to gather high-level insights, focusing on strategic viewpoints rather than generalized opinions.

The analysis of survey results revealed preliminary findings that were both intriguing and insightful. These early themes acted as a catalyst for the next critical phase: focus groups. We conducted

four focus groups, comprising one mixed French-speaking group and three English-speaking groups, each targeting different roles within the media such as journalists, editors, and publishers. These discussions were aimed at unpacking the nuanced details of the challenges and dynamics identified in the survey.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, ensuring the confidentiality and respectful treatment of all participants. We emphasized the validity and reliability of our data through careful cross-verification and the use of multiple data sources. Moreover, our approach was culturally sensitive, acknowledging and respecting the diverse cultural contexts across the African continent.

By combining desktop research, targeted surveys, and in-depth focus groups, we have endeavored to provide a holistic and nuanced understanding of the media environment in Africa. This report not only highlights the current state of media but also serves as a beacon for future explorations and interventions in the media sector across the continent. Our findings lay the groundwork for informed decision-making and strategic planning, aimed at fostering a vibrant, responsible, and impactful media presence in Africa.

By using researchers to support outreach across the continent. We were able to tap into local knowledge and understanding of the media landscape.

DESKTOP REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the media landscape in Africa, posing both challenges and catalyzing significant changes.

At its height, the pandemic led to economic downturns, which in turn caused a reduction in advertising revenues-a primary income source for many media outlets. This financial strain resulted in layoffs, pay cuts, and even closure of some media houses. With lockdowns and social distancing measures, there was a surge in demand for timely and reliable information. This led to increased consumption of news, especially through digital platforms as people sought updates on the pandemic.

Media organizations had to quickly adapt to remote working arrangements. This shift posed logistical challenges, particularly for broadcast media that traditionally relied on studio-based operations.

At the same time, the pandemic highlighted the critical role of the media as it played a crucial role in disseminating public health information, combating misinformation related to COVID-19, and holding governments accountable for their pandemic response.

However, many challenges remained after the pandemic. Firstly, the pandemic accelerated the shift towards digital media. Many organizations enhanced their online presence, developed digital-first strategies, and invested in digital content production to reach wider audiences.

But the shift to online revenue generation was slower. In Uganda, for example, the pandemic exposed the precariousness of the print media industry. Facing financial challenges, media outlets explored new revenue streams. This included digital subscriptions, paywalls, online advertising, sponsored content, and diversification into non-traditional media services. There was a renewed focus on local news coverage, as audiences sought information relevant to their immediate communities regarding the pandemic's impact.

The need for efficient remote working and digital content production led to investments in technology and training for journalists in digital skills, data journalism, and multimedia storytelling.

The pandemic underscored the importance of building trust with audiences. Media outlets worked to enhance credibility and engagement through accurate reporting and fact-checking initiatives.

In 2023, the African media landscape was still undergoing a significant transition as the shift from traditional print and broadcast media to digital platforms continued.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), and WhatsApp have become critical channels for news dissemination and public discourse, especially among younger audiences. Media houses are adapting to this digital shift by creating content specifically tailored for online consumption, ranging from text and graphics to video and podcasts.

To combat the declining revenues from traditional sources like print sales and broadcast advertising, media organizations are exploring new revenue models. These include digital subscriptions, online advertising, content syndication, and sponsored content. Apart from increased donor funded journalism, there is a growing trend towards community engagement, where media outlets interact directly with their audiences for funding support, often through crowdfunding platforms.

In many African countries, media outlets face political pressures that can lead to censorship or biased reporting. This is especially prevalent in regions where the government or political figures own or significantly influence media outlets.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) notes that African journalists continue to work in challenging environments - facing threats to their safety, particularly when covering sensitive topics like corruption, human rights abuses, or political unrest. In addition, stringent laws and regulations in some countries pose significant challenges to media freedom, with instances of journalists being arrested or media houses being shut down for their reporting.

The integration of technologies like AI and data analytics in newsrooms are beginning to take shape, offering potential for enhanced content creation, audience analytics, and personalized news delivery.

The potential use of generative AI is explored in the article "Generating Buzz: How Can Local Newsrooms in Africa Use Generative AI to Stay Ahead of the Curve?" by Research ICT Africa. It emphasizes how AI can augment newsrooms by improving news production, distribution, and revenue generation. The article delves deeper into how AI can revolutionize African newsrooms by aiding in content creation, like writing reports or producing multimedia content. It discusses the need for AI tools tailored to African contexts, emphasizing local languages and cultures. The potential of AI to automate routine tasks, thereby freeing journalists for more investigative work, is highlighted. However, it also cautions about ethical issues, including AI's impact on employment and the need for transparent, responsible AI usage.

As noted, the African media landscape in 2023 presents a diverse and dynamic picture, with each region-East, West, Southern and Central Africa-exhibiting its own unique characteristics and challenges.

EAST AFRICA

East African media has embraced digital transformation, with a significant push towards online journalism and social media engagement. Countries like **Kenya** and **Tanzania** have seen a rise in digital news consumption, with mobile internet playing a pivotal role.

Challenges in media freedom persist, influenced by political scenarios. For instance, in **Tanzania**, there have been concerns about press freedom under various administrations, impacting journalistic independence. The Anti-Homosexuality Act in **Uganda** threatens press freedom and free speech.

Media outlets in East Africa are experimenting with different revenue models, including digital subscriptions and content monetization, to counter declining print media revenue.

WEST AFRICA

West African countries, like **Ghana** and **Nigeria**, showcase media diversity, with a significant presence of local language broadcasting. This approach enhances community engagement and caters to diverse linguistic groups.

In Nigeria, the media is often intertwined with politics, affecting objectivity. The region has a history of newspapers being launched by political figures, influencing public perception and content.

Despite a strong tradition of print journalism, there is a notable shift towards digital platforms. However, challenges like internet accessibility and electricity reliability affect this transition.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Countries like **South Africa** have a relatively independent media. However, regulatory challenges and government influence can still be issues, as seen in various Southern African nations.

There's an increasing trend towards digital media, complementing the strong presence of broadcast media in the region. Online news platforms are becoming more popular alongside traditional media.

Economic constraints have pushed media houses to innovate in revenue generation, including exploring digital advertising and partnerships.

CENTRAL AFRICA

In countries like the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, media is often controlled or influenced by political figures. This affects content neutrality and diversity. The reach of media in regions like the DRC is often limited to urban areas like Kinshasa. There's also a rich tapestry of languages, with content produced in vernacular languages for diverse ethnic groups.

Journalists in Central African countries often face security threats and censorship, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Eastern DRC.

In summary, the African media landscape in 2023 is marked by a transition towards digital platforms, challenges in maintaining media freedom and independence, and efforts to adapt to economic constraints through innovative revenue models.

SURVEY REPORT

In an effort to get more detail on the impact of the changing media landscape, the researchers reached out to senior media leaders across the continent. These included editors, publishers, CEOs, station managers and other executive leaders.

Survey responses were received from 133 media leaders from 25 English-speaking African countries and 76 media leaders from seven French-speaking countries.

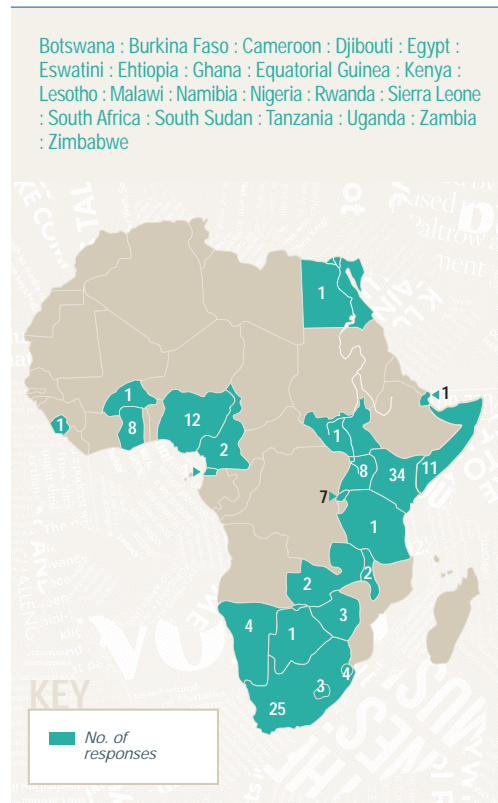## Demographics

FIG 1A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

Botswana : Burkina Faso : Cameroon : Djibouti : Egypt : Eswatini : Ehtiopia : Ghana : Equatorial Guinea : Kenya : Lesotho : Malawi : Namibia : Nigeria : Rwanda : Sierra Leone : South Africa : South Sudan : Tanzania : Uganda : Zambia : Zimbabwe

No. of responses

FIG 1B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

Burkina Faso : Benin : Cameroon : Democratic Republic of Congo : Ivory Coast : Senegal : Togo
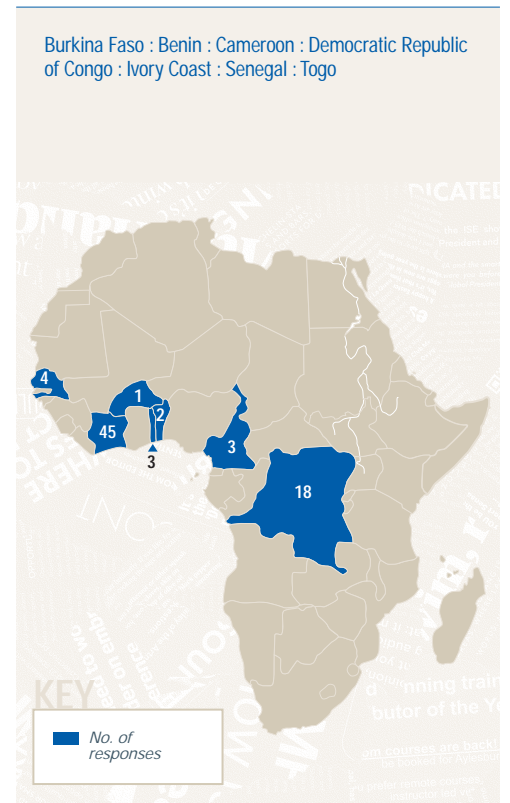
No. of responses

Which country are you from?

The survey responses depict a diverse and geographically distributed pool of participants, the countries represented include Nigeria, Ghana, The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cameroon, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, Botswana, Lesotho, Tanzania, Djibouti, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leona, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and South Sudan. Kenya emerges as the leading contributor in the English-speaking countries, with a notable 25% participation rate, underlining a significant representation from the East African nation. Following closely are South Africa and Nigeria, contributing 18% and 9% respectively, indicating a robust involvement from these key players in the African media landscape.

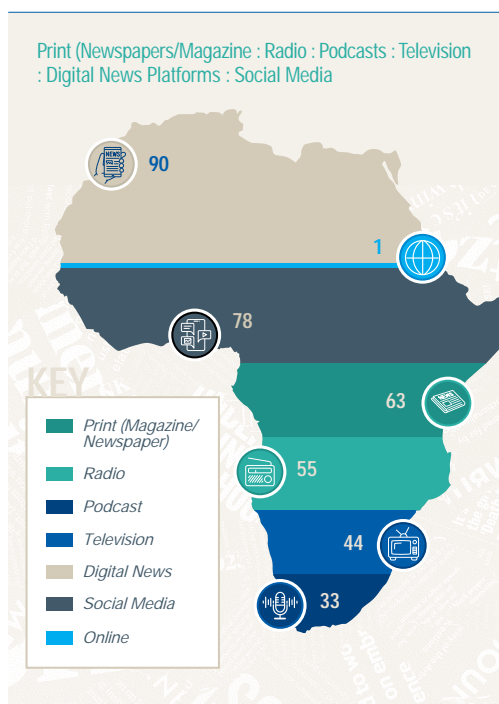Cote d'ivoire contributed 54% of the responses from the French-speaking countries. It was followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo at 24% and Senegal at 5%. The majority of French-speaking respondents are based in west Africa, the presence of DRC brings in a balance from other French-speaking regions of the continent.
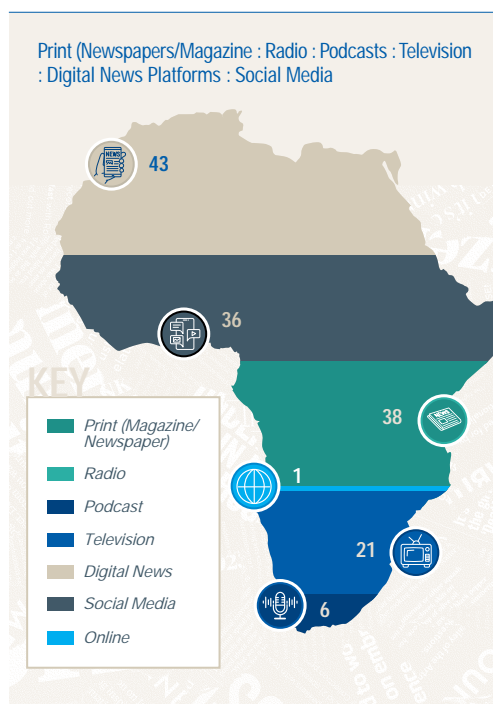
The distribution of respondents among these countries reflects a balanced yet diverse representation, showcasing a comprehensive view of insights and experiences from various regions across the continent. This diverse participation adds depth to the survey findings, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the changing dynamics within the African media landscape post-COVID.

Media Representation

FIG 2A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

FIG 2B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

Print (Newspapers/Magazine : Radio : Podcasts : Television : Digital News Platforms : Social Media

90
1
78
63
55
44
33

KEY

Print (Magazine/Newspaper)
Radio
Podcast
Television
Digital News
Social Media
Online

Print (Newspapers/Magazine : Radio : Podcasts : Television : Digital News Platforms : Social Media

43
36
38
1
21
6

KEY

Print (Magazine/Newspaper)
Radio
Podcast
Television
Digital News
Social Media
Online

What platform does your publication publish on?

The survey findings on media representation underscore a diverse landscape across different platforms, reflecting the evolving nature of media consumption in Africa. From the English-speaking countries, the predominant representation comes from digital news platforms, constituting 68% of responses. This highlights the significant shift towards online sources, indicating the growing influence of digital technologies in disseminating news and information. Social media also emerges as a prominent player with 59% representation, indicating the widespread use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), and others in the media landscape. Traditional media, including newspapers, radio, and television, continues to hold substantial representation, emphasizing the enduring significance of these traditional formats. Traditional newspapers have a noteworthy presence at 47%, showcasing continued reader engagement with print media.

Radio, a historically influential medium in Africa, maintains a substantial 41% representation, while television follows closely at 33%. The majority said they publish on social media as well (59%).
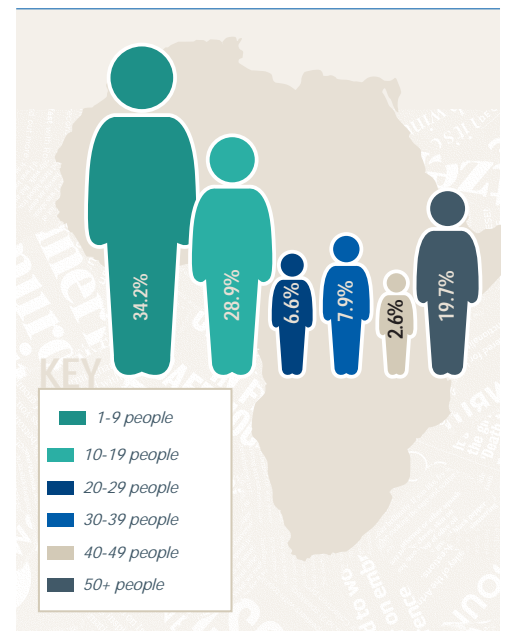
Similarly, in French-speaking countries, most respondents published on digital platforms (57%) and on traditional media which includes print, radio (49%) and TV (28%) and on social media (48%). Podcasts are more popular in the English-speaking countries at 25% vs in French-speaking countries (8%).

Organisational Structure

English-speaking: 21.1% | 13.5% | 54.9% | 6% | 1.5% | 3.8%

KEY
- 1-9 people
- 10-19 people
- 20-29 people
- 30-39 people
- 40-49 people
- 50+ people

French-speaking: 34.2% | 28.9% | 6.6% | 7.9% | 2.6% | 19.7%

KEY
- 1-9 people
- 10-19 people
- 20-29 people
- 30-39 people
- 40-49 people
- 50+ people

How many people currently work in your organization?

In the English-speaking countries over half of the respondents (54.9%) hail from large organizations with more than 50 employees. 21% represent smaller entities with one to nine employees, showcasing a spectrum of media outlets from mainstream to community-driven initiatives.

French-speaking respondents, on the other hand, were mostly from organizations with less than 10 people (33%). Large organizations with more than 50 employees only represented 20% of the French respondents.

Roles and Positions

FIG 4A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

Role	Value
Editor	41
Exec. Editor	16
News Editor	40
Publisher	4
Owner	11
Journalist	6
Other	13

FIG 4B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

Role	Value
Editor	10
Exec. Editor	14
News Editor	2
Publisher	
Owner	7
Journalist	26
Other	21

Commentary

Under Other, respondents replied...
"Director of Communications, Station Manager, Sub-Editor, Head of Digital, Contributor, Freelance, Talk Show Host, Communications Officer".

Commentary

Under Other, respondents replied...
"Director of Information, Program Manager, Regional Coordinator, Communications Manager, Editorial Analyst, Publication Director, General Manager."

What is your current role?

The distribution of respondents in senior positions, particularly Editors and Senior Journalists, suggests a notable concentration of decision-makers and influencers within the surveyed African media landscape. This underscores that responses from the survey are from those pivotal role these professionals play in shaping the narrative, editorial policies, and overall direction of media organizations. These individuals, positioned at the helm of editorial decision-making, hold significant sway over content creation, storytelling, and the strategic direction of their respective media outlets.

Size and nature of media organisations

FIG 5A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

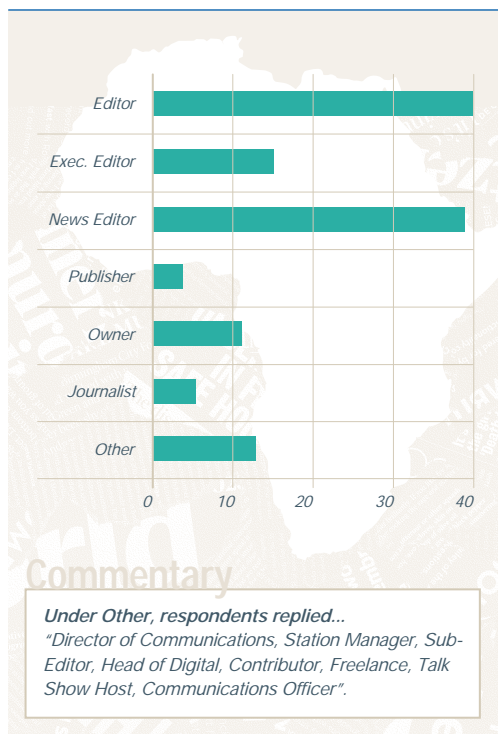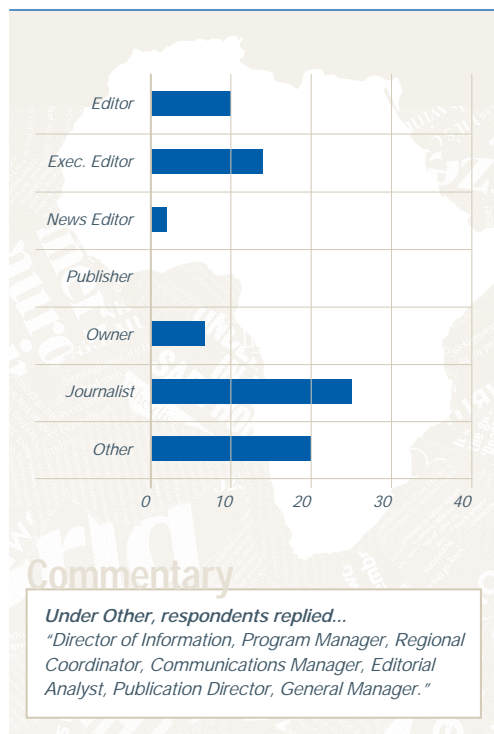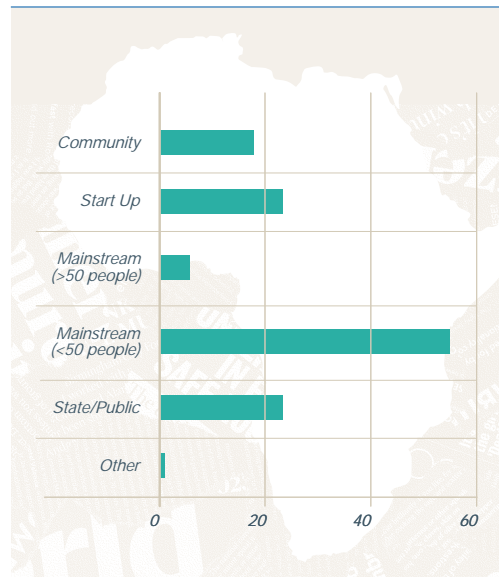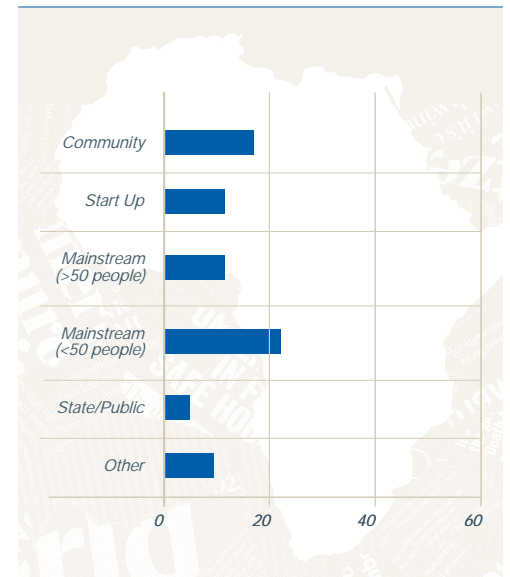**FIG 5B.**
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

How would you describe your media organization?

The distribution of respondents based on the size and nature of their media organizations provides valuable insights into the diverse landscape of the African media industry.

In the English-speaking countries the majority, comprising 42% of respondents, are affiliated with mainstream media organizations with a workforce of over 50 employees. This highlights the substantial representation of larger media entities within the survey, indicating that sizable and established players in the industry actively participated. State-owned media organizations accounted for 19% of respondents, underscoring a noteworthy presence of journalists affiliated with government-run media outlets. This suggests that insights from individuals associated with state-owned media contribute significantly to the survey's overall understanding of the media landscape.

Start-ups, a sector known for its innovation and agility, constituted 18% of the respondents. This demonstrates a notable engagement from individuals connected to emerging media ventures, showcasing the involvement of newer entrants in the evolving media landscape of Africa.

Community media, characterized by its localized focus and community engagement, attracted 14% of respondents. This signifies the representation of journalists from grassroots media initiatives, offering perspectives from those closely intertwined with local communities.

Smaller mainstream media, comprising organizations with 10 or fewer than 50 employees, were represented by 10% of respondents. This group sheds light on the challenges and dynamics faced by smaller-scale media organizations in the ever-changing landscape.

Less represented in the survey were respondents from civil society organizations (CSO), non-profit entities, organizations in the education sector, global media outlets, privately owned enterprises, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), freelance journalists, and non-profit media organizations. Each of these categories had only 1 respondent, accounting for 0.8% each. While their numbers are limited, these responses provide niche perspectives and diverse voices that contribute to the overall richness of the survey findings.

In the case of French-speaking respondents, a substantial proportion (16%) emerged from start-ups, highlighting the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative endeavors within the French-speaking media community. Most respondents (28%) where from mainstream media with fewer than 50 employees. This indicates a presence of smaller yet significant players in the French-speaking media landscape. Furthermore, a notable 23% of French-speaking respondents hailed from community media, showcasing a strong connection between the French-speaking media community and local, community-driven initiatives.

Impact of COVID-19

FIG 6A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys
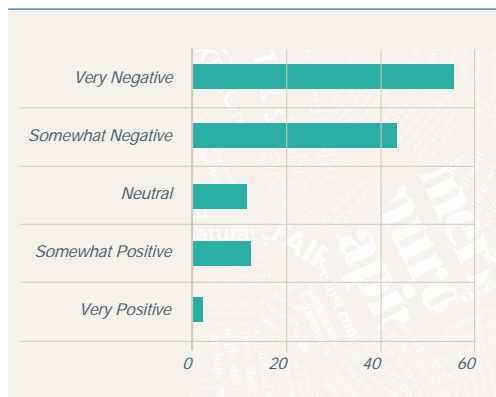
FIG 6B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys
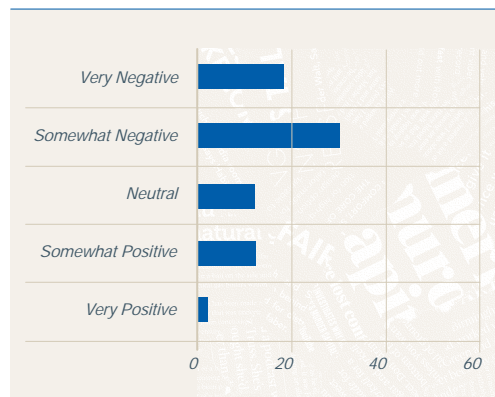
How would you rate the overall impact of Covid-19 on the media industry in your region?

The survey revealed a resounding consensus among respondents, irrespective of their language background, regarding the predominantly negative impact of COVID-19 on the media industry in Africa. The overwhelming response from both English and French-speaking found COVID-19 to have had either a very negative or somewhat negative (78% in English countries and 65% in French-speaking counties).

Insights, derived from participants' elaborations on their responses, shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by the media industry in the wake of the pandemic. The closure of borders and confinement measures significantly curtailed the deployment of journalists into the field, with pronounced financial repercussions due to the absence of advertisers. Access to information sources became arduous, necessitating adaptations such as teleworking, which was impacted by connectivity issues.

The confinement measures, while imperative for public health, hampered the media's ability to work independently. Austerity measures were implemented against certain journalists, exacerbating difficulties in obtaining information. The costs associated with purchasing protective equipment, such as masks, added a financial burden. Furthermore, partnerships supporting radio stations were withdrawn, resulting in staff reductions and funding losses for media outlets. This, coupled with a drop in audience numbers, created a challenging environment for media sustainability.

The impact on newsstand sales, compounded by journalists' difficulty in accessing information and resources during organizational shutdowns, painted a grim picture of the challenges encountered.

A prevailing theme was the struggle to access information, with individuals opting for self-confinement and sources being reluctant to provide information for personal reasons.

These impediments collectively underscore the profound disruption experienced by the media industry in the region, signaling a complex landscape that requires adaptive strategies for resilience and recovery.

Journalists highlighted challenges such as skepticism, limited travel for stories, a surge in unverified online content, and loss of audiences (some publications have still not reached their pre-COVID-19 audience numbers yet).

This is a summary of the main ways in which COVID-19 impacted African media.

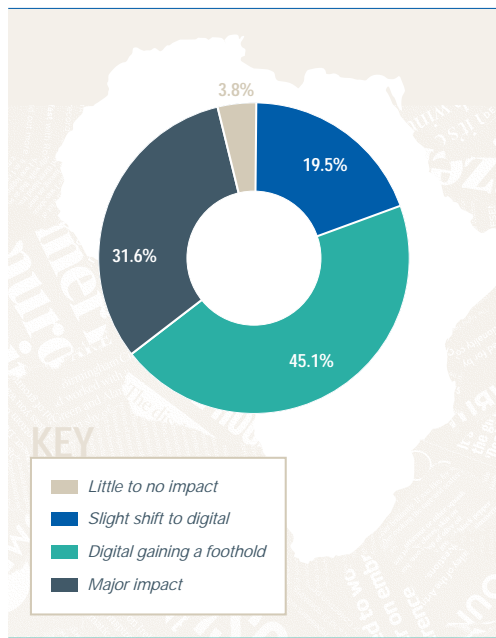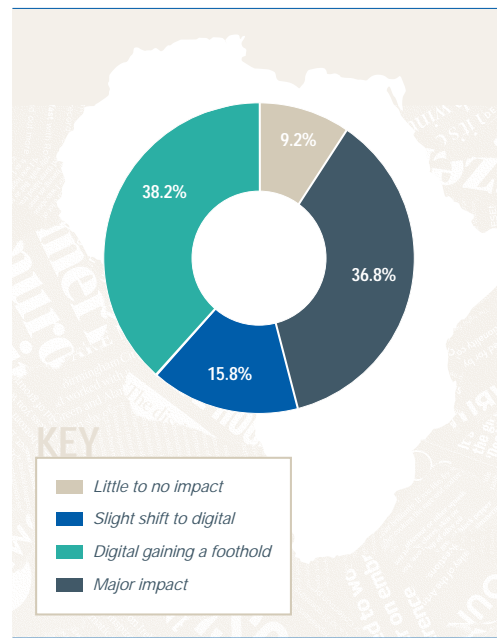| |
|---|
| It limited travel for stories that resulted in a high volume of online content that was difficult to verify and falsification that got shared widely. |
| Audience numbers went down. |
| COVID-19 harmed the media, as access to information sources became very difficult. We also had to adapt to teleworking with all the internet problems. |
| COVID-19 did not allow the media to work in complete independence since they were supposed to work in confinement. They could not have access to any information because access was limited. |
| There were austerity measures against certain journalists who had difficulty obtaining information. The cost of purchasing masks was high. |
| After COVID-19, some partners who supported radio stations withdrew; there has been a reduction in staff at certain radio stations. |
| Some media outlets have lost funding as donors have withdrawn. Journalists lost their jobs since the media no longer had the means to support them, and there was a decline in audiences. |
| The coronavirus disease has reduced our access to information and the mobilization of funds for the operation of our media houses. |
| It had an impact on news stand sales. |

Shift to Digital Consumption

KEY

- Little to no impact
- Slight shift to digital
- Digital gaining a foothold
- Major impact

3.8%
19.5%
31.6%
45.1%

KEY

- Little to no impact
- Slight shift to digital
- Digital gaining a foothold
- Major impact

9.2%
38.2%
36.8%
15.8%

Over the past few years, how would you describe the shift to digital media consumption from traditional (print, radio, television) news consumption in your region?

The survey findings regarding the shift to digital consumption in the African media landscape reveal intriguing insights into the evolving preferences and practices among journalists. The majority of the English-speaking respondents (45%), emphasize a noticeable trend wherein digital media is gaining prominence. 32% said the move to digital had a major impact. In the French-speaking countries, there was an equal split between those who said the digital media was growing in prominence and those who said it was having a major impact on the industry. This suggests a substantial and growing audience preference for consuming news and information through online platforms, signaling a significant transformation in the media landscape.

This finding underscores a noteworthy shift away from traditional outlets, such as print, radio, and television, with a considerable portion of the audience transitioning towards digital alternatives. This shift may be attributed to factors such as accessibility, convenience, and the dynamic nature of online content. In both regions only less than 10% of respondents said digital was having an insignificant impact in their region.

Adaptation to Digital Trends

Media outlets are actively adjusting to increased digital consumption, with strategies ranging from a 'digital-first' approach to investing heavily in digital platforms. Traditional media companies are transforming, introducing digital subscription models and repackaging content for online spaces.

The responses from the survey shed light on the diverse strategies that media outlets in Africa are adopting to navigate the increased trend of digital news consumption. Several outlets emphasized

a 'digital-first' approach, with a notable focus on publishing content online and utilizing various digital platforms, including social media, YouTube, and websites. This shift is evident in the allocation of increased resources towards digital platforms, such as podcasts, and a requirement for journalists to possess multimedia skills.

A significant proportion of respondents highlighted the transformative impact of the digital landscape on their organizations. For some, this involved a complete business transformation, pivoting from traditional to digital-first models. Start-ups, unburdened by legacy media, expressed a commitment to experimentation and delivery optimization in the digital space.

The survey underscored a spectrum of attitudes towards the integration of AI and advanced technologies. While some media houses expressed confidence in leveraging AI tools for news creation, editing, and verification, others remained cautious, citing challenges and a need for further exploration.

The adoption of digital news consumption trends is seen as both a necessity and an opportunity. Some outlets reported a seamless transition as online platforms are the primary mode of operation, while others highlighted ongoing efforts to adapt and innovate. The importance of social media in disseminating news updates, despite challenges in audience ownership, was a recurrent theme.

In terms of challenges, revenue generation from digital endeavors remains a concern for several media organizations. The survey also highlighted a nuanced approach to combating misinformation, with the establishment of fact-checking teams and a commitment to providing accurate, trustworthy content.

The findings illustrate a dynamic media landscape in Africa, where organizations are navigating the complexities of digital transformation, adopting AI cautiously, and seeking innovative strategies to engage audiences in the evolving digital ecosystem. The responses collectively reflect a mosaic of experiences, ranging from successful adaptation to ongoing efforts to align with the digital-first paradigm.

Respondents **highlighted their efforts** to adapt to the rapidly changing media landscape:

They are transitioning to digital media and operating in converged newsrooms.

One platform, government-owned, is actively embracing digitalization, while another is exclusively a digital platform.

A shift toward digital content is evident, with a focus on training journalists in digital content creation and marketers in digital sales strategies.

Topics are carefully selected to align with the needs and interests of the audience.

Emphasis is placed on tailoring content for specific digital platforms.

A dedicated team to produce digital content only.

A social media team has been established to manage social media accounts, with a fact-checking team in place to counteract fake news. The media outlet combines traditional radio broadcasting with digital content.

The media organization has developed online content, actively posting news on its website.

A 'Digital First' strategy has been adopted, prioritizing digital platforms for news and marketing efforts to align with the shift in news consumption patterns.

By running a converged newsroom, various forms of media are integrated effectively.

Convergence is key; content from radio is repackaged and shared across social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram and as podcasts, catering to the preferences of younger, online-engaged audiences.

French-speaking respondents provided **insights into their adaptation** to digital media trends:

> We have introduced spoken newspapers in podcast format, and articles are now shared as links on various social networks. Our news website is complemented by social platforms, which act as relays and help us maintain a close connection with our readers.

> In line with current media trends, we've diversified our content, including easily accessible internet formats like podcasts.

> Our media is aligning with digital consumption trends by showcasing shows, news, and organizational activities on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, etc. The positive audience feedback, particularly through sharing in WhatsApp groups, is a testament to this approach's effectiveness.

> We ensure that the content broadcasted on radio is also available on our website and social media platforms, adapting to digital trends.

> Recognizing the importance of reaching specific demographics, particularly the youth, we've expanded our digital presence through our website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel.

> The creation and regular updating of our website reflects our gradual adaptation to digital trends, which is becoming increasingly essential in accordance with technological advancements.

> Observing that most young people prefer digital sources for information, we've made our content available on a website and through Facebook and Instagram pages.

> We employ a dual approach, blending digital and traditional media. This includes establishing digital platforms to engage with the digitally inclined audience.

> We've launched a YouTube channel, a website, and expanded into social media. Mama-Radio broadcasts both online and in FM, keeping pace with the shift in media consumption. Our focus on digital platforms is supported by a skilled team well-versed in new information technologies, enabling us to stay ahead in the evolving media landscape.

> She has gone digital with her Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and liking pages. Some broadcasts are broadcast live on the pages.

> Audio interviews via WhatsApp, conferences via WhatsApp, collection and dissemination of information via social networks and information portal.

> Most of our young audiences access information digitally rather than through traditional means. Our media is available on a website, and Facebook and Instagram pages.
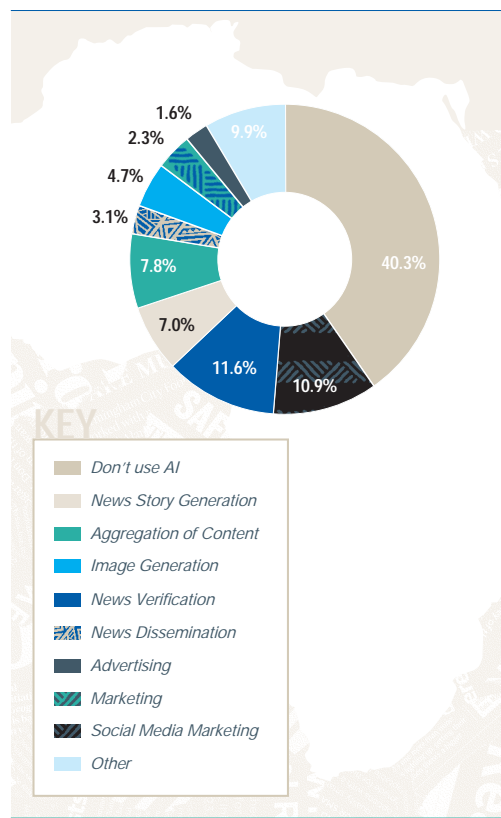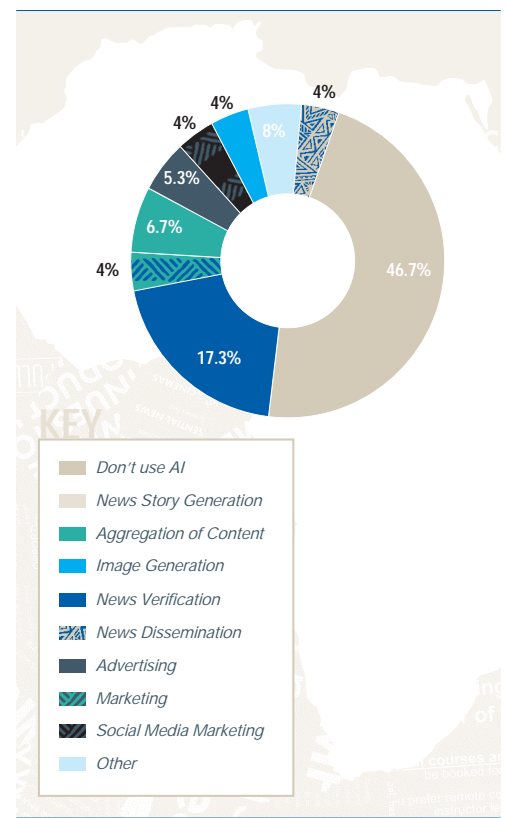
Navigating AI

The advent of AI has brought about transformative changes across various industries, including journalism. In this narrative, we delve into the survey responses of journalists from African media organizations to gain insights into the extent of AI integration, prevailing attitudes towards AI, and the impact of AI on journalistic practices.

The use of AI

Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

FIG 8A data labels: 1.6%, 2.3%, 4.7%, 3.1%, 7.8%, 7.0%, 11.6%, 10.9%, 40.3%, 9.9%

FIG 8B data labels: 4%, 4%, 4%, 5.3%, 6.7%, 4%, 17.3%, 46.7%, 8%, 4%

KEY (FIG 8A):
- Don't use AI
- News Story Generation
- Aggregation of Content
- Image Generation
- News Verification
- News Dissemination
- Advertising
- Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Other

KEY (FIG 8B):
- Don't use AI
- News Story Generation
- Aggregation of Content
- Image Generation
- News Verification
- News Dissemination
- Advertising
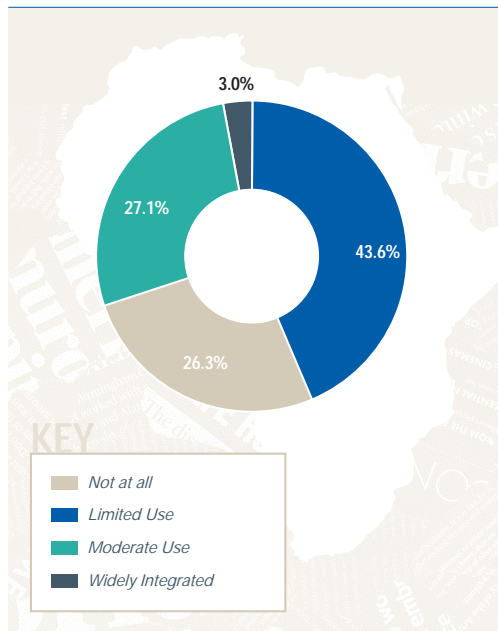- Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Other

How does your organization use AI? Select all that apply.

In both French-speaking and English-speaking countries nearly half of the respondents said they mainly use AI for aggregating content. The second most prominent task that both regions used AI for was social media marketing.
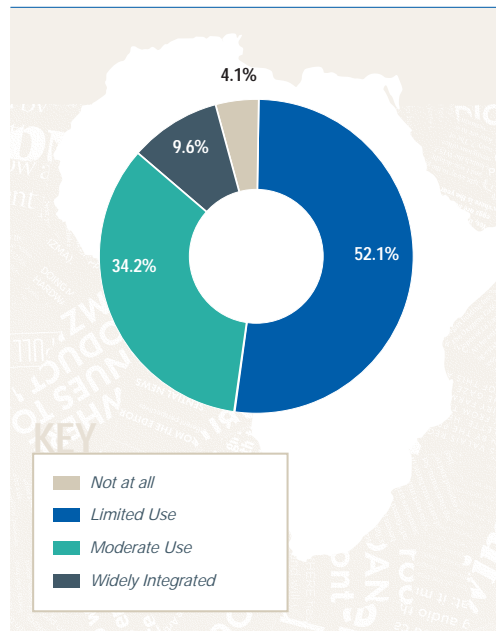
Of those who do use AI, the majority across both language groups identified ChatGPT, social media tools, and Otter as the primary AI tools in use, emphasizing the diverse applications of AI in newsrooms.

Extent of AI adoption in newsrooms

FIG 9A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

3.0%
27.1%
43.6%
26.3%

KEY
- Not at all
- Limited Use
- Moderate Use
- Widely Integrated

FIG 9B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

4.1%
9.6%
34.2%
52.1%

KEY
- Not at all
- Limited Use
- Moderate Use
- Widely Integrated

To what extent has AI been integrated into journalistic practices in your organization?
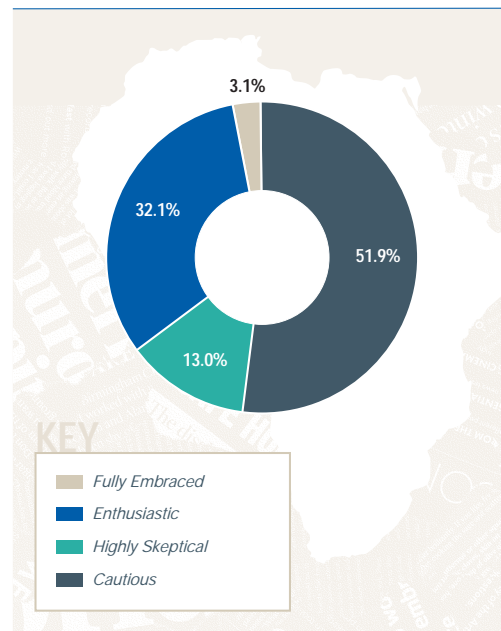
44% of respondents from English-speaking countries indicated limited use of AI in their organizations, while 27% reported moderate usage. Only a minimal 3% claimed extensive integration of AI into their journalistic practices. 27% said they do not use AI at all. Among the French-speaking respondents, 34% reported moderate use, and over half of them said they had limited use of AI. This indicates that generally, there is still a lot of work to be done in African newsrooms across different regions so they can fully leverage the benefits of AI.
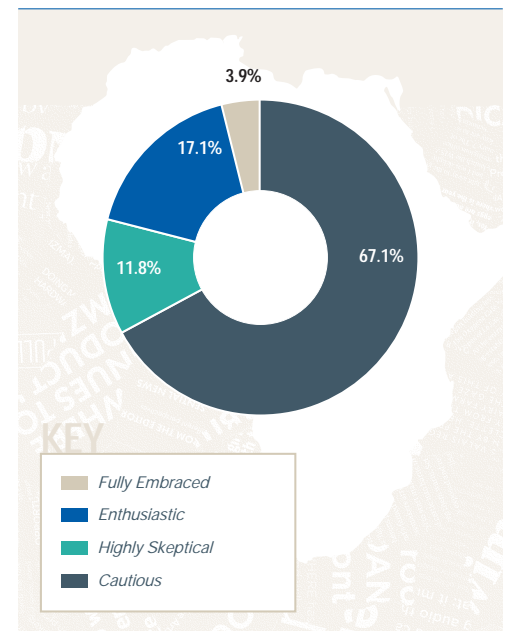
Attitudes towards AI

FIG 10A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

FIG 10B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

FIG 10A.
3.1%
32.1%
51.9%
13.0%

KEY
- Fully Embraced
- Enthusiastic
- Highly Skeptical
- Cautious

FIG 10B.
3.9%
17.1%
67.1%
11.8%

KEY
- Fully Embraced
- Enthusiastic
- Highly Skeptical
- Cautious

How would you describe the attitudes towards AI in your newsroom?

Attitudes towards AI within media organizations varied significantly. In the English-speaking countries, 51% expressed caution, recognizing both potential challenges and benefits. Meanwhile, 32% were enthusiastic, actively seeking ways to integrate AI, and 31% were highly skeptical.

A small percentage (3%) fully embraced AI, viewing it as essential for the future. In the French-speaking cohort, 67% were cautious, 12% very skeptical, and only 17% enthusiastic. The cautious attitude towards AI might also be part of why there has been a slow uptake of AI in many African newsrooms.

Unintentional Bias in AI

FIG 11A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

FIG 11B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

16.7%

83.3%

Yes
No

7.7%

92.3%

Yes
No
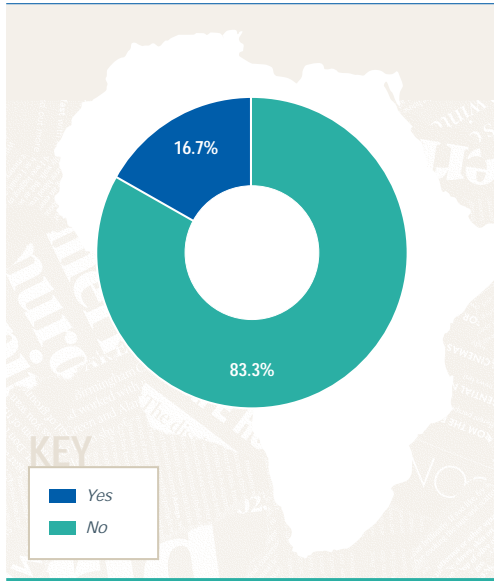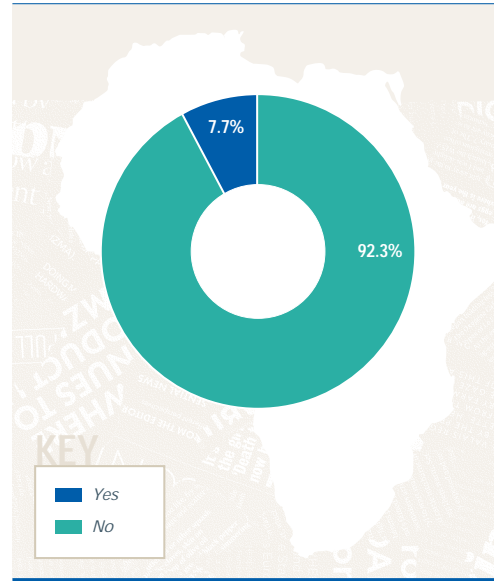
Are you personally aware of any instances where AI tools have unintentionally incorporated or amplified bias in their representation or analysis of news stories?
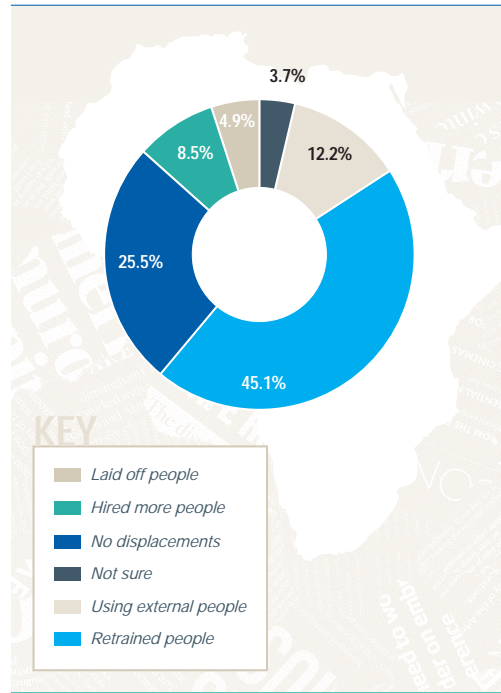
When asked if they are aware of unintentional bias in AI tools, the overwhelming majority (83% in English-speaking countries and 92% in French-speaking countries) in both regions said no.

Despite the majority being unaware of unintentional bias, a percentage of those who were aware of it in both regions emphasize the need for continuous scrutiny, ethical considerations, and ongoing efforts to mitigate potential biases in AI applications within the media industry. These insights underscore the importance of fostering a critical understanding of AI's impact on news representation and analysis, promoting responsible and unbiased use of these technologies in journalism.
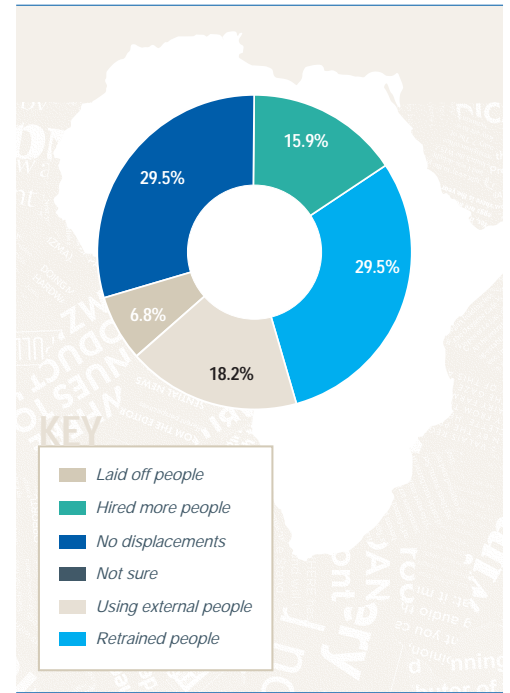
Job displacements or role changes due to AI integration

FIG 12A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

FIG 12B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

FIG 12A data:
- 3.7%
- 4.9%
- 8.5%
- 12.2%
- 25.5%
- 45.1%

Key:
- Laid off people
- Hired more people
- No displacements
- Not sure
- Using external people
- Retrained people

FIG 12B data:
- 15.9%
- 29.5%
- 29.5%
- 6.8%
- 18.2%

Key:
- Laid off people
- Hired more people
- No displacements
- Not sure
- Using external people
- Retrained people

Has your organization made any job displacements or role changes as a result of AI integration? Check all that apply.

The responses to the question about job displacements or role changes due to AI integration reveal several noteworthy insights into the impact of AI on organizational structures within media entities.

In English-speaking countries, a substantial 45% of respondents said their organizations have had to retrain staff as a direct result of AI integration. For French-speaking countries it was 30%. In the French speaking countries, there were more respondents who said they had hired new staff to adapt to AI integration vs in English speaking countries, (16% vs 9%). This suggests moves towards tangible transformation in the traditional roles and functions within these media organizations, highlighting the disruptive nature of AI in reshaping workflows and responsibilities.

Overall, the responses from participants on different aspects of AI integration suggests that, for a significant portion of respondents, the anticipated benefits of AI in terms of cost savings and efficiency gains might not have materialized. It could also hint at potential challenges or limitations faced during the integration process, warranting a closer examination of the factors influencing the perceived impact of AI on organizational efficiency.

Respondents elaborated:

It led to time efficiencies.

Reduced the cost of hiring proof-readers or editors.

As indicated, my organization is relatively small, and it currently does not have any form of funding. Instead of hiring an editor, we use ChatGPT to edit our content and a free text-to-audio converter to translate our podcasts to English if the interviewee speaks in a local language.

Particularly for news verification previously the media house paid to experts, but AI eased the cost.

It speeds up research and adds to creativity for social media.

French speaking respondents elaborated:

We are increasingly soliciting AI, and this increases the financial inputs of the house.

The radio has increased revenues thanks to its ability to post articles on the radio's website, broadcast programs online and publish videos on YouTube.

The workforce is reduced, and revenues maximized.

Impact on efficiency and cost-savings

FIG 13A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys
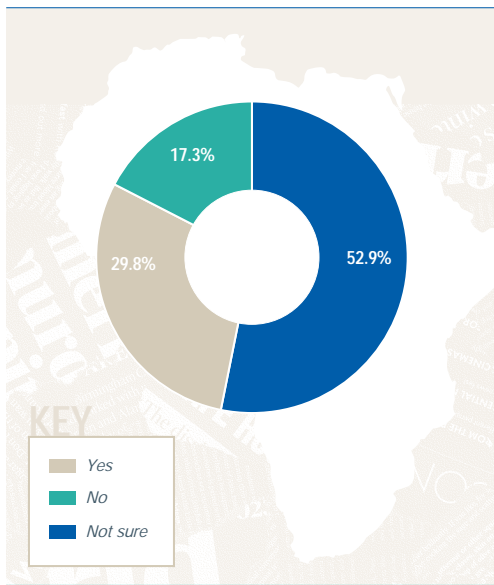
FIG 13B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys
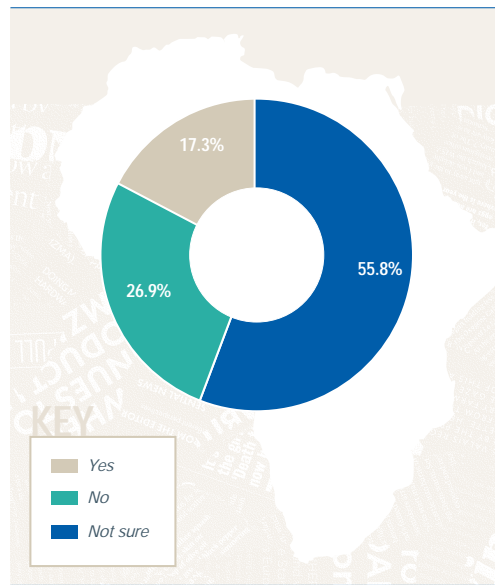
Has the introduction of AI tools led to cost savings or increased efficiencies in your organization?

Most respondents in both regions expressed uncertainty about whether artificial intelligence has led to increased efficiencies, with (56% in French-speaking countries and 53% in English-speaking

countries) indicating they were not sure. There were more respondents in French-speaking countries (27%) who believed that AI had not led to cost saving and increase efficiencies than in English-speaking countries (17%). 30% of respondents from English-speaking countries and 17% of those from French-speaking countries believed that AI has indeed led to increased efficiencies.

All respondents indicated that their organizations have not made any job displacements or role changes because of AI integration. Most respondents mentioned that they are retaining staff to enable them to focus on other tasks. Respondents who answered affirmatively provided specific examples of how AI has enhanced efficiencies:

It's quicker to perform tasks, streamline proposals, get ideas for format. So more time is available for the most important tasks.

Reduces cost of hiring proofreaders or editors.

It has allowed the team to spend less time on an article.

Easier scheduling of news on social media platforms, easing the load on the web team.

It speeds up research and adds to creativity for social media.

For news verification, AI eases the cost where previously the media house paid experts.

My organization uses ChatGPT to edit our content and a free text to audio converter for translating podcasts, which is crucial since we don't have funding for an editor.

Sophi increases efficiencies by automatically selecting and ranking stories for the site's home page. AutoPod, though not fully in use, cuts down podcast editing times dramatically.

Fast story generation; editing of stories, and analysis of complex content.

Whereas before two people were needed to manage the news desk, now it can be operated by one person with the aid of software.

Audience engagement since the adaptation of AI tools

FIG 14A.
Responses from English speaking-country's surveys

■	Significant increase
■	Moderate increase
■	Moderate decrease
■	Significant decrease
■	Uncertain/not applicable

FIG 14B.
*Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

■	Significant increase
■	Moderate increase
■	Moderate decrease
■	Significant decrease
■	Uncertain/not applicable
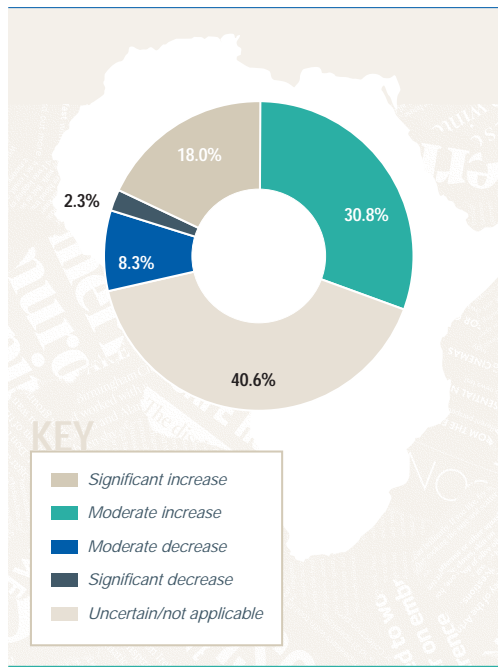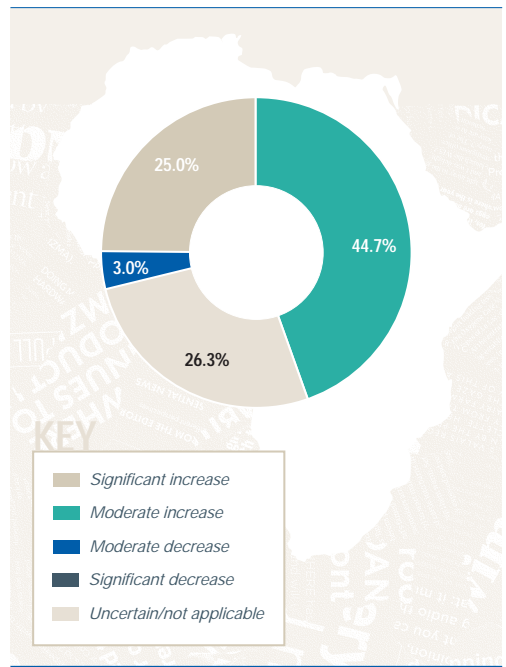
How have your audience engagement metrics changed since the adaptation of AI tools?

Overall, most respondents were uncertain about how their audience engagement metrics which include click through rates, time spend on page, social media likes and social media share, have changed since the adoption of AI tools. However, some did note a moderate increase in various metrics, including click-through rates, time spent on page, and social media shares and likes due to AI.

The graphic above presents responses for how AI adaptation has impacted social media shares. In English-speaking countries, most respondents (41%) were not certain if there had been any changes whereas in French-speaking countries most said they had noted moderate increase in social media shares due to integration of AI.

*Please note that percentages on some graphs may not add up to 100%, due to rounding off.

Revenue Models

3.0%

43.6%

36.1%

17.3%

KEY

- No change
- Very little change
- Significant change
- Complete change

1.3%

15.8%

20.9%

53.9%

KEY

- No change
- Very little change
- Significant change
- Complete change
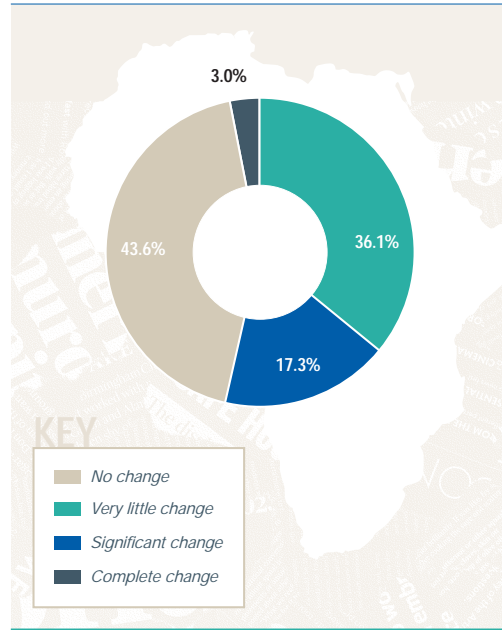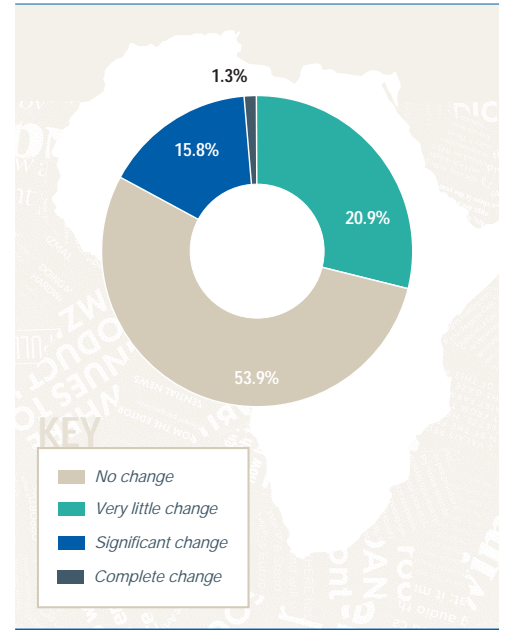
How have revenue models in your organization evolved with the shift towards digital and potential AI integrations?

The majority of respondents in both regions reported that there had been little to no change in their organization's revenue models in response to the shift towards digital and potential AI integrations. Specifically, 44% in English-speaking countries and 54% in French-speaking countries cited no change in revenue models to adapt to the shift towards digital and potential AI integrations.

Another 36%, and 29% in each region respectively reported "very little change". This indicates small adaptations in their revenue models to the digital and AI shift.

Only a small fraction, less than 3% and 1% in each region respectively reported a "complete change," indicating that they have entirely overhauled their revenue models in response to the shift towards digital and AI integrations.

*Please note that percentages on some graphs may not add up to 100%, due to rounding off.

Effectiveness of different revenue models

Content

9.0%

30.8%

19.5%

40.6%

KEY

- Very Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not very effective
- Not applicable

7.0%

15.5%

16.9%

60.6%

KEY

- Very effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not very effective
- Not applicable

How effective have each of these revenue generation models been for your new organization: CONTENT

In evaluating the effectiveness of different revenue generation models for their organization in the context of content (**paywalls, memberships, subscriptions, newsletters, events**) respondents provided varied insights.

Subscription services and events were most frequently selected as being somewhat effective or had the most responses for being very effective. The graphic below shows responses for use of paywalls.

Most respondents in both regions (61% in French-speaking countries, and 41% in English-speaking countries) said they have not used paywalls. Less than 10% of those who had used paywalls in both regions said they had found them effective. This may be linked to the economic position of citizens in African counties. Notably, marketing emerged as the top choice for being "very effective" in generating revenue.

*Please note that percentages on some graphs may not add up to 100%, due to rounding off.

Effectiveness of different revenue models

Attention

FIG 16C.
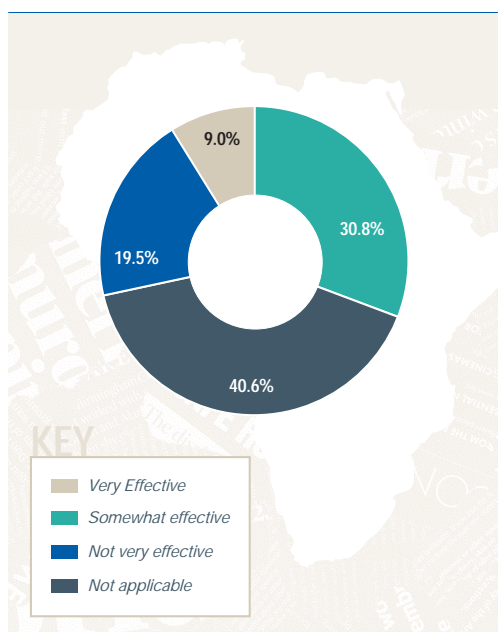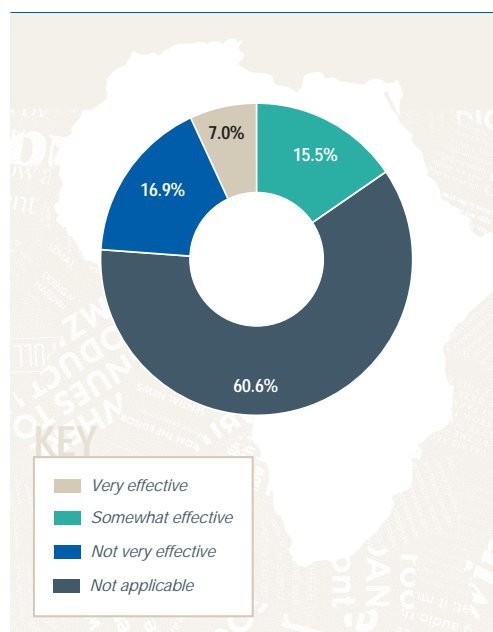Responses from English-speaking country's surveys on the use of banner ads
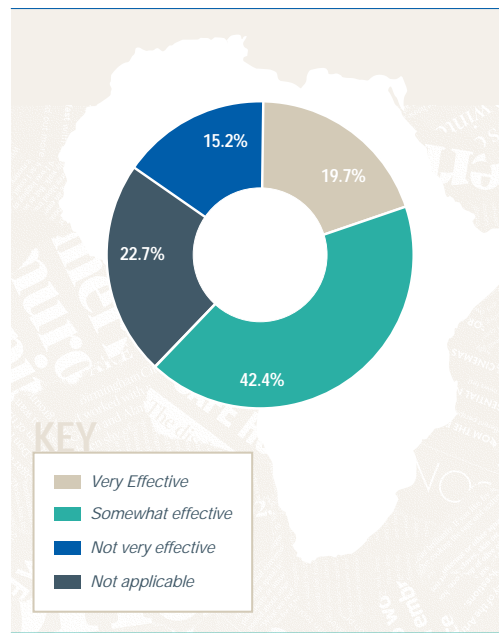
FIG 16D.
*Responses from French-speaking country's surveys on the use of banner ads
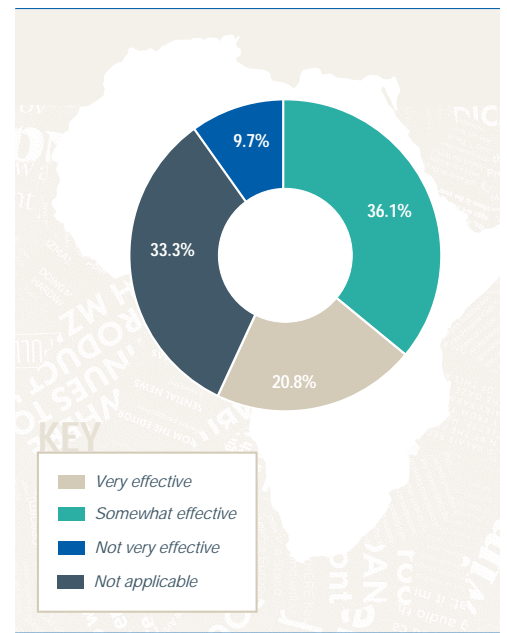
How effective have each of these revenue generation models been for your new organization: ATTENTION

Regarding the effectiveness of various revenue generation models focused on selling the attention (**banner ads, leads, affiliates, programmatic, classifieds**) that they have from their audiences, respondents shared that banners, classified ads, leads, and programmatic advertising were commonly selected as somewhat effective.

In contrast, affiliate marketing was the revenue model that was commonly either not used or not effective. The graphic above shows responses for the use of banner ads. About 20% in both regions said they had found banner ads to be very effective.

*Please note that percentages on some graphs may not add up to 100%, due to rounding off.

Effectiveness of different revenue models

Goods and Services

FIG 16E.
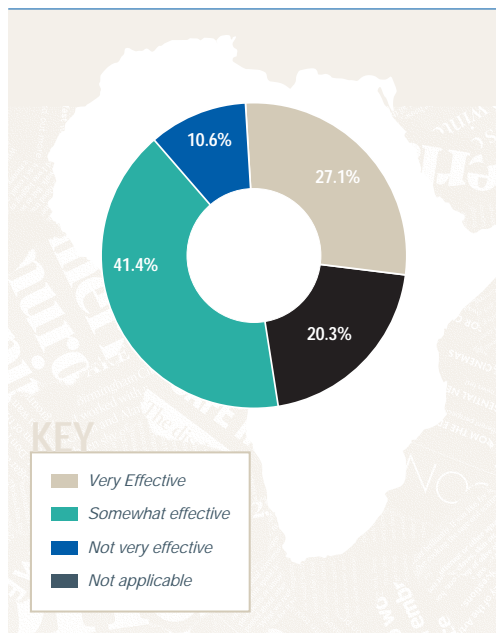*Responses from English-speaking country's surveys on the use of marketing

FIG 16F.
*Responses from French-speaking country's surveys on the use of marketing
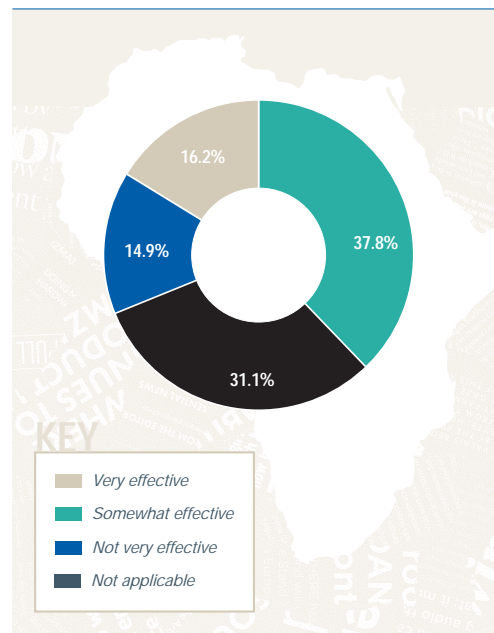
27.1%
10.6%
41.4%
20.3%

KEY

■ Very Effective
■ Somewhat effective
■ Not very effective
■ Not applicable

16.2%
14.9%
37.8%
31.1%

KEY

■ Very effective
■ Somewhat effective
■ Not very effective
■ Not applicable

How effective have each of these revenue generation models been for your new organization: GOODS AND SERVICES

For their news organization, respondents evaluated the effectiveness of revenue generation models related to goods and services (**publishing services, consulting and training, merchandise, marketing and online shopping**).

Publishing services, consulting, and training were commonly identified as somewhat effective. In contrast, online shopping and merchandise were revenue methods that either had not been used or not effective.

The graphic above shows results for use of marketing where the majority in both regions said it was either moderately or very effective.

*Please note that percentages on some graphs may not add up to 100%, due to rounding off.

Effectiveness of different revenue models

Fundraising

FIG 16E.
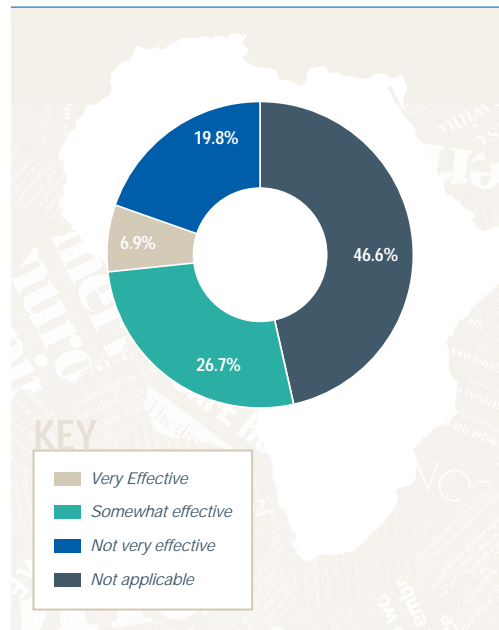Responses from English-speaking country's surveys on crowdfunding

19.8%
6.9%
46.6%
26.7%

KEY
- Very Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not very effective
- Not applicable

FIG 16F.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys on crowdfunding

2.7%
18.9%
16.2%
62.2%

KEY
- Very effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not very effective
- Not applicable
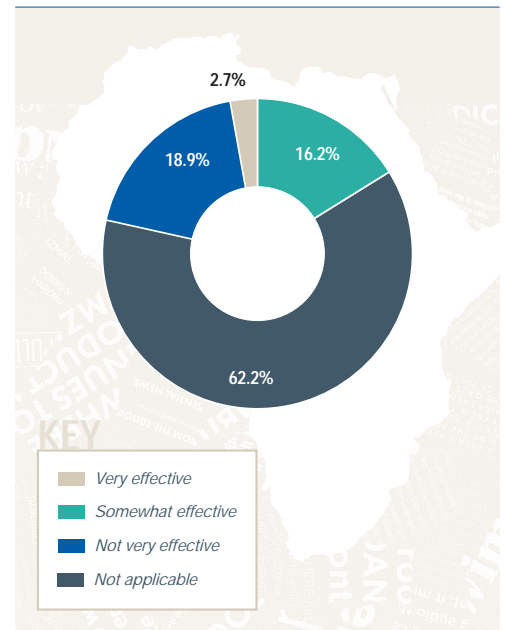
How effective have each of these revenue generation models been for your new organization: FUNDRAISING

In assessing the effectiveness of fundraising (**philanthropy, social investment, government funding, crowdfunding, partners, private loan, government advertising, venture capital and bank loan**) for their new organization, respondents indicated that philanthropy and government funding were most often chosen as somewhat effective.

Conversely, crowdfunding, and social investment were identified as revenue methods that either had not been utilized or not very effective. Notably, partnering was the most frequently selected option as being "very effective" in this context.

The graphic above shows results for use of crowdfunding where only 7% in English-speaking countries and 3% in the French-speaking countries said they had found it to be effective.

Revenue methods being considered

FIG 17A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys
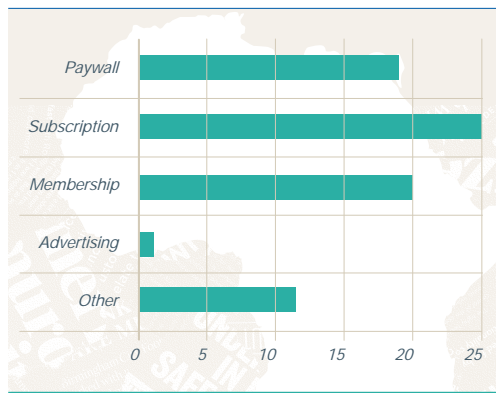
FIG 17B.
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys
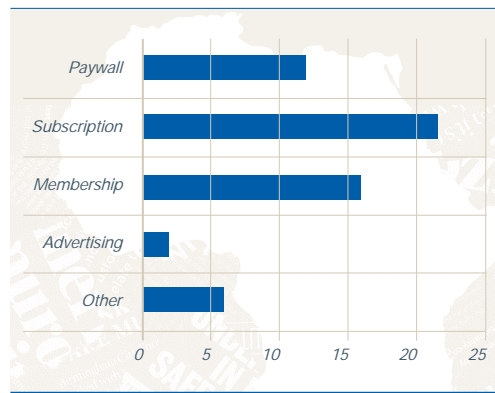
If you are not yet using the revenue models above, which ones are you considering? Please select all that apply.

Among the respondents who are not yet utilizing the mentioned revenue models, there is a clear interest in considering several options. In both regions, paywalls, membership and subscription came up as the top revenue methods that the participants were considering. This is interesting considering subscriptions and paywalls were identified as mostly not effective by newsrooms that have already been experimenting with different models.

Monetizing Social Media

FIG 18A.
*Responses from English speaking country's surveys
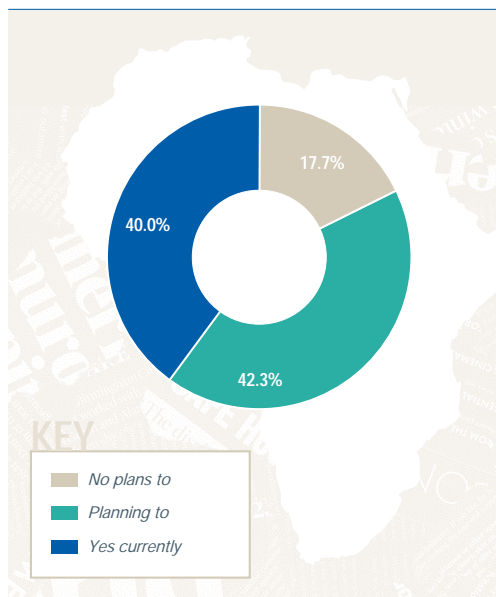
FIG 18B.
*Responses from French speaking country's surveys
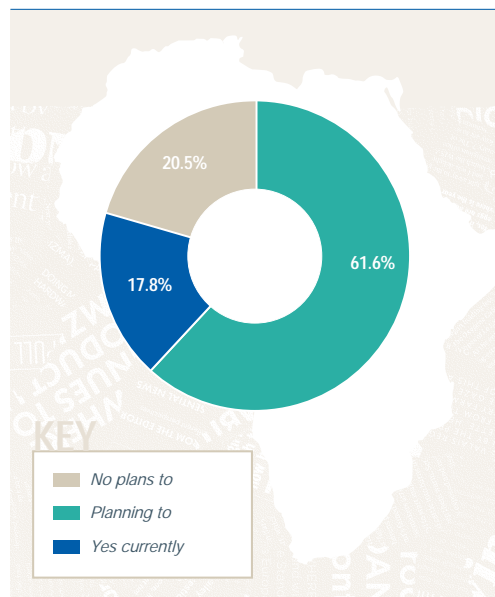
*Please note that percentages on some graphs may not add up to 100%, due to rounding off.

Do you currently monetize your content on social media platforms?

In the English-speaking countries there is almost an equal split between those who say they do not yet monetize their social media platforms but are planning to and those who say they do, 42% and 40% respectively.

In the French-speaking countries, 62% said they have not yet monetized their social media platforms but are planning on doing so and only 18% already monetized. In both regions, about 20% said they have no plans to monetize.

Social Media platforms that are monetized

FIG 19A.
Responses from English-speaking country's surveys

**FIG 19B.**
Responses from French-speaking country's surveys

Commentary

Under Other, respondents replied...
"Not applicable, Website content, Website, Instagram, None".

Commentary

Under Other, respondents replied...
"So far nothing, None, Website, Mobile Application".
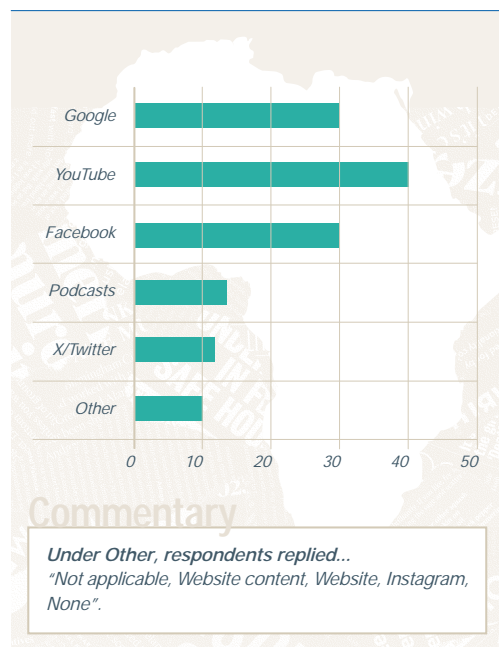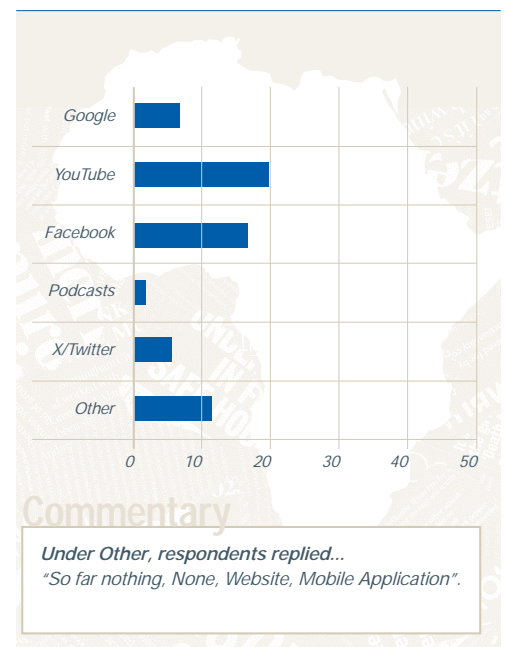
Which ones do you monetize?

in both regions, for those who have already monetised social media platforms, YouTube stands as the most popular platform for monetization, with over 50% of respondents using it.

Facebook is the second most popular with 48% of the French-speaking respondents having monetized their content there and 39% of the English-speaking respondents.

Google is the third most monetized platform, followed by X (Twitter) and then podcasts.

The responses reveal a positive attitude towards exploring and potentially scaling new revenue generation models in the evolving media landscape, particularly considering the unique context of each newsroom. Respondents emphasized the importance of improving content to enhance profitability and competitiveness. Additionally, they mentioned the aim of reaching a broader audience through methods like social media publications and events. Here are some of the specific revenue methods being considered:

- Online sales and monetizing Facebook.
- Crowdfunding through creating community with citizens.
- Securing more funders for non-profit media organizations.
- Starting a podcast to promote peace and work on gender issues.
- "Increasing visibility" of key staff to attract more viewers.
- Google Adsense and native advertising.
- Digital paper subscription and video on demand (VOD).
- Partnerships and sponsored content.
- Use of AI and exploring untapped digital opportunities.
- Selling content online through subscriptions.
- Consultancy and research services.
- PR services for multinational companies.
- Barter services and sponsored projects.
- Sponsorship and venture capital.
- Paid partnerships, private, and public funding.
- Events, including conferences and streaming services.
- Incorporating new slots in the newsroom and obtaining sponsorships.
- Consulting and more partnerships with public entities and stakeholders.

It is important to note that some respondents were unsure or had not yet considered specific revenue models.

Respondents foresee several key changes in the African media landscape over the next five years, influenced by current trends such as digitization, AI integration, and evolving revenue streams. They anticipate:

- A notable shift towards diversified revenue streams for news organizations.
- The persistence of misinformation and disinformation as significant challenges, especially with the proliferation of social media news sites lacking professional analysis or presentation. Fact-checking is emphasized as a crucial measure to combat these issues.
- The importance of trust in news sources, with professionalism in journalism seen as a vital defense against declining trust.
- Concerns about political interference, including the potential for international agendas to overshadow local ones.
- A trend towards digitalization impacting the media landscape, leading to more people reading news online rather than in physical newspapers, consequently affecting revenue streams.

The expectation that AI will increasingly dominate the media landscape. Its integration is considered important for enhancing efficiency and digital media usage, but it also raises concerns about the spread of fake news and potential job losses.

The necessity of proper use of digital media and AI, balanced with concerns about security and job security guarantees.

Acknowledgment of the significant role AI is expected to play in the sector, especially in relation to digitization and improved efficiency.

The growing trend of remote interviews, virtual events, and online content production, which are seen as enhancing media capabilities.

The rise of social media, which is expected to have both positive and negative impacts on news organizations.

An increased demand for professionals possessing multiple skills.

The need for training data to be regionally relevant to ensure its effectiveness and applicability.

Envisaged Trends in African Media

The future of African media in the next five years, as envisioned by participants, is shaped by several key trends. These trends, outlined through direct quotes from the respondents, reflect a dynamic and evolving media landscape:

Increased internet penetration and shift to digital

"African countries have witnessed **substantial growth in internet penetration**... This expanded online audience presents media organizations with opportunities to reach wider demographics and explore new revenue models."

"With the continuous advancement of mobile networks... the next 5 years will see an **increased reliance on mobile devices** as primary sources of news and information."

"Over the next 5 years, we can anticipate the rise of more **indigenous digital platforms and streaming services** that showcase local content and cater to African audiences' unique preferences."

"Digitization will play a major role... **Integration of AI will also be prominent**, enhancing storytelling, audience engagement, and data-driven journalism."

"Traditional media outlets will continue to adapt to digital formats... **Diversification of revenue streams** will become crucial."

Data-Driven Journalism

"Data-driven journalism is gaining traction... By harnessing data analytics and visualization tools, media organizations can uncover stories, identify trends, and present information in compelling ways."

"Over the next 5 years, there will be increased emphasis on the creation of locally relevant content across various formats... African media can strengthen its position as a vibrant and inclusive platform for storytelling."

Audience Engagement

"The next 5 years will witness a **deeper focus on audience-centric approaches**, including interactive content, user-generated platforms, participatory journalism, and social media engagement."

Collaborations

"**Collaborations among media organizations**... will play a significant role in shaping the future of African media."

Trust

"The challenge comes in with misinformation and disinformation... Africans are more skeptical about the over usage of AI in media because of the impact on jobs, but it is inevitable and may go a long way toward **making media businesses more sustainable**."

"Political interference in journalism may continue... **Building and maintaining trust in news sources will be a priority**."

In summary, the African media landscape is poised for significant transformation driven by technological advancements, changing consumer behaviors, and a need for innovative revenue models, all while navigating challenges related to misinformation, political interference, and maintaining trust in journalism
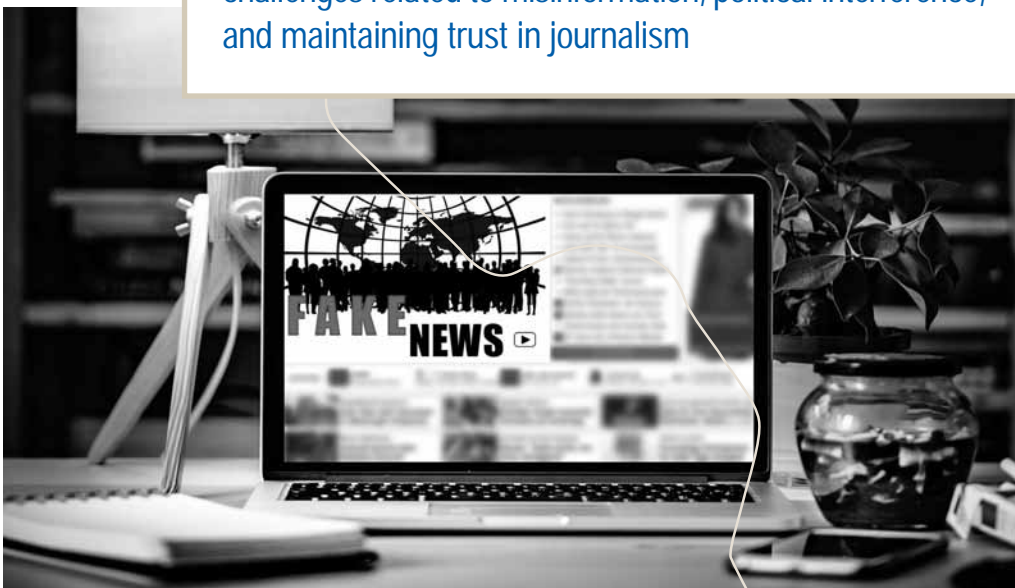
FOCUS GROUPS

The survey was followed by a series of focus groups facilitated by Mamaponya Motsai. These were attended by 58 media leaders from 10 African countries.

Publishers and Executives

A focus group of senior editors and publishers, totaling 12 participants, convened to discuss the evolving landscape of African media. The discussion offered valuable insights into the challenges and strategic directions for the media industry in Africa. Here's a restated summary of their insights, clustered under key thematic areas:

This focus group brought together experienced professionals in the media sector to explore the current state and future trajectory of African media. The participants, due to their seniority, provided in-depth perspectives on various aspects, including financial sustainability, political interference, the role of media, and the impact of digitization and AI.

Challenges Facing African Media

Financial sustainability remains a critical concern. As one participant poignantly noted, running a media organization in Africa is "deadly and commercially unviable," with market and political pressures making it difficult to maintain financial stability. This is further compounded by political interference, where government advertising is used as a tool to influence media narratives.

The publishers also identified slow growing economies and underdeveloped infrastructure as factors that impact on their ability to increase revenue and fully adopt AI in newsrooms. Operating in economies that are not performing well, with high unemployment and poverty levels means audiences are not able or willing to pay for news. Paywalls and subscriptions are not an effective way to increase revenue. Underdeveloped infrastructure means that newsrooms do not always have strong systems to help them adopt AI.

Legal challenges and cyberbullying are significant threats. Legal issues often lead to self-censorship because newsrooms have to consider their already limited resources. Additionally, the rise of cyberbullying as a tool against journalists is a growing concern.

The Digital Shift and Its Implications

The shift towards a digital-first approach is evident, with an emphasis on the need to upskill journalists for this transition. The potential of AI is recognized, with its application ranging from fact-checking to content creation. However, there's a consensus that AI should complement, not replace, human oversight.

Data availability for informed decision-making is lacking, impacting insights into audience behavior and market performance. The trend towards employing less experienced journalists due to financial constraints is impacting content quality.

Future Outlook and Strategic Directions

Diversification of revenue streams, through methods like subscriptions and partnerships, is being explored. Participants noted the need to understand why traditional newspaper buyers are hesitant to pay for digital subscriptions.

The media landscape in five years is expected to be heavily influenced by digital platforms and political dynamics, with a mix of state broadcasters and diversified revenue streams.

The focus group's discussion underscored the numerous challenges and opportunities within the African media landscape. It highlighted the need for strategic adaptation, financial innovation, and a commitment to journalistic integrity in a rapidly changing media environment. The insights provided by these senior professionals offer a roadmap for navigating the complexities of the media industry in Africa, emphasizing the importance of digital transformation, audience engagement, and sustainable business models.

Academics and Media Support Organisations

A focus group consisting of 13 participants from academia and media organizations convened to discuss the current state and future prospects of journalism in Africa. The discussion provided a comprehensive look into the challenges facing the industry, covering aspects such as funding, professional development, misinformation, digital migration, and revenue generation.

The focus group, with representatives from academia and media organizations, delved into various issues impacting the journalism industry in Africa. The participants, due to their expertise, offered in-depth insights into funding difficulties, the need for professional development, and the challenges of adapting to digital transformations.

Key Challenges in African Journalism

Participants highlighted **severe funding issues**, with journalists often going months without pay. "Just the other day I was introduced to several people who were really very independent journalists and very prominent journalists, and they would tell me that they've gone for months without pay," one participant shared. The threat of layoffs and bribery, and journalists relying on sources for necessities like travel and lunch, were also noted.

The lack of support for ongoing skill development in a rapidly changing industry was a concern. This gap is even more pronounced in a 'juniorized' environment, where young journalists enter newsrooms without adequate training and support.

The spread of false information continues to undermine trust in traditional media, especially in areas like climate change, elections, and social change. "It undermines the trust especially in traditional media sources," a participant observed.

African newsrooms face challenges in catching up with digital skills and digitization. AI training and penetration are still in initial stages for many.

Training organizations are collaborating with others to assist where resources or skills are lacking, including partnerships with fact-checking and funding organizations. The need for training on diverse revenue generation methods was emphasized. Collaborations are seen as crucial in educating newsrooms on this front.

Pressures on Journalists

Budget constraints lead to underpaid journalists and a focus on commercial or political stories over public interest ones, the participants noted. In addition, a lack of resources prevents journalists from developing depth in their stories, with a noted lack of specialization.

Journalists face work overload and burnout due to cross-platform reporting pressures. This is exacerbated by welfare gaps, such as lack of debriefs and support in dealing with PTSD issues. There are also growing concerns about attacks on investigative journalists and harassment within the industry.

Training Recommendations

It was suggested that training in digital rights is crucial, given the attempts to shrink civic space and journalism capabilities. Understanding legal dos and don'ts is vital for journalists in the current climate.

The focus group underscored the multifaceted challenges facing the journalism industry in Africa, from financial struggles to adapting to digital transformations. The insights from the discussion highlight the need for enhanced support in professional development, digital literacy, and sustainable revenue models. Addressing these challenges are crucial for ensuring the long-term viability and integrity of journalism in Africa.

Journalists

A focus group of 22 journalists gathered to discuss current challenges and future perspectives in the field of journalism. Although this group was oversubscribed, a number of participants had connectivity issues and were not able to stay for the entire call which was extended to allow for all participants to give input. The discussion was comprehensive, covering topics from revenue generation and misinformation to digitization, media freedom, AI, and the outlook for African media in the next five years.

This focus group brought together journalists from across southern and eastern Africa to share their insights and experiences in the rapidly evolving field of journalism. Their discussions provided a window into the real-time challenges and potential solutions for media organizations across Africa.

Media Challenges

Newsrooms are exploring various methods to monetize their content, including hosting events and conferences. One journalist shared, "What we've also looked in is organizing events and conferencing… we leverage on the expertise." Additionally, innovative approaches like last-mile delivery services are being experimented with.

The spread of false information, largely fueled by social media, was identified as a major concern. There is a recognized need for training in fact-checking to combat misinformation and its impact on trust.

With traditional media's decline, there's an urgent need for journalists skilled in creating digital content. Some newsrooms are providing training in digital skills and AI tools. "I see the mainstream media slowly fading away and the digital platform sweeping away the media industry by storm," a participant noted.

State-owned media, often with the widest reach, are restricted to government-approved narratives. The persecution of independent journalists and the need to distinguish between activism and journalism were highlighted.

Media Opportunities

The use of AI in journalism, though not advanced, is growing. Training on AI is being introduced in some newsrooms to keep up with the rapid flow of information and the shift to digital-first approaches.

Participants expressed optimism about the future, emphasizing the need for innovation and collaboration. "African media needs to innovate and adapt to society's growing needs in order to survive the next years," one journalist remarked.

The focus group discussion underscored the dynamic and challenging nature of journalism in Africa today. Key themes included the necessity of adapting to digital transformations, combating misinformation, exploring innovative revenue models, and maintaining journalistic freedom amidst political pressures. The insights gathered point towards a future where collaboration, innovation, and adaptation to digital platforms are crucial for the survival and growth of media in Africa.

French-Speaking Journalists and Media Leaders

A focus group discussion convened 12 journalists and media leaders from Francophone African countries, primarily the Democratic Republic of Congo. This meeting aimed to examine the multifaceted challenges and opportunities within the media landscape, exploring how these professionals navigate the evolving dynamics of journalism and media operations.

Media Challenges

The conversation vividly portrayed the media sector's operational complexities, especially regarding the surge of online media platforms. Said one participant: "The main challenge faced globally, including in the media sector, is that the rise of online media is leading to increased awareness among people."

Concerns about the authenticity of news and journalistic integrity were paramount. Participants lamented the dearth of formally trained journalists, with one remarking on the proliferation of untrained individuals in the field: "You will find that there are media with journalists who have never been trained in journalism." This situation raises significant questions about information reliability and journalistic standards.

Financial instability emerged as a critical issue. Discussions revealed that many media operations heavily rely on advertising revenues and small-scale contracts for survival. The need for more substantial financial support, possibly through government subsidies, was a recurring theme. One journalist articulated this need: "We are forced to survive only with little things, advertisements and announcements."

Technological limitations were also highlighted. The conversation turned to the pressing need for digital tools and resources to enhance journalistic practices. The lack of such tools not only hampers effective information gathering but also impedes keeping pace with global media advancements.

Prospects for Future Development

Despite the challenges, there was a tangible sense of optimism about the future of media in the region. Participants discussed the potential for innovation and growth, albeit acknowledging financial barriers as a significant impediment to progress. One journalist offered a hopeful outlook: "In 5 years, we really have media that can do better than today," suggesting a future where media has overcome current constraints, is more sustainable, efficient, and impactful.

The role of emerging technologies, like artificial intelligence, in reshaping the media landscape was acknowledged. However, the feasibility of integrating such advancements given the current financial constraints was also debated, reflecting the complex interplay between aspiration and reality in media evolution.

The focus group discussion provided an insightful and comprehensive look into the current state of media in Francophone Africa, particularly highlighting the critical challenges of professional training, financial stability, and technological advancement. The exchange among the participants not only underlined the difficulties faced but also shone a light on the resilience and forward-thinking attitude prevalent in the media sector. The meeting concluded with a collective understanding of the need for strategic approaches to overcome these challenges and leverage future opportunities for media growth and innovation in the region.

KEY FINDINGS

The African media landscape is marked by its diversity but faces challenges in sustainability; influenced by economic dynamics, political scenarios, and global advancements.

The **pandemic brought significant financial strains and operational changes** to media houses, pushing them towards adaptability, technology embracement, and diversification of news channels. It also underscored the critical role of journalists and the increased importance of fact-checking in an era rampant with misinformation.

Media organizations are grappling with challenges related to **financial survival and disruptions to traditional media models**. Compounding these difficulties are rising legal threats and an alarming increase in self-censorship. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and paths for reinvention in the media sector.

There has been a significant shift towards digital platforms, emphasizing the **need for content tailored for different digital platforms**. One of the key challenges identified is translating a strong digital presence into sustainable revenue streams, despite significant changes in media consumption patterns.

Digitalization in the African media landscape isn't just about transitioning online. It's about a comprehensive journey that includes creating content, engaging with audiences, monetizing effectively, and adapting to the constantly evolving digital landscapes.

Artificial intelligence is making cautious inroads into African newsrooms. While its adoption is not yet widespread, **the potential of AI** in revolutionizing content creation, editing, analytics, and engagement metrics in newsrooms is undeniable.

Media houses are actively **exploring diverse income avenues**, from digital subscriptions to consultancy services. The future looks promising, with explorations into innovative avenues like monetizing platforms like WhatsApp and diversifying revenue models.

Looking ahead, the African media landscape is expected to see significant integration of AI and vigorous efforts to combat misinformation. **Changing consumption patterns** will coexist with a steadfast commitment to preserving the core essence of journalism.

The future of African media is intrinsically tied to producing accurate, ethical, and trustworthy content. As the media landscape undergoes transitions driven by socio-economic, political, and technological forces, the future beckons with promises of innovation, collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to the core principles of journalism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback from participants, several key recommendations emerge for media organizations to adapt and thrive in the coming years:

Invest in digital platforms and optimize content for mobile consumption, recognizing the growing reliance on smartphones and the internet for news and information.

Explore and implement alternative revenue models like subscriptions, memberships, crowdfunding, and partnerships with tech platforms. Move beyond traditional advertising to ensure financial sustainability.

Produce locally relevant content that resonates with African audiences. Engage with audiences through interactive and participatory journalism, leveraging social media and user-generated content.

Invest in data analytics and visualization tools to enhance storytelling and investigative reporting. Train journalists in data literacy to effectively use these tools.

Foster a culture of self-learning so journalists can acquire new skills even when their newsrooms cannot afford training.

Foster collaborations within the African media community and with international partners for content sharing, co-productions, and knowledge exchange. Collaborative efforts can expand coverage and enhance journalistic standards.

Invest in fact-checking tools and digital literacy campaigns to combat misinformation and disinformation. Focus on transparent reporting, ethical journalism practices, and adherence to journalistic standards to build and maintain trust in news sources.

Embrace AI and other technological advancements for content creation, analysis, and personalization. However, balance this with concerns about job security and the impact on traditional journalism roles.

Advocate for press freedom and implement legal measures to protect journalists from political interference. Maintain editorial independence to ensure unbiased and credible reporting.

Equip journalists and media personnel with skills in digital tools, AI applications, data journalism, and multimedia storytelling to meet the evolving demands of the media landscape.

Be vigilant about security, especially in digital spaces, and address ethical considerations around AI and data usage.

African media organizations are encouraged to adapt to technological changes, diversify revenue sources, engage deeply with their audiences, and uphold high journalistic standards to navigate the dynamic and evolving media landscape effectively.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research offers a comprehensive and forward-looking analysis of the African media landscape, anticipating significant changes and challenges over the next five years. Key findings suggest a rapid evolution driven by increased digitization, the integration of artificial intelligence, and a shift in consumer behavior towards digital and mobile platforms.

The research underscores the critical need for African media organizations to adapt to these technological advancements while maintaining a strong focus on producing locally relevant content and engaging with diverse audiences. The importance of diversifying revenue streams is highlighted as a vital strategy for ensuring financial sustainability in a landscape where traditional advertising models are becoming less effective. The increase in nonprofit media organization may also indicate a move towards positioning media differently in African society which could also help with financial sustainability.

Moreover, the study points out the growing concerns around misinformation and disinformation, emphasizing the need for robust fact-checking mechanisms and ethical journalism to build and maintain trust in media sources. This is particularly relevant in the context of increasing political interference and the need for media independence.

Collaboration emerges as a key theme, both within the African media community and internationally, to share resources, enhance journalistic standards, and provide a wider range of perspectives and stories. The potential of AI and other technological tools is recognized as a means to enhance efficiency, storytelling, and audience engagement, but with a cautious approach towards its impact on jobs and the quality of journalism.

The research provides a valuable roadmap for African media organizations, outlining the opportunities and challenges ahead. It calls for a proactive approach, where adaptability, innovation, and a commitment to journalistic integrity become the pillars for thriving in an increasingly digital, mobile, and interconnected media landscape. Ultimately, the study serves as a call to action for African media to embrace change, leverage new technologies, and remain steadfast in delivering credible, engaging, and impactful journalism.

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