



**KISII UNIVERSITY**  
**UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS**

**FIRST YEAR EXAMINATION FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF**  
**MASTER OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES**  
**FIRST SEMESTER 2021/2022**  
**(FEBRUARY-JUNE, 2022)**

**MCOMS 810: MEDIA HOUSE MANAGEMENT**

**STREAM: Y1 S1**

**TIME: 3 HOURS**

**DAY: THURSDAY, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**DATE: 30/06/2022**

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**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- 1. Do not write anything on this question paper.***
- 2. Answer Question ONE (Compulsory) and any other TWO Questions.***

**Question One**

When COVID-19 began spreading around the world, Standard Group made a strategic decision to invest when everyone else was holding back to see how long the pandemic would last. The leadership fast-tracked their digital business transformation by converting their newsroom into a fully digital-first operation. When Kenya registered its first case on 13 March 2020, everything came to a standstill. The government asked people to work from home and strict health protocols were put in place - including a curfew from 7 pm to 4 am. A few weeks later - the lockdown. Many people stopped buying physical copies of the newspaper. Circulation numbers dropped for fear of infection and spread of COVID-19.

In the midst of the pandemic, Standard Group started rolling out their plan. They noted a huge increase in traffic to their website. People were consuming more content online - videos, articles and audio. And Standard Group began working out how to make those rises in traffic and consumption boost revenues as well.

Kimutai shared their challenges and learnings in the deployment of their digital subscription strategies at a roundtable on paid content during WAN-IFRA's recent Digital Media Africa event. She noted that before 2018, Standard Group had made various attempts at convergence into a digital-first newsroom with mixed levels of success. However, in 2019, the group found itself in a financial tight spot when the government of Kenya, its largest advertising client, cut their budget significantly: all the government's advertising would be run through an agency it had created. What that meant to news publishers was that the government was putting all the adverts in their own pull-out and then speaking to newspapers and asking them to run the pull-outs as inserts. The government would pay at the price they wanted to pay. A further blow to Standard Group's bottom line came soon after. There was also a ban on advertising from betting companies, which had been big spenders. Thus, Standard Group's project would not only make the newsroom digital but also move them away from the traditional advertising model which was heavily reliant government advertising.

In the months that followed, the group used data to understand and categorise their audiences. Then, they started publishing premium content. In April 2022, the Group began asking readers who wanted to access their premium content to register. This was followed up with a soft paywall, using the freemium model i.e. offering basic or limited features to users at no cost and then charge a premium for supplemental or advanced features. Today, there are digital subscription prices for *The Standard* at daily, weekly, monthly and annual access, Presently, other than offering digital subscription prices for *The Standard*, its flagship daily, Standard Group publishes two newspapers, three websites and operates four television stations and three radio stations all-in-one digital-first converged newsroom.

As a student of media house management, discuss any **four** emerging HR media-related issues in the above case study and suggest to management of Standard Group the requisite management style(s) for the effective implementation of this business model. [20marks]

### **Question Two**

'Dear Kenyans, this is just a reminder that a majority of the mainstream media you consume is either owned by or has owners closely affiliated to politicians,' - @OdipoDev

In view of the above tweet, to what extent, could you argue that media ownership and control are conflicting and/or non-conflicting with regard to media practice and management in Kenya. [20marks]

### **Question Three**

Ben, an investigative journalist with Nation Media Group (NMG), posts a socially controversial post on the NTV's Facebook page titled, "Merchants of disability!" It includes detailed graphics about disability as a social construct and the ways in which people with disability in high positions and business

intentionally benefit from this identity. This post was meant educate about diversity, social equity and civic engagement.

However, Sheila, an intern photojournalist with albinism at State house, denounces and disparages this post as propagandist and goes on to allege that in permitting the such posts, NMG discriminates against people living disability in Kenya. To make matters worse, she goes further to call out Ben for his overweight - body shame. Worse than disability! On her Facebook page, she tags prominent political leaders, judges and influencers which draws greater attention to the situation.

Shortly after posting and tagging, Sheila receives online backlash from trolls and bullies who single out names and people who are allegedly beneficiaries of disability including herself. By posting on her Facebook page, she intended to shed light on what she perceived as an excessive politicization and criticism of few political leaders with disability at the expense of the real needy and desperate untold stories of people with disability in Kenya. She did not anticipate nor wish for notoriety for her views. Regretting her decision to post publicly, she deletes the original post.

Juma, a reporter with KTN, interviews Sheila on her reasons for publicizing and criticizing Ben's socially controversial post. She speaks to Juma but asks for her identity and name to be censored from the prime-time news story. She does not want to face any further social ostracization for her stance. She believes that people will make judgments about her character and that her family, friends, fellow students and journalists will condemn her for her comments on Ben's weight.

Confidentiality is reserved for vulnerable sources in need of special protection i.e. those with less power and resources who face severe consequences, such as the threat of deportation or physical harm, if their identity and names are published. In this situation, Sheila decided to post her controversial response on Facebook and now is experiencing the repercussions of her choice. Vulnerable sources, on the contrary, face harm if their identity and names are published due to conditions they did not choose. By concealing Sheila's identity and name, people might censure KTN for providing Sheila with a platform for her controversial views without being held accountable.

Should Juma accord Sheila the right to privacy yet she herself had posted her controversial response and tagged prominent personalities to Ben's Facebook post? Discuss. [20marks]

#### **Question Four**

Unlike established democracies, Kenyan state and nation with her democracy is in its embryonic stage so is her media theory and practice.

In view of this, to what extent, would you make a case for libertarianism and/or social responsibility theories for media policy and regulation in Kenya. [20marks]

**Question Five**

'The current media trends show that majority of media houses are now leveraging on live streaming to reach out to their audiences. In addition, today's advertisers have figured out that context is king where advertisements are selected and served by automated systems based on the context of what a user is looking at. With COVID-19 forcing people to stay indoors, media competition and consumption are at their highest fueled by new technological advancements and a better, more intimate understanding of the consumer. On the flip side, this means that the consumer is spoilt for choice!' Kunal Bhandari (2022).

Referring to the above scenario, with any four reasons, suggest the most suitable management theory/theories that management of Ramogi TV (broadcasts in Dhuluo) would apply in not only managing its human resource but also raising its viewership. [20marks]