Exploring Ethical Frameworks Of Practice In Kenya’s Alternative Online Media Platforms: 
A Case Of Kenyan News Bloggers Who Are Not Mainstream Journalists

by

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EXPLORING ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS OF PRACTICE IN KENYA’S ALTERNATIVE ONLINE MEDIA PLATFORMS: A CASE OF KENYAN NEWS BLOGGERS WHO ARE NOT MAINSTREAM JOURNALISTS

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EXPLORING ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS OF PRACTICE IN KENYA’S ALTERNATIVE ONLINE MEDIA PLATFORMS: A CASE OF KENYAN NEWS BLOGGERS WHO ARE NOT MAINSTREAM JOURNALISTS

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit

Signed: ____________________________  Date: ________________

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMWIK</td>
<td>Association of Media Women in Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAKE</td>
<td>Bloggers Association of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Communications Authority of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KICA</td>
<td>Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Act, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUJ</td>
<td>Kenya Union of Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCK</td>
<td>Media Council of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCIC</td>
<td>National Cohesion and Integration Commission</td>
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<td>PR</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
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ABSTRACT

The growth of social media in Kenya has given rise to the phenomenon of blogging, an avenue of information dissemination from a personal perspective. Its spread has focused attention on various ethical issues that arise in relation to bloggers. These include the trustworthiness of blogs, the accuracy and fairness of their reports, and the appropriateness of allowing mainstream journalists to write personal opinions on their blogs. This study investigated blogging in Kenya with the hindsight of concerns that have been expressed in the media industry regarding the status of blogging and its ethical practice. The focus of the study was on bloggers who posted news on their blogs but not as part of mainstream media. The study explored the ethical frameworks used by Kenyan news bloggers who were not mainstream journalists, the ethical values that guided their work, their motivation for blogging, and whether they perceived their practice as unethical. The study used the exploratory research design because blogging is a fairly new phenomenon. Using a qualitative research approach to interrogate a purposively constructed sample, data was collected through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion. Data analysis was done through thematic analysis of transcribed data. The key findings indicated that a likely normative ethical framework for news bloggers would intersperse libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participation. Findings further suggested that the Kenyan bloggers studied were not opposed to ethical standards for their practice, but that they would like to lead debate on the same. Bloggers who participated in the research also felt that claims that they were unethical were unfounded, suggesting that the accusations were an attempt to introduce censorship into the practice. A key recommendation that emerged from the study is the need for a multi-stakeholder forum comprising bloggers, the bloggers’ association, representatives from communication regulatory bodies, representatives from the media industry, experts from the communication sector, and communication scholars, to further debate the issue of standards for the blogging practice.
DEDICATION

To my dad and mum, Peter and Jane King’ori, and to my siblings, Wangari, Cathy, Wangeci, Gichuhi and Cindy. Thank you all for walking this journey with me. And to Maina, for his love and encouragement.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The growth of social media has propelled the rise of individual bloggers who have made a name for themselves, albeit due to controversial posts they put up on their various online platforms. Going by the number of comments these bloggers elicit on their blogs, it is evident that they have a following. This study focused on Kenyan bloggers who gather and disseminate news but do not work for mainstream media. These are bloggers who post news regularly for public consumption and perform journalistic work possibly without training in journalism, and perhaps without even considering themselves as journalists. They have often fashioned themselves as a fearless, alternative voice to mainstream media.

This study examined the ethical frameworks employed by these news bloggers in their practice, investigated what motivates Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream news media, analysed how the normative models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant theory influence the practice of Kenyan news blogging, and solicited the views of selected Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media towards claims that their practice often breaches ethical standards. The study further explored whether it is feasible to standardise weblog practice, how to do so, and with what standards.

Chapter one introduces the study by giving a background to blogging as a channel of news dissemination. The chapter begins with a look at blogging from a global perspective, and the ethical concerns that have been debated over time. This is followed by a look at the blogging practice in Kenya. The chapter also includes the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research objectives, the research questions, the rationale of the study, the significance of the study, the assumptions of the study, the scope of the study, the limitations and delimitations, the definition of terms, and the summary of the chapter.
Background to the Study

From the thinking among the classical scholars before the Christian era to the theories of contemporary scholarship, the question of individual choice has been subjected to communal interests, in one form or another. For instance, Socrates believed that the society was more important than the prerogatives of the individual, and he demonstrated this by his choice to accept a death sentence unfairly imposed on him by the state of Athens instead of escaping jail as suggested by some of his friends (Knowlton & Reader, 2009). Socrates’ decision to accept the death sentence and his explanation to his friend Crito has been described as a demonstration of the principles of “independence, justification for one’s actions, and social responsibility” (Peck, 2013, p. 8). An interface between these three key principles is relevant to media practice as a whole, and brings three of the normative theories of media to bear on this interrogation of blogging – libertarianism, democratic-participant theory, and social responsibility theory.

Media practitioners, citizens, the government, and other stakeholders have for a long time debated the standards that should be upheld in the profession. In the 19th century, elites from the Western world saw media as dangerous to the stability of the society, and blamed the same for “pandering to lower-class tastes, fomenting political unrest, and subverting important cultural norms” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 27). While research on traditional forms of media continues, 21st century studies have delved into online media issues and their impact on journalism practice. This study makes a contribution to online media studies, as well as to a communication ethics focus on standards of practice, regulation, and internet content producer and consumer expectations.

Blogging in Kenya has been on the increase, propelled by the growth of affordable internet data offers made by various mobile phone service providers (Mwende, 2015). A 2010 report from the Africa blog aggregator, Agrigator, put the number of the blogs in Kenya at 739, third after Nigeria and South Africa (Sunday, 2010). In 2015, Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) chairman, Kennedy Kachwanya, was quoted saying the number of blogs in Kenya stood
at 15,000 (Njugunah, 2015). Kachwanya however, clarified that only 2,000 blogs were active. Some of the popular blogs in Kenya include Kenyan-post, Ghafla, Nairobiwire, and Nairobiexposed. These sites, run by different individuals, were sources of news and means of employment for bloggers (Kachwanya, personal communication, 2015).

The first blogger in Kenya was David Were, who started a blog known as mentalacrobatics.com in 2003 (BAKE, 2015). However, the rise of blogging in the country has been traced to the 2007 general election, when a group of bloggers came up with an alternative platform to transmit information that the mainstream media omitted (Banda, 2010; Odinga, 2013). Although Kenyans had been using the internet, it was during the 2007-2008 election and post-election crisis that social media in its participatory nature became widespread. Bloggers monitored websites and other mainstream media, as well as other sources, to generate news to post on their blogs. Five years later, prior to the 2013 elections, social media was thriving, with Kenya being ranked second in Africa for Twitter use in 2012 (Okutoyi, 2012).

Debate on blogging has intensified in recent years, with some bloggers feeling the government is using current laws to stop bloggers from exposing the rot in government (Gathara, 2015). There are those who have said that bloggers should be allowed to produce unfettered content, notwithstanding occasional mistakes, because even “mainstream media sometimes errs” (Alai, 2014). Some of these bloggers have argued that it makes little difference whether writers operate under ethical codes or not: mistakes are bound to happen. But there are others who have contended that while there is no need for a particular code targeting bloggers, they should be trained on what citizen journalism involves, and the responsibilities of practicing it (Makali, 2015). Makali, in a televised interview, hailed bloggers, saying their work was important because it bridged “a gap in journalism – reporting what journalists do not report”.

With the absence of constraints imposed by a code of ethics, some of the articles posted on the news blogs do not meet the threshold of decency as provided in the Media Council Act of...
2013. These include articles that have photographs that are pornographic in nature, which would not be found in mainstream media products. These explicit photos do not even attempt to hide the identities of those concerned. And yet, news bloggers, while not following established ethical principles, have continued performing the news gathering and dissemination roles, just like their trained counterparts in the mainstream media. Whether this dichotomy in ethical considerations should be ended was a focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The rise of social media in Kenya has led to a new breed of citizen journalists who now post news on what were once considered personal diaries, the blogs. Globally, the phenomenon of blogging has continued attracting dissenting views as to the quality and validity of content on these outlets. On the one hand, they are an arena for democratic participation and free (libertarian) expression. On the other hand, they are not easy to regulate, even to self-regulate, out of the need for social responsibility. Blood (2002) has described “the blog’s greatest strength – its uncensored, unmediated, uncontrolled voice” as “its greatest weakness” (Blood, 2002, p. 114).

While blogs have become a news source for mainstream media, there are various ethical issues that arise in relation to the blogging practice (Rich, 2010). These include the trustworthiness of blogs, the accuracy and fairness of their reports, and the appropriateness of allowing mainstream journalists to write personal opinions on their blogs. The aim of the study was therefore to explore what ethical frameworks of practice were used by news bloggers in Kenya, and how these relate to the normative theories of democratic participation, libertarianism, and social responsibility. The study was aimed at trying to fill the knowledge gap of whether or not it is feasible to standardise blogging practice, how to do so and with what standards, and whether one can make independent writers who write what Blood (2002, p. 20) called “vivid, personal stories” conform to those standards.
Bloggers have also been accused of failing to verify information they get because they are in a hurry to post it on their blogs (Smith, 2011). Emboldened by the fact that they are their own bosses and are not restricted by in-house editorial policies, bloggers have an unrestrained editorial “licence”: they post any information freely. Their actions raise ethical concerns which were the subject of this research.

Purpose of the Study
The research explored the ethical frameworks employed by Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media.

Objectives of the Study
i) To investigate what motivates Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream news media to blog.
ii) To examine how the normative models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant theory influence the practice of Kenyan news blogging that is not part of mainstream journalism.
iii) To find out what ethical values, if any, guide Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media in their transmission of news.
iv) To analyse the views of selected Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media, towards claims that their practice often breaches ethical standards of news gathering and publication.
v) To explore whether it is feasible to standardise weblog practice, how to do so, and with what standards.

Research Questions
i) What motivates Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media to blog?
ii) How does the practice of Kenyan news blogging that is not part of mainstream journalism conform to normative theories of media practice, namely, libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant theory?

iii) What ethical values, if any, guide Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media when they transmit news?

iv) How do selected Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of the mainstream media react to claims that bloggers breach ethical standards of news gathering and publication?

v) What is the feasibility of standardising Kenyan weblog practice, and with what standards?

Rationale of the Study

This research was crucial given the continued rise of social media research as part of media studies. Several developments in technology have been instrumental in the growth of social media, of which blogs are a part of. These include the advent of the World Wide Web in the late 1980s, the invention of blogging software in the late 1990s, and more recently the evolution of the mobile phone into the internet-enabled smart phone which has made it easier to send and access information online. All these advancements in media technology, has propelled citizen journalism (which includes blogging) giving ordinary people who have no journalistic training a forum for telling their stories.

This study was an in-depth examination of normative media theory with a focus on how the libertarian, the social responsibility, and democratic-participant theories relate to ethical issues of news blogging in Kenya. The research will join the body of other African scholarship that has interrogated the application of these theories which evolved in the Western world into an African world which has its own unique social-political environment. To use Wasserman’s (2014) contention that the application of social responsibility theory in African contexts brings new contestations and debates, this research intended to examine whether the tenets of the three models apply to news blogging in Kenya.
This study extended the focus of media ethics to the sphere of blogging, particularly news blogging in Kenya. The research focused on news bloggers who blog privately and not as part of mainstream media. Some of the news bloggers who formed part of the study were trained journalists who left the mainstream media and started their own blogs, while others did not have any journalistic training but regularly post news on their blogs, in the same way that journalists report news. The contention was that bloggers who blog for mainstream media are expected to adhere to media ethics, and therefore, do not fall in the same bracket as those who have no formal standards guiding their work. In view of this, the study has the potential to bring about the refinement of the blogging practice by initiating discussion around ethical implications of what bloggers post. It also canvassed the views of bloggers on standardisation of their practice and output. This will potentially move news blogs from a personal pursuit into a profession, and critically engage the dichotomy in ethical considerations between mainstream news gathering and publishing, on the one hand, and the blogosphere, on the other hand.

The research was chosen because as demonstrated in the next chapter, blogging is still a new area of research in the continent and in Kenya. The study was an attempt to fill this knowledge gap. Theoretically, the study will add on to the global debate on communication ethics, and also extend knowledge on internet-related ethical concerns in Africa and specifically in Kenya. This will in turn open up new areas of research in the ethics and regulation of blogging in Kenya.

Significance of the Study

The research sought to mainstream the debates on ethical regulation of the Kenyan “blogosphere” – debates which have been located more at public forums such as iHub and those organised by the Bloggers Association of Kenya (Khamadi, 2015; Wanjiru, 2015) than in scholarship. The study is important as an extension of the debate on professionalisation of blogging. In the on-going debate, stakeholders are yet to agree on whether bloggers should be
expected to follow laid down standards for conventional media, or whether they should be allowed to operate free of such statutory or ethical constraints. Thus, this study had an interest in locating news bloggers and their responsibilities in the wider media landscape and its ethical framework.

This study would be beneficial to various parties. First, its findings could be used by the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) to rally their members together to professionalise their work further so as to gain more respect from other professionals. Second, the research was an opportunity to document, in an in-depth manner, the views of bloggers who are not members of BAKE on their perspective on standardisation of their practice. Thirdly, institutions that deal with regulation of media, namely, the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) and the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) would benefit because the study discusses issues pertinent to the regulation of conduct in the broader media spheres of the country. The research hopes to inform discussions among key stakeholders to work out an ethical framework that does not unnecessarily constrain the freedom of speech that those who blog enjoy.

The study applied the qualitative approach to explore news blogging in an in-depth manner, with the aim of understanding the ethical frameworks applicable to the practice. Possibilities for the standardization and professionalisation of blogging emerged from the findings, although this requires more debate as the findings indicated. This could lead to a new set of philosophical propositions that would fit the Kenyan context and the demands on practitioners in that context.

Therefore, the study would be important as a resource for interrogating the views of bloggers towards ethics. As the empirical data suggests, respondents are inclined towards a form of self-regulation, through a process that the findings suggest needs further debate. For scholars of Communication Ethics, this demonstrates a start of sensitivity towards social responsibility and democratic participation that can theoretically describe bloggers.
Assumptions of the Study

The study assumed that blogs and bloggers would continue being a part of the news dissemination industry in Kenya and abroad. The research further assumed that the selected blogs would continue being a part of the blogosphere during the duration of the study. This assumption emerged from the cognisance of the fluidity nature of the blogosphere, where blogs can be pulled down or bloggers cease updating their blogs. Another assumption was that a significant number of bloggers were not trained journalists, and hence were not schooled in media ethics. The study further assumed that female and male news bloggers would view ethical values and conduct in a similar way.

Scope of the Study

The study involved deliberation with selected news bloggers and key respondents from the communication sector. The study was not focused on bloggers who are professional practitioners in the mainstream media, but on those that belong to what the research referred to as alternative online media (a term defined in the “Definition of Key Terms” section at the end of this chapter). As mentioned earlier in the study, BAKE states that there are about 15,000 blogs in Kenya but that only slightly over 2000 blogs are active.

The research had a total of 35 participants, including key informants from the communication sector, and one focus group. This study employed the qualitative approach, where the intention was to extract from informants in-depth data as opposed to numbers. As will be discussed in detail in the methodology chapter, qualitative studies use relatively smaller samples than those of quantitative studies, and stop collecting data when they get to saturation point; this being the point where the interviews do not bring in any new information. Scholars have argued that saturation point in qualitative studies is reached after the 12th interview (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Others have argued that 10 to 20 well informed interviewees are adequate for a qualitative study that seeks in-depth information (Bernard, 2011).
The first set of interviewees for the study was 20 bloggers. Eleven were members of BAKE, and nine were bloggers who were not part of BAKE. Although, the study intended to interview an equal number of BAKE and non-BAKE members, one of the would-be participants was not available. However, one extra BAKE member was available for the in-depth interviews. Another set of bloggers who participated in the research were two officials of BAKE and four of the association’s members who were part of the focus group discussion.

The second set of interviewees was nine key respondents in the communication sector, namely, an official from the Media Council of Kenya, an official from the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), a commissioner with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), a media trainer from one of the local universities, an official from the Kenya Union of Journalists, two government ICT officials, an official from the Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology, and a regional director of Article 19. The key experts were chosen purposively based on their knowledge in communication matters.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

i) The research was qualitative in nature, and the purposive sample selected did not generate statistically generalisable data. The justification for this is that this research was geared towards getting in-depth information on the perceptions of news bloggers on the issue of ethics. However, to get a cross-section of views, the study used a sample derived from BAKE and non-BAKE members.

ii) There are bloggers who work for mainstream media and those who blog privately; this study focused on the latter. The reasoning behind this is that bloggers who blog for mainstream media are already trained journalists who know about ethics and are expected to exercise the same on their blogs. Those who blog away from mainstream media may or may not be trained journalists, and this may impact the way they deal with ethical issues. The choice of bloggers who are not part of mainstream media helped to ensure that the focus was on online alternative media.
iii) Because the respondents were purposively selected, with snowball sampling being used at some point, there was the likelihood that the sample would not be as diverse. Diversity in this case means getting bloggers from different backgrounds as much as possible. The study attempted to deal with the issue of diversity by including bloggers who blog on various issues. The researcher also ensured that bloggers included in the sample were those active in the blogosphere. As much as possible, bloggers who participated in public debates concerning blogging were given preference. The key respondents from the communication sector were people whose professional occupations placed them centrally in the debate on regulation of the blogosphere.

iv) The study focused on content providers (the news bloggers) but not on the consumers of the content (citizens). This is because the study was interested in interrogating in an in-depth manner, the processes through which news bloggers make ethical decisions. To ensure that the issue of ethical frameworks was exhaustively discussed, experts from the communication sector were also included as part of the sample.

Definition of Terms

a) **Alternative media** – This is media that is not part of the “formal corporate mainstream media” (Ndlela, 2010, p. 87). Alternative media can also be referred to as media that give a voice to small communities and sometimes oppose the hegemonic bureaucracy of government and mainstream media (McQuail, 2005). In this research, the term, alternative online media refers to blogs that are not run by mainstream media houses.

b) **Ethical conduct** – Conduct is “the way in which a person behaves” (Waite & Hawker, 2009). Ethics refers to “a set of principles or a code of moral conduct” (Day, 2006, p. 3). Ethical conduct can therefore be described as behaving in a manner that is morally right. In the study, ethical conduct will refer to behaviour that is morally acceptable among those who disseminate news.

c) **Ethical framework** – A framework is “a system of rules, ideas or beliefs that is used to plan or decide something” (Cambridge Learner’s Dictionary, 2008, p. 567). Ethical frameworks are
obligations placed on human action from specific theoretical perspectives. They may be duty-based, outcome-based, guided by a social responsibility to community, or guided by an ideology of virtue. In this research, ethical frameworks of practice refer to the ethical decision making structures used by bloggers to make moral decisions.

d) Ethical model – is a process of making ethical decisions (Day, 2006). In this study, the term will refer to a normative code of ethics, compromising principles derived from ethical theories such as social responsibility (Bivins, 2004; Peck, 2013), duty (Smith, 2011), democratic participant (McQuail, 1994), libertarian (Siebert, Peterson &Schramm, 1956), and utilitarian (Boss, 2008; Peck, 2013). These theories and the personal decision-making that they help to describe are proposed and discussed with the subjects of this research as possible ways to guide news bloggers in their practice.

e) Ethical values – Values can be defined as “those things that reflect our presuppositions about social life and human nature” (Turow, 2011, p. 114). Ethics has been described as “a set of principles or a code of moral conduct” (Day, 2006, p. 3). In this study, ethical values are defined as the standards that guide journalists and bloggers in their practice of news dissemination.

f) Journalism – McQuail (2005) defined journalism as the production of news by professional journalists. In this study, journalism is defined as the work done by professionally trained journalists.

g) J-bloggers – Journalists who blog (Yu, 2011). In this study, j-bloggers are mainstream journalists who also blog privately.

h) Mainstream media – These are “news outlets that produce content specifically conceived and designed to reach and appeal to a large audience” (Moody, 2008, p. 16). Moody argued that mainstream media are expected to report on issues objectively. In this study, mainstream media are the major media organisations in Kenya that are guided by the Media Council Act of 2013 in their dissemination of news.

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i) Media regulation – Regulation refers to “a rule or directive made or maintained by an 
authority” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 1212). In this study, media regulation refers to 
formulation of laws to govern media, in this case, news bloggers.

j) Motivations – This refers to the force that pushes one to attain a goal (Gil de Zuniga et al., 
2011). In the study, motivations mean the reasons why the news bloggers blog.

k) News blogging – This refers to “the practice of covering the news through blogging whether 
by doing original reporting or by providing commentary on the news...” (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006, p. 
11). This study will use the term news blogging to refer to the practice of disseminating news 
through personally created platforms called blogs.

l) News blogger – News blogging has been described in (j) above as the practice of news 
dissemination through blogging (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006). It follows that a news blogger is one who 
covers and reports news on blogs, in a similar way like that of a journalist who gathers and reports 
news for mainstream media. In this study, a news blogger is one who disseminates news on his or 
her blog but does not work for mainstream media as a journalist.

m) Normative framework – The word normative in terms of media refers “to an ideal way for a 
media system to be structured and operated” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 98). A framework is “a 
system of rules, ideas or beliefs that is used to plan or decide something” (Cambridge Learner’s 
Dictionary, 2008, p. 567). In this study, a normative framework is the ideal ethical system that 
news bloggers should employ in their blogging practice.

n) Normative media models – The word normative has been defined in (m) above. In this study, 
normative media model refers to ideals which should guide news bloggers when they are making 
ethical decisions.

o) Perceptions – Perception can mean the impression one has of an event or phenomenon (Waite 
& Hawker, 2009). In this study, perception will mean the viewpoint or attitude held by bloggers 
towards their blogging.
p) Practice – “A job or business that involves a lot of skill or training” (McIntosh, 2013, p. 1199). In this study, practice is used to refer to both blogging and journalism, with the former being viewed as one that needs less skill and training than the latter.

q) Profession – This is “any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education” (McIntosh, 2013, p. 1222). In addition, members of a profession “maintain certain standards of technical performance and of ethics by means of self-regulatory procedures” (McQuail, 2005, p. 564). In this study, a profession refers to journalism practice.

r) Professional standards – These can be defined as “principles of honourable decent behaviour” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 1407). In this study, professional standards refer to principles that guide media professionals.

s) Professional structures – A structure is “the way in which the parts of a system or object are arranged or organised, or a system arranged in this way” (McIntosh, 2013, p. 1560). In this study, professional structures to the journalistic system under which mainstream journalists operate.

t) Professional training – As indicated in m above, a profession is work that “needs special training” and “respected because it involves a high level of education” (McIntosh, 2013, p. 1222). In this study professional training refers to the training that is required of journalists and as stipulated in the Media Council Act of 2013.

u) Profit making – Profit can be defined as “the money that you make in business or by selling things, especially after paying the costs involved” (Wehmeier, 2004). Profit making is therefore, the activity of working to make money. In the study, profit making explains the activity of news bloggers using blogging as a platform to make money.

v) Public Interest – McQuail (2005, p. 565) defined public interest as expectations that mass media should operate for “the wider and longer-term good of society”. In this study, the term
public interest will refer to the notion that some bloggers post news so as to serve society rather than their (bloggers) own interests.

w) Recreation – Recreation refers to “enjoyable leisure activity” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011). In this study, recreation refers to the act of news bloggers blogging as a hobby.

x) Standards – Standards are “principles of honourable decent behaviour” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 1407). In this research, standards refer to ethical principles expected of media practitioners, and in this case, news bloggers.

y) Standardise – This can be defined as to “cause to conform to a standard” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 1407). In this study, standardisation refers to the process of codifying blogging practice by coming up with ethical guidelines for bloggers.

Summary

This chapter has located challenges confronting ethical regulation of the media, against a backdrop of the rising popularity of social media in Kenya. The expansion of social media has given impetus to the phenomenon of blogging, with a number of bloggers functioning as disseminators of news stories. These were the bloggers referred to as news bloggers in this study.

The chapter has raised ethical issues that arise from news blogging and the debate surrounding these concerns so as to demonstrate the need to conduct the study.

The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework that guided the study. The chapter will further review different studies that relate to the current study. The review will examine the findings of the different studies so as to establish the gaps that the current study sought to address.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter looks at key studies that are related to the research problem. It includes the theoretical framework that guided the research, followed by a general overview of literature related to blogging and journalism. The general overview will begin by expounding on ethics as a concern in journalism, before focusing on the issue of news blogging and ethical concerns. The review of empirical studies will discuss the outcomes of past methodical research, before showing the gaps in the literature that the present study sought to fill.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on theoretical frameworks of practice that emerged from what became known as the “normative theories of the press”, but are relevant to practitioners and platforms beyond the print media. Normative media theories are appropriate for this study because they address issues of how the media should be structured and the standards that should guide the industry (Baran & Davis, 2009; McQuail, 2005). Though originally conceived as guidelines for the newspaper industry, the normative theories of authoritarianism, Soviet Communism, libertarianism, social responsibility (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956), and more recently, democratic participant theory (McQuail, 1994) have been applied to an extended sphere of media practice, including broadcasting, and internet media. These will augment the ethical frameworks (duty, utility, virtue, etc.) in informing the discussion around standards of practice by bloggers in the course of this study.

Issues of media standards have a moral and ethical component which is the basis of this research. Baran and Davis (2009, p. 98) further highlighted the ethical component of normative theory, describing it as a media framework that demonstrates “the ways things should be if some ideal values and principles are to be realised”. Oosthuizen (2002, pp. 38-39) emphasised that “the
potential influence of governments and citizens on what the media ought to do, explains why normative media theories and professional ethics have traditionally been the main areas of concern in normative media ethics”. This study was an attempt to interrogate the ethical framework that is employed by Kenyan news bloggers, with a further examination of the standards and values that ought to be adopted by the blogosphere.

Kenya’s alternative online media platforms, incorporating news bloggers who are not mainstream journalists, are being explored through social responsibility, libertarian, and democratic-participant indicators. This section will begin with a discussion on the evolution of communication ethics before a more focused look at the normative theories that make up the theoretical framework of the study.

Evolution of Media Ethics in the Western world

Debate on communication ethics in the Western world can be traced to Ancient Greece (Bivins, 2004; Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Day, 2006; Plaisance, 2009; Sanders, 2003). The key issue in Ancient Greece was how an individual related with the community (Bivins, 2004). Christians et al. (2009) pointed out that the philosophers in Ancient Greece were concerned about how male citizens made decisions through participatory debate which was geared toward the community’s common good. During this era, referred to as the classical period, male citizens in Athens were taught techniques on public speaking (Christians et al., 2009). These skills were necessary to enable citizens to give persuasive speeches at crucial times, such as during trials where “a speech by a plaintiff was followed by an address from the defendant” (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 1990, p. 95).

Some of the early teachers of ethics at the classical period were the Sophists, who gave their services for a fee at the various city-states in Athens (Infante et al., 1990). Infante et al. identified some of the key sophists as Protagoras, Gorgias and Isocrates. Protagoras was as a pioneer of debate, Gorgias, a teacher of rhetoric who used poetic devices, while Isocrates tried to
instil moral character in his students so as to make them better citizens by helping them understand rhetoric and politics (Infante et al., 1990).

Besides the Sophists, three other philosophers of ethics in Ancient Greece whose role in the evolution of moral reasoning is still highly valued to date are, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The three emerged as philosophers who were opposed to the teachings of the Sophists whom they viewed as foreigners and as teachers with faulty teachings that were flowery and “full of demagogic half-truths” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 44).

Socrates introduced the dialectic method where individuals used questions and answers to develop critical thinking skills for tackling issues (Infante et al., 1990; Rich, 2015; Smith, 2011). Using the dialectic technique, Socrates would pose a challenging question and would then continue asking further questions to the answers given until the issues raised by the first question had been examined in a thorough manner (Rich, 2015). Unlike the Sophists, Socrates believed that people should not be lectured but helped to use reasoning to come up with their own answers (Infante et al., 1990). Media ethics in the contemporary world can be described as is an extension of the Socratic method of critical inquiry into moral issues (Day, 2006).

Socrates’ teachings are significant to media ethics and to the blogging practice because they argue for a life of contemplation on morals where individuals use reasoning so as to arrive at truth (Peck, 2013). Using Socrates’ philosophy on ethics, Peck argued that journalists, (and in this case, bloggers) should take responsibility for their conduct and that they should seek knowledge on how to deal with ethical dilemmas that they face in their practice rather than act out of ignorance.

Plato, a student of Socrates, also taught on the dialectic method but sought to showcase it as a search for truth derived from evidence, not just a way of showcasing mastery of language (Christians et al., 2009; Infante et al., 1990). One of the memorable issues in Plato’s teachings is a story of a cave (Bivins, 2004; Rich, 2015). Plato’s recital known as “the allegory of the cave”
describes a group of people chained in a dark cave and made to face a huge wall. Behind the enslaved people is a huge fire. Between the slaves and fire is another group of people. The slaves cannot see these people clearly, all they see are shadows. They can also hear the sounds of the people speaking. The only reality that the slaves have is the sounds and the shadows (Bivins, 2004). Bivins added that the slaves would need to break free from their chains and face the fire and the people whose shadows they see, so as to change their reality. The scholar however, elaborated that according to Plato even when one slave escapes and comes back to tell the others about the real world, the others may be too inhibited in their thinking to accept a new worldview.

Plato’s story of the cave has been used to describe the power of media in influencing how people interpret reality (Bivins, 2004; Peck, 2013). Bivins further pointed out that this view of the media was advanced by Walter Lippmann in the United States in the 1920s when he called for the control of information by elites who would decide what would be disseminated by media. “All information disseminated this way would be completely objective and free of opinion” (Bivins, 2004, p. 81). According to Peck (2013) media professionals should behave like the slave who escapes from the cave, sees the real world out there and comes back to educate the other professionals.

In connection with this research on bloggers, Plato’s cave allegory is linked to the concern that online media is now a big part of people’s reality. Could this reality be keeping people enslaved with their backs on the real world? The research considers the role that news bloggers can play to raise the ethical bar by educating their fellow bloggers on ethics so that in turn, the public benefits from stories reported in an ethical manner.

Aristotle’s treatise, *Nicomachean Ethics* has been cited by some as the one of the first written works on ethics (Plaisance, 2009). Aristotle who was Plato’s student was more practical than his teacher in his approach on ethics (Knowles, 1988; Oosthuizen, 2002; Patterson & Wilkins, 2014; Plaisance, 2009; Rich, 2015; Sanders, 2003). Aristotle believed that virtue could
be acquired through habit (Cohn, 1990; Peck, 2013; Sanders, 2003). According to Aristotle, a person who performed virtuous acts habitually would eventually develop a character that exemplified the same (Cohn, 1990).

A concept in Aristotelian ethics that has been cited enormously in media ethics is the principle of the golden mean, or the doctrine of the mean. The golden mean calls “for moderation in all things as the road to a virtuous character” (Bivins, 2004, p. 99). This is because “to every virtue corresponds two vices: one of excess and one of deficiency” (Sanders, 2003, p. 16). However, Aristotle’s idea of the golden mean has been criticised for its inapplicability in some matters, as some issues do not have grey areas and can only be viewed as right or wrong (Christians, Fackler, Richardson, Kreshel, & Woods, 2012).

Nevertheless, some have argued the applicability of the golden mean, positing that it is not simple mathematics of getting the mean but “the result of acquired character, a moral maturity, and an ability to perceive a situation accurately as it pertains to the individual involved” (Bivins, 2004, p. 99). Another scholar, Peck (2013) agreed, noting that media practitioners would become more virtuous through practice which would eventually make them more skilled at arriving at a mean after weighing all the facts of a situation.

The enlightenment era was a period when philosophers began to seek scientific explanations to various happenings in society (Ruggiero, 2008). One of the philosophers of the time, John Milton, an Englishman called for the freedom of the press advocating for an environment free from censorship, where ideas would compete freely – arguments that would that later produce the marketplace of ideas concept (Bivins, 2004; Christians et al., 2009). Christians et al. (2009) elaborated the marketplace of ideas as a libertarian concept which emphasised the rights of individuals (entrepreneurs) to own media industries and use them as they deemed fit but in accordance with the law.
John Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau were enlightenment philosophers who advocated for social contract, a theory, which examines how people come together to form a state and the relations that exist between these people (Bivins, 2004; Graham, 2004). Hobbes strongly advocated for government saying life without state would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (Bivins, 2004, p. 82). Hobbes’ proposition was that the only way individuals would act morally was if there was a government to enforce it (Ruggiero, 2008). In reference to media, it would mean that the government dictates how journalists should conduct their duties. Bivins (2004, p. 85) termed this “a form of forced social responsibility”.

Locke influenced the writing of the US constitution arguing that taking away freedom of speech in parliament was taking away the freedom of debate and hence destroying the government (Boss, 2008). Locke is regarded as the rights philosopher because of his argument that the government existed for the sake of protecting citizens’ rights (Graham, 2004). Unlike Hobbes, Locke argued that although the government is there to guide citizens, it should be replaced if it infringes on people’s rights (Smith, 2011). In relation to ethics, media practitioners and in this case, bloggers have social contracts with citizens and must weigh their actions against the effect that the same will have on society. Social contract alludes to the accountability that news bloggers owe their audience (the citizens).

Rousseau, another social contract philosopher, believed that it was erroneous to elevate reason above everything else, advocating instead for the general will, a belief that individuals had instincts that they could use for the benefit of the society (Bivins, 2004). Bivins explained that Rousseau’s social contract theory lends itself to social responsibility as it advocated for individual interests to come second to societal interests.

As discussed above, social contract theory investigates what role media play in relation to the community and the state (Bivins, 2004). Bivins argued that according to the theory, journalists have a contract with their audience which impacts on how they carry out their practice. In regard
to this research, if bloggers believe that they have a contract with the community, should they then practice social responsibility instead of acting primarily through self-interest?

David Hume regarded ethics as “exploration of emotion, sympathy and motive” (Sanders, 2003, p. 14). Hume’s proposition was that it is not reason that primarily leads us to take action, but emotion with pleasure being our main goal (Sanders, 2003). The meaning is that ethical conduct emanates from using reason (an objective way of making moral judgment) and from feelings where one chooses what gives him or her pleasure (Ruggiero, 2008).

Another key figure in the enlightenment period was Immanuel Kant. Kant has been referred to as a deontologist, a theorist who is mainly concerned with the actions of the individual and not the outcome of the situation (Patterson & Wilkins, 2014). Kant’s philosophy advocates that people follow maxims which they believe “all reasonable people would follow” (Peck, 2013, p. 12). The argument is that if you would not want other people to carry out a certain action then do not do it yourself. That means that if an individual who is a blogger believes lying is wrong then one should not post lies on their blog. Smith (2011) called this issue of duty in Kant’s principle as striving to do right even when it does not serve one’s interest. A blogger who values Kant’s philosophy will post accurate information even if it does not serve the self-interest of attracting traffic to the site.

John Stuart Mill is associated with the concept of utilitarianism, a principle that concentrates on the consequences of one’s action to gauge how ethical a decision is (Peck, 2013). The idea of utilitarianism was first coined by Jeremy Bentham, who “defined the principle in terms of pleasure and pain instead of benefits and harms” (Peck, 2013, p. 13). This principle argues for the greatest good for the greatest number, and in reducing harm while increasing benefits. Moral actions are right to the extent that they promote pleasure, which in turn adds to happiness and reduces pain which is associated with unhappiness (Boss, 2008). Bloggers may
argue that they are employing utilitarianism when they expose harm propagated by a few individuals in the society. The key thing in utilitarianism is the consequences of one’s action.

The twentieth century brought in philosophers such as William David Ross and John Rawls. To Ross individuals could practice moral behaviour by using their “common sense or intuition” (Peck, 2013, p. 16). Ross highlighted several duties that he believed comprised moral behaviour. These included: “keeping promises (fidelity), showing gratitude for favours, practicing justice, making others’ lives better (beneficence), avoiding harm, making amends when necessary (reparation), improving oneself” (Peck, 2013, p. 16). According to Ross, when one is making an ethical decision, one should weigh which duty they feel is most important in the situation and choose it to guide their conduct. Ross believed that common sense will guide individuals in making ethical decisions. Some critics feel that ethics or rules of good conduct are not as evident to everyone as Ross assumes (Peck, 2013). In relation to bloggers, do those who blog think about these duties highlighted by Ross as they blog? Do they for example, keep the promises they give their audiences, do they practice beneficence and do they avoid harm?

John Rawls is known for the ethical principle called the veil of ignorance, a moral reasoning concept whose main concern is equality in society (Peck, 2013). Rawls argued:

> When you’re behind the veil, you must forget who you are; only then can you step into the shoes of others who are involved in the dilemma. Forgetting who you are means not considering your class status, religion, ethnicity or values. You consider the viewpoints and welfare of everyone involved because everyone is equal. When the veil lifts after the decision is made, you don’t know what your identity will be; you could be master or slave, royalty or pauper. (Peck, 2013, p. 17)

Under the veil of ignorance, the weaker party is protected (Christians et al., 2012). This would mean that media practitioners think about how they treat those they cover in the news. In relation to blogging, bloggers would have to think about how they report about various people in society. As Christians et al. (2009) argued the veil of ignorance principle would dissuade them from merely portraying politicians as liars just because that is what most people in society think they
are. The argument here is that if bloggers put themselves under the veil and they emerged as politicians, they would not like such a label.

Media Theory in Africa

There has been consensus among scholars on the complexity of identifying a homogenous normative media framework for Africa (Fourie, 2007; Mfumbusa, 2008; Nyamnjoh, 2013; Skjerdal, 2012; Wasserman, 2012, 2014). According to Mfumbusa (2008), the main issue is whether media practitioners in Africa should embrace African-centred ethics (ethics that subscribes to African values) or should go for professionalism through enforcement of codes of ethics and establishment of independent media councils. Wasserman (2014) contended that there are various ethical frameworks which are in competition in Africa. He added that these frameworks are entwined with politics and leave African media practitioners confused about who they should be responsible to, and how they should tackle media freedom. In African societies, public interest may conflict with national interest where the government feels that the rights of the public to know should come second to the country’s “sovereignty”, even when that means failure to report on government’s misdeeds (Steenveld, 2016; Wasserman, 2006).

Kasoma’s Afriethics has been one of the major attempts in the continent to formulate an African ethical framework for media practitioners. Kasoma (1996, p. 95) called for a return “to the primordial ethical checks and balances that have always existed in African society and ensured reasonably good moral order”. He urged African journalists to stop emulating the Western media whom he described as individualistic and lacking a society-based moral focus. When Afriethics is applied to blogging, bloggers would be expected to be more communitarian in their approach in news dissemination where the public good takes precedence over personal gain.

Kasoma introduced the Afriethics debate in the 1990s at a time when many African nations that had recently embraced multi-party democracy felt that media practitioners had
become excited and portrayed extremism by publishing stories without caring about the consequences of the media reports on society. He wrote:

African newspapers, particularly the independent tabloids in countries which adopted multi-party politics in the 1990s, have spared no one in their muckraking journalistic exploits, libelling, invading privacy and generally carrying out a type of reportage on those they report on that can best be described as ‘vendetta journalism’. (Kasoma, 1996, p. 99)

The remedy to this state of affairs according to Kasoma is to embrace Afriethics which puts community at the centre of decisions. He called on African journalists to put their duty to society first before considering their self-interest. He further urged journalists to embrace communalism where media practitioners who err would be helped to get back on track for the sake of the community of journalists. Interestingly, Kasoma referred to the notion of putting society first as public interest, a term that is emphasised in social responsibility, the main theory in this research.

Chasi (2016) has referred to Kasoma’s Afriethics as a type of ubuntu philosophy, a Zulu term that means “I am because of others” (Fourie, 2007, p. 210). In a comparison of ubuntu to communitarianism which is a Western model, Christians (2004) argued that both situate morality in the community. According to Christians (2004) and Fourie (2007), media practitioners under the ubuntu model are not just detached conveyors of news but engage the society in a fruitful discourse so as to find answers to pressing issues.

Banda (2009) in a critique of Afriethics posited that Kasoma ignores the complexity of the history of Africa’s media. Banda further explains that Kasoma’s ideas were born out of the social-political environment of Zambia in the 1990s. Banda outlined four issues that influenced Kasoma’s discourse on ethics, namely, “religious affiliation, profession association, state hegemony and pluralistic media environment” (Banda, 2009, p. 229). Firstly, Kasoma’s religious affiliation as a devout Roman Catholic could have contributed to his “high moral ground” which made him see certain journalistic practices as bad (Banda, 2009, p. 229). Secondly, Kasoma who
began his journalism career at the *Times of Zambia*, a newspaper owned by the state, had no experience working for private media (Banda, 2009). Thirdly, the liberalism that came with the re-introduction of multiparty politics in Zambia made Kasoma apprehensive that the multiple media outlets were exploiting media freedom for sensational reporting (Kasoma, 1996). Fourthly, Banda said that the pluralistic media environment at the time made it impossible for state-owned media and the private media to coalesce under one association. This led to the private media forming their own association and refusing to join the Press Association of Zambia which was headed by Kasoma as president.

Tomaseli (2009) stated there is a commonality between Western ethical paradigms and the African-based ones like *ubuntu*. He pointed out for example, that Aristotle’s golden mean and Kant’s categorical imperative are similar to *ubuntu* because “they link the individual to the community via practice and social action” (Tomaseli, 2009, p. 585). He also cautioned that models such as ubuntu and communitarianism could be misused by selfish individuals in society who may misrepresent their personal agenda as “the will of the community” (Tomaseli, 2009, p. 591).

Given the continued debate on an African ethical model and the discourse on individualism on one hand, and the community consciousness on the other, Western ethical models remain important in helping the individual media practitioner “overcome the restraints of communitarianism” while embracing the good aspects of community togetherness (Tomaseli, 2009, p. 591). This was echoed by Nyamnjoh (2013) who advocated for a journalism that recognises the duality of African identity, where an individual is a part of the individualistic cosmopolitan life but also has strong ties with the community in the village. Nyamnjoh hailed alternative media propelled by ICTs and the internet as crucial in giving a voice to various groups in the community. Nyamnjoh’s contention ties in with democratic-participant theory, a model in
this study which will be interrogated in connection with whether news bloggers play the role of alternative media.

The above discussion clearly demonstrates as Tomaseli (2009, p. 789) argued that “media ethics in Africa remains a contested terrain” with a number of models competing for dominance. Wasserman (2014, p. 794) called on media ethicists to listen to the discussions, contestations and engagements that journalists and scholars make in relation “to global ethical debates from the vantage point of their lived experience in African societies”. The contention therefore, is that, the libertarian, social responsibility and democratic-participant models although having originated in the West remain relevant frameworks for gauging the professionalism of media practice and particularly in regardless to public interest.

The Libertarian Theory

The libertarian theory is one of the theories discussed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) in the classical press theory book, *Four Theories of the Press*. This theory emanated from the liberalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Siebert et al., 1956). The three scholars highlighted several factors that led to the emergence of libertarian theory. One of the factors was religious reformation which encouraged individuals to rely on reason so as to make rational decisions. Another factor that made liberalism flourish was the rise of the middle class who challenged the power of the church and state as they strove to make successful businesses. Siebert et al. (1956) also pointed out that the enlightenment period also propagated liberalism with the argument that human beings had the power to understand and master the world.

Major contributors to the libertarian theory as cited by in the *Four Theories of the Press*, are John Milton, John Erskine, Thomas Jefferson and John Stuart Mill. John Milton wrote extensively about the right for free discussion arguing that human beings could use reason to distinguish right from wrong, and that multiplicity of ideas would enable them to choose the truth (Siebert et al., 1956). Milton’s argument was: “Let all with something to say be free to express
themselves. The true and sound will survive; the false and unsound will be vanquished” (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 45). This idea of encouraging free debate so that one can pick out the truth and discard lies has been referred to as the self-righting principle (Baran & Davis, 2012). John Stuart Mill posited that individuals had a right to think in their own ways as long as they harmed no one as they did so, while, Thomas Jefferson, an American president argued that society needed the media despite the violations committed occasionally by the latter (Siebert et al., 1956).

McQuail (2005) described media that fall under the libertarian theory as subscribing to the liberal-pluralist or market model. He termed the model as one where media freedom is paramount and without government interference. While the libertarian theory has been hailed for championing media freedom and speaking against government controls, the model has been criticised for assuming that media will act responsibly (Baran & Davis, 2012). The model has further been critiqued for the optimistic assumption that most individuals are rational and will make the right choices, and for overlooking other rights that conflict with media freedom (Baran & Davis, 2012).

Concerning the libertarian model the question in this study, was whether the selected respondents felt that blogging practice should be completely free from government control? Did they believe that those who read blogs are rational and able to sift through the content to determine what is true and what is false?

The Social Responsibility Theory

The social responsibility model emerged in the late 1940s at a time when, just as concerns have emerged on present-day blogging practices, there was discontent about media conduct in the United States. The concept was originally a response to the failure of American businesses to demonstrate public interest in their dealings (Bivins, 2004). Social responsibility has been situated as part of a typology of four models which form part of the broader normative media theory
(McQuail, 2005). McQuail argued that social responsibility incorporates freedom of media with an obligation of public interest.

The model emanated from the work of the Hutchins Commission which was set up to deliberate concerns about alleged excesses of the media. One of the major concerns at the time was the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few powerful individuals (Ferre’, 2009; Nerone, 1995). These powerful media owners were “politically active and used their positions to support candidates and influence elections and legislative action” (Nerone, 1995, p. 79).

There were fears that the clique of dominant elites “could manipulate media to transmit propaganda” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 113). Some members of the Hutchins Commission felt that “small weak pluralistic groups” in society needed to be protected from the dominance of the powerful elite (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 113). The theory further suggested that the media must give a voice to these “underprivileged” groups (Russell, 2011). The emergence of the social responsibility theory was a response to the liberalism of the twentieth century (Ward, 2011) where calls were made for media to “serve the public, challenge state power and give voice to those on the margins (Fackler, 2009, p. 306).

McQuail (2005, p. 172) outlined the main principles of social responsibility theory as: the media have obligations to society, and media ownership is a public trust; news media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant; the media should be free, but self-regulated; the media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct; and under some circumstances, government may need to intervene and safeguard the public interest.

The argument in this study on bloggers is that although citizen journalism, of which blogging is a part of has been lauded as giving a voice to those who cannot be heard through mainstream media, it is not everyone who has access to the internet. This means that a big portion of the underprivileged groups (the masses in society who are not part of the elite) identified by the
Hutchins Commission are still underrepresented. Some scholars have also raised the concern that despite the fact that citizen journalism is supposed to encourage open participation, “the online community has created its own hierarchies” through the domination of conversation by a few well known bloggers (Ogola, 2015, p. 74). To echo Christians’ (2011) sentiments about inequitable access of the internet in Africa, the blogs are mainly owned by an educated urban population who write on topics of their interest, leaving out the rural population’s concerns. Furthermore, in pursuit of revenue from advertising as discussed in chapter one, bloggers concentrate on stories that will bring traffic to their sites, relegating truth and public interest to the periphery.

In this study, social responsibility theory was used to interrogate ethical obligations on news bloggers in their dissemination of information. Have new media users in Kenya reached the deliberative stage where the internet’s “open access” and user empowerment needs to be moderated to conform to the wider public interest? These sentiments tie in with the tenets of democratic-participant theory which advocates for “development of innovative “small” media that can be directly controlled by group members” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 122). One could argue that the emergence of blogging is the development of a space where small media controlled by individuals or communities thrive (Mudhai, 2011; Ogenga, 2010; Ogola, 2015).

The social responsibility theory which according to McQuail (2005, p. 172) advocated for news media to be “truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant” was used to answer the research question on the ethical values that bloggers use when disseminating news. The social responsibility theory which also proposes that media adhere to codes of ethics (McQuail, 2005) was relevant in examining the ethical framework that can be used by the news bloggers to disseminate information in the public interest.

A further question on news blogs and public interest is whether blogs, which sometimes tend to be private conversation made in a public arena (the internet), should be subjected to the same ethical standards as those of mainstream media. Key to note here is that ownership of
mainstream media is a public trust, but does this apply to news blogs? McQuail (2010, p. 171) stated that the social responsibility model views “media ownership as a form of public trust or stewardship, rather than as an unlimited private franchise”. This is reiterated by Watson (2008, p. 118) who argued that socially responsible media “have obligations that amount to a form of public stewardship”. Although, these are issues that the mainstream media are still grappling with, the principles of the social responsibility are relevant to news blogging, because of the accountability aspects that the model proposes.

Critique of Social Responsibility Theory

Nerone (1995) has criticised social responsibility theory as merely an extension of liberal theory. He posited that the theory was not adopted for the good for society, but simply because it made market sense, at a time when citizens were demanding that companies embrace public interest. Nerone’s argument is that “media came to seem responsible without embracing the totality of social responsibility theory” (Nerone, 1995, p. 83). Nerone further stated that social responsibility perpetuates the status quo “by erecting standards of performance”. Christians et al. (2009, p. 4) also critiqued the theory arguing that it is part a typology developed at a time “when the world was deeply divided between the capitalist West, the socialist East, and the underdeveloped South”.

Despite the criticisms against social responsibility theory, its relevance remains. For example, even as they critique the Four Theories of the Press as out-dated and pro-Western, Christians et al. (2009) emphasise the viability of the social responsibility theory:

The genius of the social responsibility tradition has been its ability to find a balance between freedom and control, self-regulation and public regulation, respect for both national culture and cultural diversity, personal needs and community needs, relatively high cultural quality and mass comprehension. (Christians, et al, 2009, pp. 24-25)

Fackler (2011) contended that although social responsibility may appear too idealistic rather than practical for journalists and as mere moral rhetoric to academics, it is an alternative to the individualistic enlightenment and authoritarian media systems. Fackler (2011, p. 125) termed the
theory as “the anchor of efforts to elaborate the mission and moral responsibility of democratic media”. Ward (2009) emphasised the importance of social responsibility in defining the standards for evaluating journalistic practice. These standards continue to be demonstrated through codes of practice and mission statements of companies (Fackler, 2011; Foreman, 2011). This emphasis on standards by the social responsibility theory illustrates the relevance of the model in an interrogation of the normative frameworks that may be used for the blogging practice. However, industry monopolies which put commercial gain as priority, systems that discourage citizens and media from opposing those in power and other socio-cultural realities in different nations continue to be a challenge to the achievement of the tenets articulated by the social responsibility model (Fackler, 2011).

Democratic-Participant Theory

The democratic-participant model emerged from attempts to address the flaws of previous theories which were seen as failing in giving a voice to the grassroots (Oosthuizen, 2002). The theory has been used to describe alternative media (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; McQuail, 1994). According to McQuail (1994) the democratic-participant theory advocates for grass-root media that supports horizontal communication and links media producers with their audiences.

Democratic-participant theory advocates for non-professionals to have access to media and to also participate in the production processes (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007). McQuail posited: “the term ‘democratic-participant’ expresses a sense of disillusionment with well-established political parties and with media systems, which are seen as having broken faith with the people” (McQuail, 1994, p. 132). He said that democratic-participant theory is premised on the notion that “both freedom and self-regulation have failed” (McQuail, 1994, p. 132).

The democratic-participant theory is relevant because blogs have been viewed as part of alternative media (Banda, 2006; Cooper, 2006; Debatin, 2011; Ndhlovu, 2009, Ogenga, 2010;
Ogola, 2015). Ndhlovu, a journalist from Zimbabwe described blogs as a voice for the marginalised who cannot be heard through mainstream media. For Cooper, blogs monitor mainstream media to ensure the latter play their role. To describe the power of blogs as alternative media, Debatin (2011, p. 823) said “blogging makes possible new forms of civic and grassroots journalism, advocacy-driven publishing, political opinion writing, media criticism, and last but not least novel approaches to news and investigative journalism”. Of interest to this research, was whether Kenyan news blogs would be described as alternative media as conceptualised under the democratic-participant theory.

General Literature Review

Description of News Blogs

The growth of online media and the technological changes that continue to change the media landscape have occasioned a continual redefinition of news (Hanson, 2011). Hanson has further argued that there has been a move from traditional news to stories that have a human interest angle. He has contended “that most online news sources and special online versions of newspapers organise content differently to traditional newspapers, with greater attention to gossip and celebrity news than public events or news that could inform serious public discourse” (Hanson, 2011, p. 812). This redefinition of what constitutes news has also been witnessed in mainstream media where media strive to beat competition by giving hard news a human interest twist so as to avoid merely reporting the straight facts that have already been reported by competitors.

Knowlton and Reader (2009) attributed the changing definitions of journalism to the dynamic nature of news gathering and dissemination. The scholars stated that while the 1980s was an era of investigative reporting, the 21st century brought in a type of news that was not only informative but also had entertaining aspects. Frost (2011) was in agreement with these sentiments as he defined news as reports that sell, whether they are disseminated by traditional media or online
media. This aspect of selling to an audience is what pushes those who disseminate news to add a sensational or an entertaining angle.

The concept of news blogging which is the focus of this study has been previously debated by scholars who have examined the meaning of news in relation to the blogging practice. The contention has been whether there are blogs that disseminate what can be termed as pure news. Bruns (2006, p. 11) has defined news blogging as “the practice of covering the news through blogging – whether by doing original reporting or by providing commentary on news as it is reported in other news sources”. Gunter et al. (2009) have posed the question whether what news blogs disseminate can be considered news in journalistic terms. Davis (2012) looked at the different ways that blogs and traditional media transmit news. The scholar argued that the two complement each other. He said “blogs emphasise commentary with some hard news, while news organisations offer hard news with some commentary” (Davis 2012, p. 58).

Bruns (2006, p. 12) noted that although blogs post news they act as a gatewatching forum “which focuses more on providing additional commentary on the news as it is reported elsewhere.” Bruns added that while many blogs are not devoted entirely to news, they do occasionally disseminate news. This concept of occasional dissemination of news is what some like Lasica (2003, p.71) referred to as a “random act of journalism”. To explain this phenomenon, Russo (2006) and Trimarco (2015) stated that bloggers integrate opinion and news in their blogs. McCombs, Holbert, Klousis and Wanta (2011) also contended that news on blogs leans more on opinion unlike that of traditional media. Davis (2012) further clarified how blogs treat news:

Bloggers conversely, do not have the same obligation to report the news of the day. Any particular blog can, and will, ignore the vast majority of stories the news media cover and home in on one or two topics, if they wish. (Davis, 2012, p. 54)

Post (2008) explained how blogging has changed the concept of news and states that bloggers do not use the five Ws and H rule to determine what to post but rather put up posts that they feel they should put up. According to Post, who is one of the co-founders of the successful
American blog, *The Huffington Post*, even if reports by bloggers are not news according to the traditional notion of journalism, the posts attract mainstream media attention if many people join in the online conversation. The raising influence of blogs has occasioned changes in the way journalists cover and report news as mainstream media struggle to contain the occupational threats posed by the blogging practice (Domingo & Heinonen, 2008; Lowery & Mackay, 2008).

The following illustration of four Kenyan blogs (Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4) demonstrates the argument that blogs are neither purely news-oriented, nor purely human-interest/entertainment-oriented. Niaje.com and Ghafla.com are both entertainment blogs which post news. Cyprian Nyakundi’s blog had a category clearly defined as news. Owaahh.com, a blog that posts historical and investigative pieces, also occasionally posts information that could be described as news.

*Figure 2.1: Screenshot of Ghafla Blog*
Figure 2.2: A Screenshot of Blogger, Cyprian Nyakundi’s blog

Figure 2.3: A Screenshot of Niaje Blog
The discussion above demonstrates the niche nature of blogging where bloggers focus on areas of interest unlike mainstream media which report on a wide range of topics (McCombs et al., 2011). These areas of interest later become their areas of expertise. Walejko and Ksiazek (2010) posited that due to their niche reporting, bloggers are able to write authoritatively on issues because they are either experts in their areas of blogging or have created a great rapport with sources in certain fields. According to McCombs et al. (2011), while there are blogs that devote a lot of their space to news, it is those blogs that also infuse opinion into their writing, that attract huge audiences.

Ethical principles and concerns over the conduct and motives of those carrying out newsgathering roles can be looked at from society expectations; that is, communitarian ethics; or from the individual point of view (Gordon, Kittross, Babcock, & Dorsher, 2011). If blogs serve mainly as vehicles of self-expression (Quinn & Lamble, 2012), then the idea of an ethical model or code that binds news bloggers to set standards may be considered by some to be far-fetched. However, even though self-expression was described by Bruns and Jacobs (2006, p. 76) as “one of the major motives for blogging”, the authors also pointed out that it should not be in the interest of the blogger to alienate, to a large degree, those who read and may potentially advertise on the blog. This means that the guiding principles in moral conduct for news bloggers can lean towards what society says is proper and good, as well as what the individual blogger’s moral conscience dictates (Ahmad, Mohammed, Pawanteh, Ahmad & Aziz, 2011).

To explore the individual and communitarian dichotomy further, Bruns and Jacobs warned that while self-expression is a major motivation for all forms of blogging, “even more seriously, to the extent that self-expression is a marketable commodity, it will be profitable to stimulate it using market-tested standard formats” (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006, p. 76). What this means is that the personal expressions of a serious blogger will often have to face the marketability test. Being
marketable includes being socially responsible, which is where McQuail’s (2005) typography of social responsibility theory, a theoretical framework for this study, has relevance.

A perspective of blogging, which incorporates both personal expression and social responsibility, ties in with the findings of Gordon et al. (2011), who suggested that most journalists combine communitarian ethics and personal ethics. Friend and Singer (2007), on the other hand, said that bloggers mostly rely on personal ethics unlike journalists who are guided by both personal standards and those of the profession.

Bloggers’ ethics are almost wholly personal; they can choose to provide a platform for the collective pursuit of truth, or they can publish whatever outrageous nonsense strikes their fancy. Either way, they will still be blogging tomorrow (if they feel like it). However, the additional safeguard of being part of an occupational group that values the responsible pursuit of the truth is important (Friend & Singer, 2007, p. 121).

The concern of this research was whether news bloggers should be subjected to ethical standards. Should they be concerned about their duty to society? Should they be worried about the consequences of the outcome of their behaviour? Brown (2011, p. 3) defined ethics as a means of utilising moral beliefs “in the process of reasoning”. The moral beliefs guide the media practitioner in deciding how to behave in various contexts. Brown looked at moral theory from three perspectives: deontological or duty based theories, where the motive is paramount; teleological theory, where the emphasis is the consequences of one’s action; and virtue theory, where the focus is character, and not behaviour. Christians and Merrill (2009) used a typology developed by ethicist scholar, Louis Hodges which has two other categories of ethics: rights associated with philosophers like Locke; and love associated with the teachings of Jesus. Do any of these principles of ethical reasoning apply to the practice of news blogging?

Relating to the historical transitions between phases of media practice, Elliott (2009) contrasted values of 20th century journalism – which she terms the traditional paradigm – with
those of the 21st century, which she calls the new paradigm. She outlined the differences between the two (2009, p. 31). The traditional paradigm required journalists to:

always seek the truth and present both sides if a clear single truth does not exist; use sources that have expertise or authority; present the story objectively; write stories for a general mass audience and present the story through a one-way communication. (Elliot, 2009, p. 31)

By contrast, according to Elliot, the new paradigm requires journalists to: “notice issues and events; use own reporting as well as open sourcing; filter stories through journalistic perspective; write stories for targeted audiences and allow audiences to provide feedback” (Elliot, 2009, p. 31).

Elliott’s new paradigm, although referring to journalism, aptly describes blogging which is the subject of this research. Bloggers use their own writing style, have no restrictions to the kinds of sources they can use, report for specific audiences and make provision for feedback. Truth may not always be the sole purpose of news dissemination on blogs because as Elliott argued the new paradigm is geared towards a business model. She pointed out that although the new paradigm of online media practice appears more people-focused, it promotes what she calls wikiality, “the mistaken belief that open participation in providing and editing information results in truth” (Elliot, 2009, p. 36). This research delved deeper than the Elliott’s study to evaluate how concerns about the new paradigm relate to blogging. The study sought to evaluate whether bloggers who prided themselves as being free to speak their minds while allowing others to do so, actually promoted truth and diversity.

Connected with Elliott’s concerns, blogging has been seen as a media practice that could seriously compromise mainstream journalism because of the easy and affordable access, through which any individual or group can post constructive or negative material, whether validated or invalidated, that can be accessed by millions around the globe (Tremayne, 2007). Tremayne illustrated three ways in which mainstream media has dealt with the threat: portraying the blogs as “insignificant and lacking in credibility”; accepting the blogs by hiring bloggers as contributors to
mainstream brands; and learning from the bloggers (Tremayne, 2007, p. xvi). The scholar gave three reasons why he believes blogs are influential. These include: the outsider status that makes blogs appear uncorrupted by the power plays in mainstream media, the large audiences they attract, and the power they wield by working together (Tremayne, 2007, p. xvi). This demonstrates that despite the love-hate relationship that journalists and bloggers have, the latter have become a regular feature that cannot be ignored.

Tremayne’s sentiments about the relationship between blogging and journalism are similar to the debate on the blogosphere occurring in Kenya currently. The debate in Kenya has been whether blogging is a part of journalism and whether bloggers are journalists (NTV, 2016). Some Kenyan bloggers have argued that they do not want to be considered journalists (Wamathai, 2016). Others however, were of the view that journalism and blogging are related (Itumbi, 2016). There were also those who felt that the two practices complement each other and should find a way to coexist (Bwire, 2016). This study explored this debate further by seeking the views of other bloggers on whether they considered the blogging practice as part of journalism.

While the Elliott and Tremayne’s studies were conducted in the Western world, this study examined the blogging phenomenon from a Kenyan perspective. The research examined how news bloggers in Kenya treated ethical issues concerning their work and the manner in which they viewed their profession (that is, if they actually saw it as a form of journalism).

Some studies have looked at how mainstream journalists have embraced blogging (Knight, 2008; Lowery, 2006; Singer, 2005; Yu, 2011). Knight found that quality blogs were influencing journalism and compelling journalists to “re-evaluate and reform their practices” (Knight, 2008, p. 118). Lowery’s findings were that the main difference between bloggers and journalists is the production processes that their stories go through. The scholar noted that production in the newsroom is a long process involving editors and reporters while the blogging process most times involves one person. Singer’s study, which focused on how blogging affected mainstream media’s
norms and practice, found that although journalists gave their opinions on blogs, they strove to “remain gatekeepers even in this highly interactive and participatory format” (Singer, 2005, p. 173). These journalists, whom Yu (2011) referred to as j-bloggers, remained highly objective in their blogs and linked their work to their media organizations. Yu’s study which looked at j-blogging in China found that Chinese journalists attempted to go beyond the gate keeping of their highly restrictive media houses by engaging in blogging (Yu, 2011).

The studies by Knight, Lowery, Singer, and Yu are relevant to this study as the research sought to find out how normative media models influenced Kenyan news bloggers who were not mainstream journalists and what ethical values guided their practice. In investigating these issues, the study sought to investigate how news bloggers in Kenya produce their stories.

Friend and Singer (2007, p. 115) illustrated the power of blogs in scrutinizing the work of mainstream media:

Bloggers have taken a self-appointed role as “watchdogs of the watchdogs” carefully and continuously monitoring what journalists report and how they report it and calling attention to perceived problems such as hypocrisy, bias, inaccuracy, and inattention to potentially big stories. (Friend & Singer, 2007, p. 115)

Other scholars have gone further to call bloggers, the fifth estate (Cooper, 2006; Jericho, 2012). Cooper (2006) like Friend and Singer (2007) called blogs “a watcher of the watchdog” (Cooper, 2006, p. 14). Cooper (2006) explained that in the same way that mainstream media are considered the fourth estate whose duty is to check on the excesses of government, blogs monitor the news dissemination activities of the mainstream media. Cooper added that while a report by mainstream media about government misdeeds will make government lose credibility among citizens when blogs highlight poor performance of the mainstream media, the public reduce consumption of media content. He elaborated the fifth estate role of bloggers:
While the editorial staff of mainstream media outlets have the power to spike stories (i.e., cancel their publication) or to generate headline coverage, bloggers do not. But bloggers do have the power to identify factual inaccuracies in mainstream reporting, second-guess the news judgment of mainstream editors, argue for different interpretations of facts than those offered in mainstream stories, to draw attention to stories, they feel have been insufficiently covered. (Cooper, 2006, p. 14)

Cooper (2006) argued that blogs criticism of mainstream media concerns “accuracy, framing, agenda-setting/gatekeeping, and journalistic practices” (Cooper, 2016, p. 18). Cooper explained how the blogs criticism of media works: to check accuracy, the blogs countercheck the facts; in framing, the blogs may disagreed with media frame and give new frames; in agenda setting, they relook at the news judgment or even set an alternative agenda; and in journalistic practices, they scrutinise the working styles of journalists and their media houses.

This contention that bloggers watch the mainstream media was important to this research. Did news bloggers in Kenya also consider themselves as watchdogs of traditional media? Did they take it upon themselves to critique media reports? Did they scrutinise the inaccuracies of mainstream media? Did they reframe media reports? Did they set alternative agendas to those set by mainstream media and do they question the journalistic practices of both media houses and journalists? These questions are tackled in chapters four and five.

Leach (2013) explored the journey of how blogs have finally found acceptance in mainstream media. The scholar noted that in the earlier years of blogging, blog posts were mostly considered by journalists as private posts and were hardly quoted from. Leach also pointed out that there was the issue of authenticating the author of the blog. The issue of verifying the author of a blog is still a matter of concern today, with some bloggers using pseudonyms to hide their identity. In Kenya, a former Cabinet Secretary, Anne Waiguru, sued Google Inc. and Google Kenya Limited in a bid to expose the owner of the blog, Kenyan-post (Waiguru vs. Google Inc. & 2 others, 2014). Google Kenya sought to be struck out of the suit, arguing that it was a separate legal entity from Google Inc. and that it did not “own or operate the offending website” (Waiguru
Google Kenya pointed out, that the platform that hosted the blog that Waiguru was complaining about was owned by Google Inc. However, the court declined to strike out Google Kenya from the case, ruling instead, that the organisation continue participating in the case, which the judge described, as a “novel one in Kenya” because it sought to determine who takes “responsibility of a publication made on the Google website” (Waiguru vs. Google Inc. & 2 others, 2014).

Krapf (2009) concurred with Leach (2013) that there has been a continual professionalisation of the blogosphere through interaction of bloggers and mainstream media. He posited that this interaction has had a profound effect on blogs. Krapf argued that blogs should therefore not be dismissed as non-serious forums that propagate falsehoods. He added that there has been a beneficial interaction between blogging and journalism. The scholar outlined three of the ways in which the professionalisation of blogs has taken place. According to him, professionalisation of blogs has been achieved through, having successful bloggers writing their posts on mainstream media, mainstream media ensuring that blogs are part of their online platforms, and the use of blogging as a tool by new online media (Krapf, 2009, p. 370). Krapf’s sentiments were echoed by Singer (2006) who stated that bloggers and journalists both play crucial roles of news dissemination.

...news bloggers and journalists fill sometimes-overlapping but essentially different niches in the information environment. Their relationship is both symbiotic and complementary: bloggers and journalists irk one another, but ultimately offer mutual benefits, and a 21st century public is better served by both together than either alone. (Singer, 2006, p. 23).

Singer’s observations were important in this study, as one of the research objectives was to find out what motivates the news bloggers to post their stories. Could the motivation be to disseminate information in the same way that journalists do? Singer argued that while a lot of bloggers blog for fun, there are those who go further and post on matters of “politics, government, war, the media, social issues” among others (Singer, 2006, p. 23). These bloggers make posts in
much the same as journalists write reports on mainstream media. While answering the question on motivations for blogging, the study sought to investigate whether news bloggers perceive the posts they put up on their blogs as a form of journalism.

However, despite the influence that blogs seem to now have as a crucial part of citizen journalism, debate on ethics remains critical to the blogging practice. The global discourse on professionalisation of the blogosphere indicates that the lack of widely-accepted standards makes it difficult to enforce ethical principles in the blogging practice. Therefore, this study was a part of the continuation of the debate on ethical issues that arise in the blogging practice. Perlmutter and Schoen (2007, p. 39) pointed out several issues that they say have propelled the discussion on ethical conduct of blogs. These include: plagiarism/fabrication of material; bloggers who misrepresent their identities or affiliations; editing history on blogs; and bloggers acting as though they are independent while failing to disclose conflict of interest arising from funding.

As part of answering the research question concerning the ethical values that guide Kenyan news bloggers in their practice, the respondents were probed to examine whether the concerns raised by Perlmutter and Schoen confront them in their practice. However, the study also looked at other ethical concerns which were not mentioned by Perlmutter and Schoen.

In order to understand the blogging phenomenon, it is important to describe the different types of blogs that exist. This is important in further understanding the blogging practice and also in identifying the type of blog(s) that will be examined in the proposed study. The discussion on the types of blogs begins with a look at a typology developed by Krapf (2009). Krapf described four types of blogs: the classical blogs, community blogs, institutional blogs and bridge blogs.

The classical blogs are run by individuals or a small group that focuses on “daily personal musings and experiences” (Krapf, 2009, p. 372). These blogs act as forums where individuals can share personal information, thoughts and opinions at almost zero cost. The community blogs create “communities of interest meant to facilitate discussion and promote collaboration or
collective action” (Krapf, 2009, p. 372). These are blogs set up by like-minded individuals and groups to propagate ideas and as an advocacy platform for certain issues. Groups can start community blogs to fight for issues such as animal rights, women’s issues, health, and the like.

The institutional blogs, the third of Krapf’s typology – are those that are set up by institutions to complement their offline outfits. These corporate blogs serve as an index of the institutions, used for reference purposes, additional information, and to share information with stakeholders. Bridge blogs, the fourth type of blog described by Kraft, are a combination of the institutional and community type blogs. They are run by institutions, but at the same time encourage feedback and participation of online communities. The study focused mainly on classical blogs run by individual bloggers as a means of transmitting news.

Debatin (2011, pp. 828-829) came up with different typologies of blogs based on popularity of the blogs, the scope of topics, the type of author, and the type of information, among other considerations. Debatin posited that one of the key reasons for ethical challenges in blogging is that blogs operate in a grey zone which he described as a place “between informal personal observations, transmission of gossip, critical opinion writing and actual reporting” (Debatin, 2011, p.824). Other ethical issues that arise from blogging that Debatin identified are conflict of interest, accountability, and objectivity.

Debatin proposed a new normative framework which should be adopted by bloggers. The framework according to Debatin should adopt the three ethical principles of transparency, accuracy and advocacy. Debatin’s argument was that this would ensure that a blog upholds journalism tenets such as accuracy and at the same time remains true to the inclination of citizen media toward advocacy. Debatin (2011, p. 840) further postulated that the three principles are founded in the “three validity claims of truth, rightness and truthfulness found in the universal ethics of communicative action”.

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In line with Debatin’s proposal for a normative framework for bloggers, this research examined the possibility of standardising blogging practice. The research also examined whether Kenyan news bloggers could integrate some universal principles of journalism such as accuracy and objectivity while at the same time maintaining the freedom that allows them to speak with more boldness than the mainstream media.

So, what kind of ethics should guide citizen journalism and blogging in particular? Ward (2011, p. 208) called for a new kind of ethics that is a “hybrid of professional and amateur.” The scholar set out characteristics that should be part of this ethics. The ethics ought to embrace citizen and professional media, a factor that Ward referred to as ecumenical ethics; it should be open and people-based; and should be universal in nature (Ward, 2011, p. 208). How true is Ward’s advice in relation to news bloggers in Kenya? Is it acceptable to news bloggers to pick some of the principles in the code of ethics for Kenyan journalists and add other principles that embrace citizen journalism so as come up with standards for blogging?

Kenyan Laws that have been used to Regulate Bloggers

The law and ethics work together. Singer (2015) explained this connection between the law and ethics elaborating that some ethical issues that face media practitioners also have “legal implications” (Singer, 2015, p. 80). She described the ethical issue of privacy as one that is also tackled under law. In the Kenyan situation, the ethical principles guiding journalists are contained in the Media Council Act of 2013, thereby making them legally enforceable. As this debate is on a possible normative framework for the Kenyan blogosphere, it is prudent to discuss Kenyan laws that could relate to blogging.

In the Kenyan jurisdiction, there is no specific law that touches on bloggers and their work. However there are several laws that may be used, and some that have been used to penalize bloggers who breach the law. These laws include sections of the Penal Code, the Media Council Act of 2013, the law of defamation and the National Cohesion and Integration Act.
Vnzomo, who writes on regulation of social media, says there is need for clarity on how matters of blogging and new media are handled. Vnzomo argued that there is need for “judicial, legislative and policy interventions to protect both private and public interests” (Vnzomo, 2014).

The following section examines statutes that may be used to regulate Kenyan bloggers. As is indicated in the discussion, some of the laws have since been nullified after bloggers and other social media users moved to court and challenged their constitutionality.

The National Cohesion and Integration Act (2008)

This Act was enacted in response to the 2007 post-election violence. It created the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), giving it a mandate to eliminate “all forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or race”, and promote cohesion among the diverse groups of people in Kenya. The section that is relevant to this research is that which deals with hate speech. Section 13 of the Act has defined hate speech as actions done by a person who: uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or displays any written material; publishes or distributes written material; presents or directs public performance of a play; distributes, shows or plays, a recording of visual images or; provides, produces or directs a programme which is threatening or abusive and intended to promote ethnic hatred.

The NCIC Act has stated that a person found guilty of contravening its provisions is liable to pay a fine of one million shillings or a face a jail term of three years or both. One Member of Parliament, Moses Kuria of Gatundu South, was in June 2014 charged with hate speech for posts that he made on his Facebook account. The Member of Parliament was charged with “incitement, hate speech, and causing ethnic contempt in Facebook messages” that he was said to have published on May 16, 2014 (Agoya, 2014). In October 2015, political activist, Mutahi Ngunyi was also charged under the NCIC Act. Ngunyi was taken to court over posts he made on his Twitter account. He was charged with “four counts of ethnic contempt and hate speech” (Makana, 2015).
The Media Council Act 2013

The Media Council Act 2013, while not specifically talking about bloggers, has defined journalism as “means of collecting, editing, and presenting of news and news articles in newspapers and magazines, radio and television broadcasts, in the internet or any other manner as prescribed…” (Media Council Act, 2013). By mentioning the word internet, this means that the Act may actually be used to cover bloggers whose work can be defined as news dissemination. The Media Council Act also currently remains the only substantive law which deals purely with media regulation in Kenya. Vnzomo (2014) argued on his blog that “….the Act is significant as it blurs any distinction between journalists and bloggers, with the latter group being subsumed in the definition of the former group”.

As will be demonstrated in a later section of the literature review, codes of ethics for bloggers in other parts of the world have borrowed heavily from journalistic codes. It is with this reasoning that the code of ethics for Kenyan journalists was used as a starting point for interrogating what standards Kenyan news bloggers use. During the data collection point, the views of the sampled bloggers on whether the highlighted ethical principles should be included in a proposed code of ethics for bloggers were examined. Of particular importance in this research was the Code of Ethics for the Practice of Journalism which appears in the second schedule of the Media Council Act of 2013. This is in relation to the research objective seeking to establish ethical values that guide news bloggers in their work.

The principles in the code of ethics for journalists in Kenya that are key in this research include: accuracy and fairness; independence; integrity; accountability; opportunity to reply; obscenity, taste and tone in reporting; confidentiality; privacy; gender non-discrimination and minimising harm (a principle implied but not expressly stated in the Act). The selected news bloggers were probed on whether these are some of the values that guide them in their work and whether they would like them included in a code of ethics for bloggers.
Section 132 of the Penal Code: Undermining a public officer – Nullified by the High Court

This law that was found in the Laws of Kenya, Chapter 63 had been used to prosecute bloggers who questioned some actions of officers in the national government and those in the counties. The section targeted anyone who “...uttered, published any words, or did any act or thing, calculated to bring into contempt or to excite defiance of or disobedience to, the lawful authority of a public officer or any class of public officers...” (Laws of Kenya, The Penal Code, Section 132). One who was convicted under this law faced a jail term of up to three years.

Some of the bloggers who had been prosecuted using this law include, Robert Alai and Alan Wadi Okengo. Alai was facing a charge of undermining the presidency through a post he made on his twitter account while Wadi had been jailed for two years for posting hate speech on his Facebook account (Vnzomo, 2014). Wadi who had been convicted for writing a Facebook post insulting the president was later freed by the Court of Appeal.

The law was declared unconstitutional following a petition by Robert Alai in 2016 (Alai vs. AG & Another, 2017). In his petition to the High Court, Alai argued that the law shielded “government officials from public scrutiny” and violated “the right to utter, print or publish certain words” that are not included in the constitutional limitations on freedom of expression. In its finding, the court argued that the words of the law were “too general, vague and wide to the extent that it is not clear when a person is said to have undermined a public officer’s authority” and that “criminalising criticism is a curtailment of the right to speak about public officers and it derogates one’s right to hold opinion” (Alai vs. AG & Another, 2017).

Section 194 of the Penal Code: Criminal Libel – Nullified by the High Court

Section 194 of the Penal Code stated: “Any person who, by print, writing painting or effigy, or by any means otherwise than solely by gestures, spoken words or other sounds, unlawfully publishes any defamatory matter concerning another person, with intent to defame that other person, is guilty of the misdemeanour termed libel”. According to the Penal Code the
general punishment for misdemeanour is a sentence of two years, a fine or both (Laws of Kenya, Penal Code, Section 36).

The section was nullified by the High Court following a petition by two Kenyans (Okuta & Another vs. AG & 2 others, 2017) who sought the court’s interpretation of criminal libel following their prosecution over posts they made on a Facebook account, Buyer-Beware Kenya. The two argued that the criminal libel law violated their right to freedom of expression guaranteed under Article 33 of the Kenyan Constitution. Nullifying the law, the court argued that the law was not proper in a democratic society like Kenya and added that there was an “appropriate and satisfactory civil remedy [Defamation Act] that is available to combat the mischief of defamation” (Okuta & Another vs. AG & 2 others, 2017).

Section 29, Kenya Information and Communications Act of 2013 – Declared unconstitutional by the high court

This law that had been used to prosecute bloggers and journalists who criticised the government was declared unconstitutional by the high court in April, 2016 (Andare vs. AG & 2 others, 2016). While nullifying the section, the court said it was broad and vague and violated Article 33 of the Constitution (Andare vs. AG & 2 others, 2016). The nullified section speaks about improper use of telecommunication systems. Improper use entailed: sending a message that is false so as to cause “annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another person”; or sending a message that “is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.” Before the law was nullified, the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) had argued that it criminalised “legitimate freedom of expression by criminalising the use of tools such as smartphones, the internet, laptops for self-expression on social media platforms” (BAKE, 2015, p. 7).

Yassin Juma, a journalist who is also a blogger is one of the individuals who had been arrested using the telecommunication law. In January 2016, police arrested Juma over social
media post about the Alshabab attack on El Adde Camp in Somalia that left an unknown number of Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) soldiers dead (Momanyi, 2016).

Another law that might be used to regulate the blogosphere is the yet to be enacted Cyber Security and Protection Bill, 2016. The sections of the law that are relevant to the blogosphere are: 25 (electronic distribution of pornography); 27 (cyber-bullying), 28 (wrongful distribution of intimate images) and 29 (cyber-squatting – the bill describes this as intentionally taking or making use of a name, business name, trademark or domain name that is owned or registered by someone else). The Bloggers Association of Kenya-BAKE sent its views on the bill to the Senate (BAKE, 2016).

BBloggers’ Codes of Ethics Developed in other Parts of the World

Rebecca Blood’s Code of Ethics for Bloggers

One of the earliest proposed codes of ethics for bloggers was formulated by Rebecca Blood in 2002. Blood came up with six ethical principles which she laid down as guidelines for bloggers. The six include: be factual (avoid speculation); give links to articles on posts; publicly correct misinformation; avoid rewriting or deleting entries; disclose conflict of interest and avoid quoting questionable and biased sources (Blood, 2002, pp. 114-121). Blood’s code contains some principles that are also in the Media Council Act of 2013 such as being factual and conflict of interest (referred to as integrity in the Kenyan code for journalists). However, it omits a principle such as minimising harm, an ethical value that is critical to those who publish online, where unfettered freedom means one can post anything regardless of whom it will affect. It also omits the principle of accountability, an important concept that reminds communicators of those they owe responsibility.

Jonathan Dube’s Code of Ethics for Bloggers

Another code that is relevant to this study is one developed by Jonathan Dube (cited in Baran & Davis, 2009), a former president of the Online News Association and founder of
cyberjournalist.net website. The code which was developed in 2003 was adapted from the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. Dube’s code of ethics for bloggers condenses ethical guidelines into three major items: honesty and fairness, minimization of harm and accountability (Baran & Davis, 2009). Under honesty and fairness, bloggers are asked never to plagiarise, never to publish inaccurate information and never to represent commentary as factual information. Under the principle of minimizing harm, bloggers are advised to show compassion and sensitivity to children and other inexperienced sources and to be considerate to those facing grief and to respect privacy. The accountability segment is concerned with the bloggers admitting mistakes and correcting them, encouraging dialogue with the public on their blogs and disclosing conflicts of interest.

The important factor to note here is that Dube, the author of the cyberjournalist.net bloggers code of ethics, is a journalist. This may explain his adaptation of rules for bloggers from a journalists’ code of ethics. How did this inform this study? The study picked some of the ethical principles outlined in the Media Council of Kenya, Act of 2013 and examined whether Kenyan news bloggers were willing to have some of the values therein guide their work. The research assessed whether Kenyan news bloggers are willing to embrace the journalistic principles as guidelines for their work.

Martin Kuhn’s Bloggers’ Code of Ethics

Kuhn (2007, pp. 33-34), proposed a code of ethics for blogging after he conducted a survey online to find out what ethical issues bloggers found challenging. Kuhn critiqued Blood’s and Dube’s proposed codes of ethics as guidelines that narrowly suit only those bloggers who see their work as journalism. Kuhn described the two codes as narrow, as they view credibility of blogs from a journalistic point of view. Kuhn’s argument is important in this research, which sought to find out from Kenyan news bloggers, the type of ethical guidelines they would prefer,
the values that guide their work and more so whether public interest is a consideration as they
make their posts. Kuhn argued for a broader method of coming up with a code:

The challenge instead is to identify through a dialogic process those values held most
deeply by those who choose to blog regardless of the specific functions they perform as
bloggers, and build a normative code accordingly. A code of blogging ethics should be
normatively based, drawing upon the interactive nature of blogs, and dialogically derived.
(Kuhn, 2007, p. 21)

Kuhn’s study, which involved 32 bloggers, was conducted between December 8, 2004 and
January 14, 2005. Twenty-eight bloggers posted comments on a survey blog developed by Kuhn
while four of the bloggers emailed comments. Kuhn posted five questions on the survey blog. He
used the philosophical perspectives of Rawls, Ross, and Kant to come up with three of the survey
questions. For the first question, Kuhn used Rawls’s argument that one should be concerned with
who will be affected by one’s ethical decision. The second question in the survey was based on
Rawls’s reasoning that ethical decisions should be based on the situation at hand, while the third
question focused on Kant’s categorical imperative that rules should be applied “all the time”
(Kuhn, 2007, p. 27).

Kuhn (2007, p. 27) had five survey questions for the bloggers. Who were the stakeholders
of their blogs? What ethical values they used when deciding what to post? Were there ethical
duties that they felt they must always fulfil and were there some things they should never do?
What roles did their blogs play in society? Why did they start blogging? On the question of ethical
values, Kuhn listed six values – transparency, accountability, minimizing harm to others, free
expression, factual truth, and etiquette. He asked the bloggers to rank the values. In the same
question, he asked the bloggers to name any other values which should be considered in a
discourse on bloggers’ ethics.

On the stakeholders’ question, Kuhn found that there was an equal number, 14, for those
who thought bloggers were the stakeholders of the blog, and those who viewed their readers as the
stakeholders of the blog. Kuhn viewed stakeholders as those who would be affected most by what
the blogger posted. Only one blogger considered the society at large to be the stakeholder of blogs. Kuhn’s second question was on which of the listed ethical values were considered by the bloggers’ when they made ethical decisions on their blogs. On which values came to mind as they made ethical decisions, factual truth was the most mentioned ethical value among the bloggers, with 17 of them talking about it. Transparency, minimizing harm, free expression, and etiquette were mentioned by 13 bloggers. Accountability was mentioned by nine bloggers.

The second part on the question on ethical values had asked the bloggers to rank the six values in order of their importance. Kuhn however, noted that not all bloggers ranked the values. On the ranking, he found that the bloggers highly valued free expression, with nine bloggers out of 13 ranking it highest. Factual truth was considered the second most important value, “followed by transparency, accountability and minimizing harm to others” (Kuhn, 2007, p. 31). Kuhn did not however, say how many bloggers ranked factual truth and the other values.

Kuhn (2007, p. 31) also pointed out that the bloggers who participated in the research highlighted three other ethical values they considered important, namely, “post on a regular basis, promote interactivity, and serve the greater good”. He argued that the value of interactivity, which he says “humanizes” blogs by making the online journals similar to “one-on-one communication”, was not included in the earlier codes proposed by Blood and others (Kuhn, 2007, p. 31). At the end of the study, Kuhn described various values that he felt should be included in a code of ethics for bloggers. Kuhn argued that the code should be developed through debate among the bloggers and professional communicators. He emphasized the importance of this dialogue by noting that “bloggers seem to be generally resistant to rules and codes established by others” (Kuhn, 2007, p. 34).

Kuhn’s (2007, pp. 33-34) proposed code of ethics for bloggers underscored the need to: promote interactivity – this means that a blogger should post on their blog daily and visit and post on other blogs; promote free expression – this includes allow access to one’s blog, allow and
encourage comments, and maintain published posts without unnecessarily removing them; strive for factual truth – do not intentionally deceive; embrace transparency – this includes disclosing conflict of interest, citing and linking to all sources referenced on post; and promote the human element of blogging by minimizing harm, providing links and responding to emails and comments.

The three codes of ethics discussed above were useful in helping to examine the ethical frameworks that guide Kenyan news bloggers’ in their practice. They were also a good reference point for analysing the kind of ethical principles that may be proposed for the Kenyan blogging community.

Article 19: The Right to Blog

Article 19 is a human rights body based in London. It was established in 1986 to “defend and promote freedom of expression and freedom of information worldwide” (Article 19, 2013, p. 3). It derives its name from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “which guarantees the right to freedom of expression and information” (Article 19, 2013, p. 3). The organisation has offices in various countries around the world, including Kenya. In 2013, the organisation developed a policy brief on blogging, titled: The Right to Blog. The policy brief is relevant to this segment on codes of ethics for bloggers because it gives both ethical and legal guidelines for the blogging practice which Article 19 would like to see adopted by countries. Article 19, Kenya office was enjoined as an interested party in the constitutional cases that nullified the three laws discussed in the section on Kenyan laws have been used to prosecute bloggers (Alai vs. AG & Another, 2017; Andare vs. AG & 2 others, 2016; Okuta & Another vs. AG & 2 others, 2017).

The policy brief talks about the legal and ethical implications of blogging and the rights that bloggers enjoy as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 says the document is a discussion on how state agents and other policy makers can promote and protect bloggers’ rights. The document is also aimed at advising “bloggers about their rights” and
explaining to them how “they can invoke some of the privileges and defences that traditional journalists have found vital to the integrity of their work” (Article 19, 2013, p. 1).

Interestingly, while Article 19 lobbies to have bloggers enjoy the same rights and protection as those of journalists, the organisation speaks strongly against trying to compel those who blog to abide by journalistic ethical codes, or even giving them ‘an incentive to join self-regulatory bodies for traditional media” (Article 19, p. 42). Article 19 adds that bloggers can on their own volition, embrace the standards of traditional media or formulate a code of ethics for their individual blogs or through bloggers’ associations they “voluntarily join” (Article 19, p. 42). To further explain why bloggers do not necessarily need to have standardised guidelines, the organisation argues that bloggers “tend to abide by some form of online ‘etiquette’ and that “as competitors in the online marketplace of ideas, bloggers are arguably contributing to the raising of standards” (Article 19, p. 42). However, given the many ethical concerns about the blogging practice that have been highlighted from literature examined in this study, it would have been prudent for Article 19 to provide empirical data to support the claims that bloggers willingly embrace ethics.

Codes of Ethics for Bloggers in Kenya

Attempts have been made by a section of Kenyan bloggers to develop ethical guidelines, and promote standards through shared training and representation. An association that has tried to come up with some guidelines is the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE). However, BAKE was hesitant to call the guidelines, a code of ethics (Wamathai, 2016). BAKE members described themselves as:

a body that promotes content creation on the web in Kenya and represents a group of content creators who are of Kenyan origin, descent or are based in Kenya and want to syndicate their content, network among other fellow content creators, get legal and communal representation from Bloggers Association of Kenya (bake.co.ke)

This section of the literature review summaries the various guidelines contained in a document titled: Bloggers Association of Kenya Social media ethics and guidelines.
BAKE, an organisation registered in 2011 indicated on its website that it has over 500 blogs registered and over 7000 articles listed. The category of news, which is the main focus of this research, was not listed as a major blog category under which BAKE registers its members. News was listed as a sub-category under other categories. However, there was a category titled culture and politics, with one sub-category listed as political news and discussion.

BAKE had a set of 11 guidelines, according to the chairman of BAKE, Kennedy Kachwanya. Most of the principles were written as simple rules, as either don’ts or dos. The first guideline asked bloggers to be open about when it is their opinion as opposed to that of the organisation. The second guideline was on hate speech – it simply restated subsection two of Article 33 of the constitution’s Bill of Rights which sets out the limits to freedom of expression. The third guideline was “don’t tell secrets”. This guideline cautioned bloggers against infringing on copyright and disclosing clients’ secrets. The fourth rule titled “don’t spam ever”, asked bloggers to be careful when linking to other posts, saying they should do so subtly.

The fifth guideline (Give credit where credit is due) urged bloggers to avoid plagiarism by citing and attributing sources. The sixth rule (mistakes happen) asked bloggers to admit mistakes that they make and move on, but advised them to seek the association’s help if the situation called for the same. The seventh guideline was “share the love”, and called on bloggers to feel free to link to interesting information from other sources and even that of their competitor-bloggers. Rule eight (be a good conversationalist) called on bloggers to maintain the conversation by monitoring comments on their blogs and responding to them.

Rule nine (be clear, but not defensive) spoke on the need to be polite and professional when responding to issues raised by readers. Rule 10 (remember everything online is discoverable) called on the need to ensure that there is decency and legality in what is posted, while guideline 11 (always be learning), asked bloggers to read more than they post because the blogosphere is always growing.
Critique of the BAKE Ethical Guideline

When compared with the other bloggers’ codes of ethics discussed earlier, there were a number of ethical values that appeared to be missing from BAKE’s guide. Key among these values is truth. Blood, Kuhn, and Dube all mentioned truth in their codes. The code of ethics for the practice of journalists in Kenya also challenges journalists to uphold accuracy. The question here was whether Kenyan news bloggers and BAKE believe that truth is important. This study probed the respondents on the principle of truth and expounded on the findings in chapter four.

The other key value that is found in the other codes and is missing in the BAKE guide is how to handle conflict of interest. Blood urges bloggers to disclose conflict of interest by giving the reasons for blogging while Kuhn asked bloggers to link to sources used in posts (Blood, 2002; Kuhn, 2007). The code of ethics for journalists in Kenya discusses conflict of interest under the value of independence (Media Council of Kenya Act, 2013). The study examined whether conflict of interest is a valued ethical principle among bloggers so as to find out what vested interests, monetary or otherwise influence Kenyan news bloggers to make posts.

Another important ethical principle missing in the BAKE guide and present in three of the codes of ethics discussed earlier is that of minimising harm. The Kuhn code asks bloggers to promote humanness by minimising harm (Kuhn, 2007). The Dube code says bloggers should minimise harm by showing sensitivity when writing about children, when reporting about sources not used to media coverage and when dealing with people faced with “tragedy or grief” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 121). The Kenyan code of ethics for journalists while not expressly talking about minimising harm has sections titled intrusion into grief and shock and protection of children (Media Council Act, 2013). The two sections ask journalists to show sensitivity when dealing with sources facing grief and not to identify children when reporting on matters of sexual crimes.

However like the Blood and Kuhn codes, the BAKE code encourages interactivity between bloggers by asking them to link to other blogs, and with their audiences by encouraging
responses to readers’ comments. This need for interaction is evident through the advice: “link to others and always build relationships. That’s what our work is all about.” In addition, the value of transparency which has been hailed as key by Debatin (2011) is demonstrated through the first principle urging bloggers to always disclose when something they write is an opinion.

Empirical Literature Review

Studies on Media Regulation in Kenya

This section on empirical literature review begins with discussion on various studies that have traced the development of media professionalism in Kenya. One such study was Njuguna’s (1998) master’s thesis titled: *Towards a Code of Ethics for Members of Kenya Union of Journalists*. Although, done in the 1990s, Njuguna’s research was instrumental to the current study because it was also done in Daystar University and it was carried out when the media fraternity was grappling with the idea of creating standards for the industry. The circumstances that faced the media in Kenya at the time mirror those that face blogging where debate on whether to regulate blogging has intensified in the recent past especially after the arrest and harassment of bloggers by government agencies.

At the time that Njuguna wrote her thesis, there was no code of ethics for the media fraternity in Kenya. Journalists relied on codes of ethics from their different media organisations. Njuguna argues that the development of the code was “an attempt of professionalising journalism in Kenya” (Njuguna, 1998, p. iv). Njuguna liaised with the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ) and held a discussion with journalists to come up with a code of ethics for the practice of journalism in Kenya. She stated that the code of ethics was aimed at journalists who were members of the KUJ.

Njuguna used a group discussion involving 32 respondents, 25 of them journalists to formulate a code of ethics for journalists. The respondents also included journalism scholars and lawyers. Njuguna used other codes of ethics from other countries to come up with ethical values for discussion by respondents. The first discussion in the data collection stage of the research was
a brainstorming meeting with respondents where values to be included in the code of ethics were identified. This was followed by meetings of three small groups comprising four people each which scrutinised the findings of the brainstorming discussion and came up with a draft of the proposed code of ethics for journalists.

After the small groups submitted their final draft, Njuguna met with the KUJ committee she was working with to discuss the final draft of the proposed code of ethics. The final draft which formed part of her thesis was also sent to the KUJ. She called the code which had 23 articles, Articles of Ethics. Although, it is not clear whether Njuguna’s code of ethics was later used to deliberate the code of ethics that is part of the Media Council Act of 2013, her research was important in the debate on professionalisation of the media. The research also played an important part in the documentation of the history of the process of professionalising journalism in Kenya.

The current study on the standardisation of the blogosphere is an extension of the continued debate in media professionalism. Similar to the way Njuguna’s study asked journalists to propose a code of ethics for their profession, this research strove to find out from key stakeholders in the blogging arena, what kind of standards bloggers would prefer to guide their practice.

A number of other studies examining the ethical practices of journalists in Kenyan mainstream media houses have been done in the past. Previous research has investigated the issue of ethics in the newsroom and concerns about the brown envelope syndrome. This is an unethical practice where journalists receive money from sources so as to report a story in a certain way or so as not to report the story at all. One such study conducted by Helander (2010) did a critical analysis of the Kenyan media through the eyes of several journalists. After doing thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 15 Nairobi-based journalists, Helander’s findings were that although Kenyan media are regarded as some of the most progressive in Africa, public
interest has been compromised by several factors, among them commercial interests, political interests and corruption. Helander further observed that while a number of journalists in Kenya would like to serve the public interest, they felt constrained by non-professional interests both within and outside the media. The journalists ended up abandoning their ideals so as to keep their jobs.

Like the Helander study, this study although focused on blogging sought to find out from news bloggers whether public interest is a key consideration as they blog. The study also investigated whether factors such as monetary considerations comprise the news bloggers intention to serve public interest. In Helander’s findings, journalists’ willingness to serve public interest was compromised by interests both within and outside the media. How does this apply to news blogging? Is their decision to serve public interest influenced by their peers or is it a decision they make on their own?

Mutere (2010) analysed the development of media policy in Kenya, examining the role that government has played and the input of media practitioners. His conclusion was that government always had an upper hand in enactment of media policy while the media were given a raw deal. Mutere’s paper, which was written before the enactment of the current constitution in 2010, does not seem to see any positive outcomes in media regulation in the country. It is in contrast with the observations of Obonyo and Peel (2012, p. 151), who, in making comparisons with regulatory regimes in Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, consider Kenya’s hybrid model where the Media Council is “both statutory and non-statutory” (independent but funded by state) as one the of success stories for media self-regulation in Africa. Obonyo and Peel observed that stringent government control and over-reach in the existing Kenyan model is hindered by the fact that the Media Council of Kenya is accountable to parliament, and not to the executive arm of government.
This study investigated whether Kenyan bloggers will in the same way journalists did, accept to pursue self-regulation so as to avoid government intervention. The discussion also demonstrates the long and tedious process that gave birth to the Media Council of Kenya. While the council has been recognized as key in the regulation of trained journalists, it is yet to establish a framework to monitor those who practice journalism outside mainstream media, particularly those that are the interest of this study - the news bloggers. The professionalisation process of the Kenyan media, the lessons learnt and the continuous debate were instrumental in guiding this study. Obonyo and Peel’s findings, for example, are notable in that they advocated the notion that regulation that is advanced by industry players is more acceptable than that championed by the state (Obonyo & Peel, 2012).

Other Relevant Studies in the Kenyan Context

While a number of studies to understand the citizen journalism phenomenon in Kenya have been carried out, few have focused on news bloggers and how they tackle ethical issues that arise in their work. Some of the previous studies have looked at citizen journalism from the point of view of those who send short text messages as feedback to media programmes, and those who tweet and post Facebook posts to discuss media content (Onyango, 2011).

Another study examined “the extent to which journalists reflect on the code of conduct to make decisions on how to gather information, package information, publish and distribute stories in media” (Ochieng, Gachoka, & Mureithi, 2014, p. 1). In their study, the researchers surveyed 15 respondents, including reporters, editors and sub-editors of the Nation Media Group, Standard Media Group, Media Max, Royal Media and Radio Africa Group. The findings of the study indicated that editors felt that they as administrators were not the main targets of the code of conduct while reporters felt they should be given more editorial say over content. According to the findings of the research, sub-editors played an enforcing role since they edit copy to ensure that it
follows not just the code of conduct, but also the editorial policy of the specific media house. The research recommended a study on online regulation in Kenya.

Ochieng et al. demonstrated that there is need for further research on online media regulation in Kenya. The study also recommended a review of the Media Council Act, 2013 so as to clearly define the term public interest. The term public interest is important in this study because the research will be examining how social responsibility comes in when news bloggers are making decisions on what stories to post.

Other studies, such as the one by Ongong’a and White (2008), pointed out that journalists do aspire to embrace ethical behaviour. The study examined the news values of 20 young journalists in Kenya. The journalists were working at the Nation and the Standard media houses. Ongong’a and White found that the popular rhetoric dismissing most journalists in Kenya as unethical and incompetent did not fit the 20 journalists sampled. Instead, the research showed that most of the young journalists held high ideals about the journalism profession, which they had acquired as they grew up and in their schools as early consumers of media. The research, however, did not give the actual number of those with high idealism and those who do not have it. The study was done at the onset of the journalists’ careers, and the researchers noted that it would be interesting to follow up the group 10 years on to see whether they still held the same high ideals. The Ongong’a and White study is included in this section of empirical literature review to show the kind of research that has examined mainstream media journalists and their ethical practices. It is a further demonstration of the gap in online media research, and particularly on news bloggers, who are not necessarily trained journalists.

There has also been research on how citizen journalism impacts processes in the newsroom. A study by Onyango (2011) focused on how certain programmes screened by the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) were influenced by content coming from citizen journalists. There were 40 respondents who included reporters, camerapersons, video editors,
programmers and producers. Most of the respondents (71%) said that the content from citizen journalists could not be verified and lacked objectivity. Poor quality of content from citizen journalists was ranked second with 61 per cent of the respondents giving that as a major challenge of citizen journalism. There was also concern about objectivity, with 31 per cent of those surveyed feeling that the citizens’ reports were not objective. According to Onyango, most of the respondents (83.3%) agreed that citizen journalism is a crucial part of news and other current affairs programmes, but added that effort should be made to verify those reports before they are disseminated. A huge segment of the respondents (84%), felt that citizen journalism is a crucial aspect that should be taught in media schools, while 16 per cent of the respondents felt this would not be necessary.

Onyango’s study indicated that trained journalists and newsrooms are acknowledging that citizen journalism is indeed a crucial part of mainstream journalism. The main worry however, as indicated in the statistics, is the accuracy of the reports from citizen journalists. The issue of objectivity of the reports was also raised. And there was also the feeling that citizen journalism should be made a subject in media training institutions. The matters raised by Onyango’s thesis make the current study crucial as it mounts a further investigation into citizen journalism, but now with an outward look, not in the newsroom but among the citizen journalists themselves.

Studies have also been carried out to investigate how social media was used as an alternative voice during the 2007 and 2013 general elections (Odinga, 2013). Odinga’s study found out that social media was used as a tool for online audiences to pool together during the elections. However Odinga, who was conducting research for her master’s thesis, observed that social media cannot be entirely considered as a tool that enhances political democratization because it is media mainly used by those in urban areas.

Other studies have examined the power of social media to unify and incite citizens (Lando & Mwangi, 2014). In a study examining how social media and cell phones were used among the
public in Kenya in the 2013 general election, Lando and Mwangi found that social media was both a bonding and vilification tool. The scholars surveyed 106 Nairobi residents and conducted 25 in-depth interviews between March 2013 and July 2013. They also conducted content analysis of some of the social posts. Their findings were that although there was no postelection violence in Kenyan streets during and after the 2013 election, the battles were fought on social media where individuals from different ethnic groups vilified and insulted each other. This study exemplified the ethical issues that arise from the unrestrained freedom of expression granted to citizens by social media. It is this same freedom that is also enjoyed by news bloggers, the subject of this research.

A PhD study titled: An Investigation of Cyber Journalism Regulation in Relation to Media Freedom in Kenya conducted by Bosire (2013) found that regulation among bloggers is difficult because bloggers are scattered, often work individually, and strive to work outside the regulatory constraints imposed on mainstream media houses. One of the key objectives of Bosire’s study was “to explore the challenges cyber journalism poses to media regulatory framework in Kenya” (Bosire, 2013, p. 16). Bosire’s research also looked at ways in which cyber journalism can be regulated, and sought to propose what kind of regulation would be appropriate for Kenya. The study did not focus on bloggers per se, but on those who post what they term as news on various online platforms. Bosire was not interested in ethics alone, but on the whole media regulatory framework. Data was collected through face to face interviews, online interviews and focus group discussions. Key respondents in the study included interviewees from the Communications Authority of Kenya and the Ministry of Information.

One of the findings of Bosire’s research was that “the respondents recommended the adoption of the ethical values for the practice of journalism in traditional journalism to guide journalism on the net” (Bosire, 2013, p. 165). This recommendation is similar to another that emerged in a worldwide bloggers survey on ethical beliefs that proposed a code of ethics to guide
blogging practice (Cenite, Detenber, Koh, Lim & Soon, 2009). The challenge posed by this suggestion is that bloggers see themselves as an alternative voice to mainstream media, with the courage to say what those in the newsrooms cannot because of the bureaucratic gate keeping controls.

Another recommendation of the study was that the Media Council of Kenya needs “to monitor the compliance of bloggers to the standards it has set for the practice of journalism in Kenya” (Bosire, 2013, p. 127). However, the interesting question here is whether bloggers fall under those regarded as journalists by the council? Does the Media Council of Kenya have the mandate to monitor private citizens who post their thoughts on news events on their blogs? These questions are answered in chapter four.

This study argued that Bosire’s proposition that bloggers be regulated through the Media Council Act 2013 is a simplistic way of looking at things because bloggers are part of the blogosphere which calls for new ways of championing for ethics and regulation. This study proposed that there is a need to dialogue with bloggers on the kind of standards that would fit their practice. This is in agreement with the proposition by Kuhn (2007) that any code of ethics for bloggers must be formulated through dialogue with bloggers.

A study on blogging in Kenya found that bloggers and journalists are collaborators not competitors (Oriedo, 2014). The research also found that journalists use blogs to get story ideas. The research was for a master’s thesis titled: *Journalists vs. bloggers: Competitors or collaborators?* The study sought to find out how journalists perceive bloggers, the roles that bloggers play and whether journalists collaborate or compete with bloggers in informing the public. A sample of 30 respondents who included journalists, bloggers and online editors was used in the study.

Oriedo’s findings indicated that blogging is slowly being accepted as a part of media. This arises from the fact that journalists are not shying away from using blogs as a source for stories.
Given that bloggers and journalists according to Oriedo, complement each other, this finding is important as the current study was an attempt at professionalising a practice that is becoming part of journalism.

Relevant Studies in the Global Context

An exploratory study on citizen journalism in Africa carried out by Banda (2010) sought to investigate how citizen journalism has impacted on democracy, and more so the media. Key informants who had initiated citizen journalism projects in different African countries were interviewed, analysis of documents on ICT policy and regulation were carried out, and the researchers observed “key features of the citizen journalism movement across the African continent” (Banda, 2010, p. 3). Banda sought to exemplify the democratic nature of citizen journalism by defining it as “news of the people by the people and for the people” (Banda, 2010, p. 26). He described citizen journalists as freelancers who are not tied down by editorial policies of newsrooms. While Banda’s study was not about ethics, he stated that citizen journalism was aimed at “de-institutionalizing and de-professionalizing the practice of journalism” (Banda, 2010, p. 27).

Banda like the Article 19 organisation, while not calling for unethical practice among citizen journalists who include bloggers, would rather have them operate freely, without the expectations of the norms set out for mainstream journalists. Banda argued that this is what separates non-institutional citizen journalists, who are essentially private citizens, and the institutionally-aligned who practice their profession in media organizations.

Banda pointed out that the penetration of mobile phones in Africa had propelled the growth of citizen journalism, but lamented that internet connectivity costs meant that there was still a large part of the population that was left out. He also felt that citizen journalism was being taken hostage by mainstream media, who had joined the fray to try and draw numbers to their online platforms so as to generate advertising revenue (Banda, 2010, p. 34). He added that there
were bloggers who post material on their sites simply to attract an audience that will in turn woo advertisers. Although he posed the question whether this is sustainable, it is evident that some Kenyan bloggers are making a living through advertising revenue they generate through their blogs (Kachwanya, personal communication, 2015).

Citizen journalism has been hailed as a platform that gives rise to multiple media channels which in turn contribute to democracy. But there is a caution that “high levels of technological penetration” must go hand-in-hand with media freedom for true citizen participation to thrive (Banda, 2010, p. 77). The acknowledgment by Banda that citizen journalism in Africa is a reality and that it is crucial for enhancing media democracy made a strong case for studying how key players practice their trade, what motivates them and guides their conduct.

A similar study to Banda’s work on democracy was conducted by Touri (2009). Touri’s research looked at how news blogs can be used to strengthen democracy through conflict prevention. Touri, whose theoretical framework was framing theory, examined “the performance of news blogs during situations of political conflict and war” (Touri, 2009, p. 170). Like Banda, Touri found that blogs are an essential platform for discussions that are not under the control of the political elites. The assumption is that politicians have the most say in mainstream media, while “blogs provide the grounds for greater news parity, multiple perspectives, and alternative interpretations of decisions and events” (Touri, 2009, p. 181). Is this true in the Kenyan situation? Do news bloggers in Kenya blog so as to offer multiple perspectives to the Kenyan audience? This is an issue this study investigated as it explored whether bloggers blog so as to serve public interest and whether they play the role of alternative media.

Globally there are various studies that have looked at the ethical conduct of news bloggers. One such research studied the credibility of news blogs (Gunter, Campbell, & Touri, 2009). The contention of the researchers was that blogs must follow some of the tenets of journalism practice if they are to be considered credible news sources. Some of the questions posed by Gunter et al.’s
study were whether blogs must be written by trained media professionals for them to be seen as credible news sources, or whether they must adhere to particular formats so as to be accepted. Gunter et al. concluded that while blogs do not produce “pure news”, their role in opening up avenues for news analysis and interpretation cannot be ignored.

Another key study that has similarities to this research on Kenyan news bloggers is a survey on bloggers’ ethical beliefs (Cenite, Detenber, Koh, Lim & Soon, 2009). The research by Cenite et al. which studied 1224 bloggers worldwide, divided blogs into personal and non-personal ones. Personal blogs were defined as those where people focus on events happening in their own lives, while the non-personal blogs concerned themselves with general interest matters such as business and politics. Cenite et al. focused on the respondents’ ethical beliefs, the ethical practices they followed, and their views on the need for an ethical code for blogging. A majority of the bloggers polled (65%) were from the US. The rest (35%) were from different parts of the world. The researchers however, did not specifically name the other countries where the 35 per cent came from although they point out that none of the other nations had more than eight per cent of the sample.

The findings of the research indicated that non-personal bloggers (27%) talked about general interest matters and drew more audience attention. The non-personal bloggers were “more likely to be male, older, married and better educated” (Cenite et al., 2009, p. 584). These bloggers also did more research and frequently checked the number of people that had accessed their sites. Cenite et al. argued that this was probably due to the fact that non-personal bloggers engaged more in what can be termed journalism, with posts geared towards broader content such as news and commentary, while their counterparts in the personal blogs posted more individual matters. The personal bloggers (73%) blogged “to express their thoughts and feelings (36%) and to document their lives (22%)” (Cenite et al., 2009, p. 583).
Cenite et al. found that the two groups of bloggers were not very enthusiastic about a code of ethics. The question on the ethics code asked whether the bloggers’ agreed to the necessity of an ethics code. The scale of responses was three and included “at least slightly agree”, “neutral”, and “at least slightly disagree”. The findings were that 56 per cent of personal bloggers slightly agreed that an ethics code was necessary as compared to 53 per cent of non-personal bloggers. Cenite et al. were of the view that the lukewarm support for a code of ethics was because bloggers view blogging as a “recreational activity” rather than a professional venture (Cenite et al., 2009, p. 591). The researchers also felt there was no need for panic on the conduct of bloggers because the study already showed that the bloggers were concerned about ethics, although not on a large scale. Cenite et al. (2009) argued that:

…a code is only as useful as the number of people who adhere to it. Given their diversity, it may be unrealistic to expect bloggers to agree on much at all, or to be bound by any one code. Indeed, ethics codes may be little more than a set of ideals, unless they have “teeth” in the form of sanctions. (Cenite et al., 2009, p. 591)

The Cenite et al. study informed this study’s objective on the ethical values that guide bloggers. This study unlike the Cenite et al. one that only went as far as asking the bloggers whether they felt a need for a code of ethics deliberated with the bloggers the values that could be used to guide their work. The research sought to find out from the selected bloggers how they perceive their practice and their views on the criticism that blogging often violates ethical tenets. By asking the sampled bloggers what motivates them to blog, this study set to determine whether Kenyan news bloggers who are not mainstream journalists, are of the same view with those surveyed by Cenite et al. who regarded their practice as recreational.

A study conducted in Australia echoed the findings of the Cenite et al. study. The Australian study found that a majority of bloggers who blog on personal issues do not consider ethical issues, a major consideration in blogging (Archer, Pettigrew, & Harrigan, 2014). Archer et al. who did an online survey with 245 bloggers, who blog on parenting issues found that 68 per cent felt there, were no ethical issues with blogging, while 32 per cent believed there were ethical
issues. Those who felt there were ethical issues were mainly concerned with the issue of sponsorship. The main issue here is how bloggers should handle pressure to receive payment so as to endorse a product on their blog, and how this would affect their readers.

Archer et al. (2014) argued that the issue of sponsorship is one that has not been tackled by previous studies on blogging. Their sentiments are important to the current study, especially in the research question on ethical values that guide Kenyan news bloggers in their work. The study sought to unveil whether sponsorship is an issue that arises among Kenyan news bloggers and how it relates to the question of integrity and independence. The Australian study also ties in with objective number four which examined whether bloggers agree that most of their practices unethical.

Another notable study was research on 30 political blogs in the United States in 2007, conducted with the aim of establishing whether the blogs had ethical codes on their websites to guide their conduct (Perlmutter & Schoen, 2007). The scholars also sought to know whether bloggers who had journalistic background differed with those who did not, in the manner they dealt with ethics on their sites. The researchers analysed how ethical codes were expressed on the blogs; “were the codes stated, unstated or were there no ethics codes (none) discernible on the blog” (Perlmutter & Schoen, 2007, p. 40). The codes that were stated were those that were clearly labelled as guidelines for ethics, for example, with words like “terms of use” preceding an outline of the rules (Perlmutter & Schoen, 2007, p. 40). The unstated codes were not labelled as a set of rules or guidelines but were mere phrases or words such as “never plagiarise” or “avoid stereotyping” that appeared on the blog.

Perlmutter and Schoen’s findings demonstrated that of the 30 political blogs studied only six had either a clearly stated code of ethics or the unstated rules on their websites. Of the six blogs, three had clearly stated codes, while the other three had words or phrases guiding ethical behaviour but which were not clearly labelled as ethical rules. The most commonly cited ethical
guidelines on the six blogs were “never plagiarize”, and “to avoid stereotyping” (Perlmutter & Schoen, 2007, p. 42). Of the 30 bloggers studied, 12 had journalistic experience, meaning they had worked for a mainstream media organization. Given that only six of the 30 bloggers studied had a code of ethics on their blog; journalistic experience did not determine whether a blogger set up a code of ethics on their blogs. The researchers’ conclusions were that although “bloggers do think about the ethical implications of their writings”, they “see their own values being antithetical” to journalism’s professional codes of ethics (Perlmutter & Schoen, 2007, p. 44).

Perlmutter and Schoen’s conclusion that bloggers find their values opposed to those of journalism is instrumental in helping answer research question two on how the normative models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participation influence news bloggers in their practice and research question three on what ethical values guide news bloggers work. The Perlmutter and Schoen study is also relevant to research question five of this study which examined the feasibility of standardising Kenyan weblog practice, and the standards that should be used.

Two objectives of this research were to find out what motivates Kenyan news bloggers to blog and the perceptions on whether they consider their practice unethical. The contention is that motivation and perception may determine the ethical values of bloggers. A study on bloggers done in 2011 in America elaborated this link. The study looked at blogging as a journalistic practice, and identified a model for linking perception, motivation and behaviour in journalism (Gil de Zuniger et al., 2011).

Gil de Zuniger et al. embarked on unpacking “the notion of blogging as a journalistic practice, particularly from the perspective of the typical American blogger” (Gil de Zuniger et al., 2011, p. 587). A total of 223 bloggers were contacted via phone and questioned on “the extent they perceived their work as a form of journalism, how the perception shaped their motivations
and their blog topics” (Gil de Zuniger et al., 2011, p. 586). Gil de Zuniger et al. analysed three independent variables which included, perception, motivation and blog topic.

The researchers used the theoretical model shown in Figure 2.5 “to predict whether bloggers would behave like professional journalists” (Gil de Zuniger et al., 2011, p. 586). In their findings, Gil de Zuniger et al. found that bloggers who perceived their work as journalism, and who amounted to 34 per cent, tended to be motivated to report in a journalistic manner, and also tended to follow media ethical principles. On the question of blog topics, Gil de Zuniger et al. found that 16.8 per cent of the bloggers wrote journalistic-like topics which they (Gil de Zuniger et al.) called public affairs; 38.7 per cent wrote on life experiences, 19.3 per cent wrote on niche interests such as sports, business and religion, while 6.8 per cent posted articles on entertainment.

![Figure 2.5: Theoretical Model Explaining How Bloggers may Engage in Journalistic Behaviours](Source: Gil de Zuniger et al. (2011, p. 592))

The Gil de Zuniger et al. study was instrumental to this research on news bloggers, given its focus on how the perceptions of bloggers affect their motivations, the blog topics they post, and eventually their behaviour. The research examined how news bloggers’ motivation for blogging may affect how they perceive their practice, the kind of content they post and their ethical values.

Smith (2011) alluded to a survey in the US which recorded 61 per cent of blog readers saying they actually believed that blogs were more honest than other media. The trust was attributed to efforts made by bloggers to state their motives, opening up about their sources, and their readiness to correct errors that are pointed out by their colleagues. However, a 2017 report by the Kenya Audience Research Foundation (KARF) found that a majority of Kenyans (94%) get
information from traditional media, compared to 33% who get it from social media (Amadala, 2017). Releasing the report KARF contended that the results were an indication that Kenyans perceived information from traditional media as more authentic than that from social media (Amadala, 2017).

**Conceptual Framework**

Miles (2014, p. 20) said that a conceptual framework “explains either graphically or in a narrative form, the main things to be studied - the key factors, variables, or constructs – and the presumed interrelationships among them”. Hennick, Hutter, and Bailey (2010) went further and explained that a conceptual framework should provide a summary of the research questions and fit the theory into them (research questions).

![Conceptual Framework Diagram]

*Figure 2.6: Conceptual Framework*

*Source: Author*
Concepts raised in the research questions of this study on news bloggers include the motives behind blogging, the ethical values that guide bloggers in their work, normative media frameworks and their influence on news blogging and the bloggers’ perceptions on whether their practice is unethical. The concepts have been derived from the research questions, research objectives, and the theoretical framework.

Discussion

Ethical conduct of bloggers is influenced by the ethical values that news bloggers ascribe to. These values or standards would constitute a normative framework which influences bloggers’ ethical conduct. The values are fed by the libertarian theory, social responsibility theory and the democratic-participant theory. Libertarian theory privileges individual freedoms and the exercise of those freedoms, over normative standards of media expression (Christians et al., 2009; McQuail, 2010). The thinking behind libertarianism is that human beings are rational and can decide for themselves how to react to the information disseminated by media (Biagi, 2016; Fourie, 2010). A libertarian view may influence attitudes to ethical standards and any idea of normative conduct, as indicated in Figure 2.6 above, but it is not constrained by the communal ownership and dictates of conduct that are explicit and implicit in both the social responsibility and the democratic-participant theories.

According to social responsibility theory, media exist to serve society and should be allowed to thrive and self-regulate themselves (Biagi, 2016; McQuail, 2010). Nevertheless, if they fail in their duty to serve the public interest, then they should be taken to task for this failure. This means that if the bloggers agree to be socially responsible they will serve public interest and have certain standards. This may mean that the argument that blogging should not be regulated may change.

In the conceptual framework, the three independent variables are the three theories, libertarian theory, social responsibility theory and democratic-participant theory. Libertarian
theory affects the variable of ethical standards. Social responsibility and democratic-participant theories affect the two main dependent variables, ethical values and ethical conduct. This means that the theories determine the kind of guidelines that can be set up to guide bloggers’ work and in turn also influence the kind of ethical conduct they portray as they carry out their practice.

Summary

The chapter started with an in-depth look at the evolution of theory in media ethics globally and in Africa so as to offer a justification for the choice of theoretical framework and demonstrate its place in blogging practice. Libertarian theory examines the contention that bloggers should be free of any constrains in their dissemination of information as individuals are rational and can separate truth from falsehood, while social responsibility theory advocates for self-regulation of blogging but calls for intervention from government and other quarters if bloggers contravene public interest. The other theory is democratic-participant theory, a relevant theory to probe the role of news blogging as part of alternative media. The second part of the chapter dealt with a review of general literature relating to the question of ethics and journalism before narrowing down to other related studies on ethical issues arising in blogging.

The next chapter will discuss the research methodology that guided the study. The chapter will explain the research design, the population that was studied, the sample size, the sampling technique, types of data, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, how the instruments were pre-tested, how the data was analysed and the ethical considerations that were made.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology that was used in the research. The chapter will begin with a discussion on the research design that guided the study. It then describes the population of the study, the sample size of the research, and the sampling method that was used to choose the sample. Also included in the chapter are the types of data that were collected from the study; the instruments, and the procedures that were used to collect the data. There is also a discussion on how the data collected was analysed. The chapter also explains how the data collection instruments were pre-tested before they were used in gathering the data. At the end of the chapter, there is a discussion on the ethical considerations that were made as the research was conducted.

Research Design

This study used qualitative research so as to examine the “perceptions, beliefs and feelings” (Hennink & Hutter, 2011, p. 64) that Kenyan news bloggers have about ethical matters. Creswell (2007, p. 37) argued that qualitative research method is used to study “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. In this research qualitative research was used to understand the meanings that Kenyan news bloggers give to ethical issues concerning their practice.

The research was based on the exploratory research design. The exploratory research design is appropriate “whenever a researcher is breaking new ground” (Babbie, 2015, p. 91). An ethical model specifically for Kenyan bloggers does not exist currently, and this makes exploratory research appropriate. The design allowed an in-depth investigation into the phenomenon of news bloggers in an open and flexible way (Durrheim, 2006); specifically
interrogating bloggers on what ethical values – if at all – guide their conduct when disseminating news.

The study employed the philosophical approaches of phenomenology and grounded theory. The phenomenological approach “focuses on individual experiences, beliefs, and perceptions” (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013, p. 8). Phenomenology was utilised through in-depth interviews aimed at understanding the world of the selected news bloggers in relation to ethics. Grounded theory was used to interrogate the theoretical applications of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant models to the blogging practice. This study used the three theoretical models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant theory to understand the responses gathered from the respondents. The aim was to examine whether the tenets of the three theories (freedom and individualism of libertarianism, self-regulation of social responsibility, and the grass-root approach of democratic participation) fit into the ethical practices of news blogging. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012, p. 33) described this as use of grounded theory to “modify or extend existing theory”.

Birks and Mills (2010) and Charmaz (2006) further argued that grounded theory techniques can be integrated into other qualitative methodological approaches. Gibson (2003, p. 132) described the outcome of grounded theory as “generation of theoretical statements about the data”. Monette, Sullivan, and Dejong (2008, p. 220) contended that although grounded theory is mainly considered a method of developing theory from data, the approach can sometimes, “use existing theory to understand and explain data, and it does include procedures for verifying theories”. Harding (2013) argued for integrating the inductive strategies of grounded theory with other deductive techniques which may involve starting with a theoretical framework before data collection.
Population

As a general population, bloggers are online writers who shift between providing news and news updates, commentary about news which has already been published elsewhere, and lastly, journal-writing, which may be about any subject, including personal or family life, considered interesting to the blogger (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006). They are described as “mavericks of the online world” positioned “outside the mainstream of mass media.” Beholden to no one, weblogs point to, comment on, and spread information according to their own, quirky criteria” (Blood, 2002, p. 114). They are thus viewed by many scholars as dependent upon “a different model of authority” (Friend & Singer, 2007, p. 121). News bloggers based in Kenya, who fit the description offered here, having no fixed model of ethical practice and not necessarily sensitive to the need of social responsibility, were the research universe, or population of this study.

Target Population

The target population that was used in the study is of news bloggers who publish stories online but who are not employed as journalists in the Kenyan mainstream media. This target population included Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) officials and key participants from the communication sector.

BAKE puts the number of blogs in Kenya at 15,000 but adds that of these only 2000 blogs are active (Njugunah, 2015). The study focused on news bloggers based in Kenya so as to exclude those who are not in the country but whose work is published online and read by Kenyans. This is because practitioners based in Kenya operate in specific social, economic, and political circumstances which may affect their practice in different ways, and distinguish their priorities from those of externally-based bloggers, including Kenyans based abroad.

Sample Size

A total of 35 participants were part of the study. Of these, 26 were bloggers who included two Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) officials, and nine were officials from the
communication sector. Eleven of the bloggers who were interviewed were members of BAKE and nine bloggers are non-members. Seven of the bloggers interviewed had training in journalism or communication from at least diploma level. Eight bloggers interviewed were trained in Computer and Information technology, two others in business, one in political science, one had trained in forensics, and another in international relations. The bloggers interviewed posted stories on a variety of topics, including general news, business, travel, politics, lifestyle, and technology. (More details on the demographics of the respondents are contained in Appendices)

The nine participants from the communication sector included a Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ) official, an official from Media Council of Kenya (MCK), a Ministry of Information Communication and Technology official, one official from National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), the regional director of Article 19, a media trainer, an Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) member and two government ICT officials. These key participants from the communications sector were selected so as to assess discussions surrounding both official policy and industry perceptions on ethics in the blogosphere.

The justification of mixing BAKE and non-BAKE members was so as to give a variety of views on the issue of ethics for news bloggers. King and Horrocks (2010) argued that when one is getting respondents for in-depth interviews, one should get those that represent a cross section of opinion so as to get an all rounded view on the phenomenon being studied. The BAKE members were chosen because they already had an association that brought them together and laid down some rules for them (though it is far from clear that these “rules” are adhered to, even by BAKE members). The non-BAKE members were chosen because they worked on their own and made their own rules.

There was also one focus group discussion. The focus group discussion included two Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) officials and four bloggers who were members of BAKE but are not officials. The bloggers who participated in the focus group discussion were not part of
the in-depth interviews. The focus group discussion was instrumental in interrogating the ethical issues from a group’s point of view.

The sample size was adequate and justifiable given that this is a qualitative study that sought to uncover motivations and perceptions rather than numbers. The views of various scholars were considered in coming up with the sample size. One such scholar is Bernard (2011, p. 154), who stated that “10-20 knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience”. Daymon and Holloway (2010) argued that sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be small and selection extends into the data collection and analysis. Researchers in qualitative research continue collecting data from a sample size, up to the point of saturation – a point where a new respondent does not bring any new information (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Breen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Some scholars have argued that the saturation point in qualitative studies occurs after 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Sampling Technique

This was a qualitative study geared towards gathering in-depth information, and was not interested in numbers that are rigidly collected using a statistical method such as random sampling. The study used purposive sampling. Most qualitative studies employ purposive sampling (Boeije, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2012; Edwards & Holland, 2013; Houser, 2011; Punch, 2005). The argument not to use random sampling was also supported by the sentiments of Lindlof and Taylor (2011, p. 109) that “the chief value of qualitative research lies in achieving in-depth understanding of social reality in a specific context”. Lindlof and Taylor further advocated for non-probability sampling by stating that “most qualitative researchers choose to engage in purposeful (or purposive) sampling. That is, they make informed judgments about what to observe or whom to interview” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 110).
The study used purposive sampling method to choose 20 news bloggers based in Kenya who blog regularly. The study did not focus on the 20 most popular blogs, but on those that post news on their blogs. The first step in selecting the bloggers for the study was a look at bloggers who won BAKE awards in 2016. The list of 10 winners included both BAKE and Non-BAKE members. From the list of winners, the next step was to examine the type of blog owned by those on the list to determine whether they fit in the category of news blog. Seven bloggers who were in the list were then contacted through BAKE. Of the seven, only five were available for the in-depth interviews. Snowball sampling was then used where BAKE and bloggers interviewed were asked to give contacts of fellow bloggers. A total of 20 news bloggers participated in the individual in-depth interviews. Baxter and Babbie (2003, p. 135) advocated for snowball sampling where “members of a special population are difficult to locate”. Online platforms provide forums where people can post content without revealing their true identities or posting their contacts. This posed some difficulties in locating the bloggers, hence the decision to use snowball sampling. The key respondents from the communication sector were chosen purposively on the basis that their work makes them knowledgeable about blogging matters and the ethical debates concerning the practice.

Types of Data

This research used the qualitative approach. Creswell (2009, p. 4) defined qualitative research as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. This design is appropriate for this study because the aim was to answer the questions why and how rather than that of how much or how many. The study examined the motivations, perceptions, and ethical values of news bloggers. Therefore, the focus was not on how many bloggers perceive matters in a certain way, but was on in-depth analysis of the bloggers’ perceptions on ethical governance.
Scholars identify three sources of qualitative data: interviews, observations, and documents (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2010). Patton said interviews yield “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge”, while observations “consist of detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviours, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interaction” (Patton, 2002, p. 4). Documents present data which “includes studying excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or programme records, memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and survey” (Patton, 2002, p. 4). Qualitative data also includes “notes made while observing in the field, interview transcripts, documents, diaries, and journals” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 119).

In this study, data emerged from the 29 in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion that had six participants. The data was stored in form of the transcriptions derived from the interviews and the FGD and the analytical memos made following familiarisation with the data.

**Data Collection Instruments**

The data was collected through in-depth interviews with the bloggers and nine key respondents from the communication sector, and a focus group discussion with BAKE officials and four of their members. Two different interview guides were used: one for the bloggers and another one for the other participants from the communication sector. A focus group guide was used for the FGD with the two officials of BAKE and another four bloggers who are members of the association. The five research questions were used to formulate questions in the three data collection instruments. The interview guides and focus group guide are attached as appendices, A, B and C.

**Data Collection Procedures**

In-depth interviews were one of the major procedures that were used to collect data in this research. Brennen (2013, p. 28) has posited that qualitative interviews are “less concerned with
data collection and instead strive to understand the meanings of information, opinions and interests in each respondent’s life”. The study aimed at understanding the world of the news blogger, to see whether libertarian, social responsibility and democratic-participant ethical tenets fit into the blogging experience, what guides their ethical conduct, what they think about ethics and if they consider what they do to be journalism. Regarding the key communication experts, the research explored their perceptions about news bloggers and what they feel about formulation of standards to guide the blogging practice.

Data collection was done between September 21st and December 22nd 2016. Seventeen out of the 20 bloggers, who were to take part in the individual in-depth interviews, were interviewed face-to-face. However, one blogger was interviewed on phone and two participated in email interviews. The three bloggers were unable to avail themselves face-to-face because of their busy schedules. Various scholars (King, 2010; Meho, 2006; Nehls, 2013) justified the use of email interviews in qualitative research. The scholars contended that email interviews may be used due to inaccessibility of participants caused by among other reasons, distance or the nature of the research topic.

Each of the 20 bloggers and nine of the participants from the communication sector were interviewed using a guide that had semi-structured questions. Although key information was jotted down on a note-book, the interviews were recorded so as to save time and ensure information was captured in detail. The participants’ consent was sought before the recording began. The recording was also to ensure that all the key information was stored for transcription at the data analysis stage. The same procedure was followed for the separate in-depth interviews with the key respondents from the communication sector.

Another data collection procedure was the focus group discussion session with two key officials of BAKE and four bloggers who are members of the association. Ten participants had been invited for the discussion but four were not able to make it. The FGD was conducted on
December 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2016 at the iHub offices in Bishop Magua building. The researcher hired a room for the purposes of carrying out the FGD. She also provided snacks and refreshments for the participants of the FGD. She was the moderator of the discussion. The purpose of the focus group was to get a wide perspective of the views of the participants on ethical matters concerning blogging. Hennick, Hutter, and Bailey (2010, p. 136) said that focus groups are essential for highlighting “unique perspectives on the study issues due to the group environment in which data are collected”.

Although, the participants had been briefed through email and phone calls about the research, the FGD began with a brief on an overview of the study. This was followed by a conversation on the structure of the discussion. The moderator further asked the participants for their consent to record the discussion. During the in-depth interview sessions and the FGD, key observations about the demeanour of the respondents and the set-up of the surroundings were noted down as these would not be captured in the recorded interviews.

This being a qualitative study, the researcher was cognizant that she is a major instrument in the data collection procedure. She acknowledged that being a trained journalist who worked for the mainstream media for some years before joining the academia meant that she was coming into the study with her own biases about what ethical conduct of those who disseminate news entails. However, she did not allow these views to bar her from openly hearing what those who transmit news on blogs feel and think about ethics. This is reflexivity, a process that “requires the researcher starts with an awareness of their values and how they relate to those being researched” (Kamau, 2013, pp. 40-41). As pointed out by an argument by Wimmer and Dominick (2011) on how to ensure the reliability and validity of data, the researcher took great care to record the FGD and take notes meticulously, while also keeping all the data including that which did not suit her earlier presuppositions. A research assistant who helped in transcribing the data was trained before the start of the data collection.
Pretesting

The interview guides and the FGD guide were pretested before use. The decision to pre-test qualitative research tools was taken in line with Arthur and Nazroo’s advice that “it is important to review whether it (the qualitative research tool) allows participants to give a full and coherent account of the central issues” of the research (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003, p. 111). Pretesting of the data collection instrument is also important as it helps amendment of parts that are offensive to the respondents (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003; Berg & Lune, 2012). The pretest also acts as a practicing ground for the researcher (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

The interview guide for the news bloggers was pretested with two colleagues. The interview guide for the key respondents from the communication sector was pretested with two communication experts; one a media trainer and the other an editor with one of the local media houses. The focus group guide was pretested with a group of six MA (Communication) students from Daystar University on July 30th, 2016. The students, all taking media studies helped to clarify terms in the FGD guide that were not clear. Following the pretest, the data collection instruments were revised to make the concepts that were vague, clearer.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis in this study followed the structure laid down by Miles and Huberman, namely: “data reduction, data displays, and conclusion drawing” (Monette et al., 2008, p. 420). The scholars stated that the three processes may begin at the data collection stage, hence the flexibility of qualitative research. Data analysis began with the transcription of the interviews as soon as data collection started in September 2016 so as to avoid getting overwhelmed by the voluminous data collected in the study. Data from the recorded interviews and discussions was transcribed every time a session was completed. The transcription of the data ended in February 2016. The transcribed data was saved in password-protected documents in a laptop that was also
password-protected. The data was saved in three different folders, labelled: BAKE; Non-BAKE; communication experts and FGD.

The main analysis involved examining transcribed text obtained through the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion. Repeated themes from transcriptions were observed and analysed using an excel sheet. This was the process of coding data so as to reduce “the large mountains of raw data into small, manageable piles” and enable quick retrieval of the same (Neuman, 2006, p. 460). The process of identifying themes is described as coding and entails categorizing data into words, phrases or sentences (Monette et al., 2008). Coding helps in understanding “patterns and explanations” that emerge from the data (Richards, 2010, p. 94). The data management process followed Boeije’s (2010) levels of open, axial and selective coding where data was first segmented into numerous codes then reassembled severally to reduce to main categories that were eventually labelled the main themes which had several sub-themes. In addition, minimal graphic representations were used to show the numbers of those respondents who gave certain views on the issues examined.

During the coding process, both deductive and inductive approaches were used. Various scholars (Harding, 2013; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011; Riazi, 2016; Salmons, 2015) contended that qualitative data analysis uses both deductive and inductive codes. In this research, the major themes were deductively derived from the research objectives, while the sub-themes were inductively removed from the data.

Various scholars are in agreement that data analysis in qualitative research is a continuous process that starts as soon as data collection begins and continues to the end of the research (Creswell, 2009; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Reflexivity also counted in data analysis as the researcher critically examined how her background and experiences influenced the manner in which she interpreted the data (Brennen, 2013).
Ethical Considerations

Hennick et al. (2011) posited that qualitative research heightens ethical concerns because of its flexible nature and the closeness that the researcher develops with the respondents over time. This study used a list of concerns raised by Wimmer and Dominick (2011, pp. 69-75) to explain ethical issues that arose in the study and how they were tackled. The ethical issues are explained in the following section.

One of the ethical issues listed by Wimmer and Dominick (2011) is voluntary participation—a principle that demands that respondents willingly join a study and withdraw from it at any point. Brennon (2013) underpinned the importance of voluntary participation:

Because of the active role of the researcher and the understanding that all inquiry is fundamentally subjective, qualitative researchers use a variety of strategies to develop ethical ways of dealing with the people they encounter during the research process. Of fundamental concern is the principle that all individuals who participate in qualitative research projects must voluntarily agree to participate in the studies without any psychological or physical pressure, manipulation or coercion. (Brennon, 2013, p. 16)

In this study on news bloggers, respondents were allowed to voluntarily accept to participate in the research by being clearly informed of the nature of study being done and how the findings will be used. Those respondents who declined to participate in the study were not coerced to do so.

Another important ethical consideration is informed consent. Boeije (2010, p. 45) described informed consent as “the obligation to outline fully the nature of the data collection and the purpose for which the data will be used to the people or community being studied in a style and language that they can understand”. The respondents were given enough information about the study to make sure that they would make an informed decision about participating. This was done by sending the respondents an email briefly describing the study, the kind of information that would be required from them and the nature of the data collection procedures that would be used. For example, the research participants were informed that the journalistic ethical principles from
the code of ethics for the practice of journalism in Kenya would be used in the data collection instruments.

Protection of privacy is also a key ethical consideration when conducting research. Babbie (2010) underscored the importance of protecting respondents in qualitative research. The scholar pointed out that “when writing up the results of your analyses, you will often have to actively conceal identities. Individuals, organizations, and communities are given pseudonyms to conceal their identities” (Babbie, 2010, p. 418). The current study undertook to protect the privacy of the respondents, especially the bloggers. To protect their identity, the bloggers who participated in the in-depth interviews were categorised as either BAKE or Non-BAKE. The BAKE bloggers were given numbers one to 11, while non-BAKE bloggers were given numbers one to nine. The participants in the FGD were given numbers one to six. Seven participants from the communication sector said they did not mind being identified by their names. However, two asked that their identity be concealed, a request that the researcher respected.

Confidentiality and anonymity, an ethical issue closely linked to privacy was also crucial in this study. Confidentiality and anonymity is an “agreement on how data are to be handled in research in order to ensure privacy” (Boeije, 2010, p. 46). In this research, the confidentiality of respondents was respected by not revealing any information that a respondent requested to be kept confidential. The security of data was ensured by saving the soft copy transcriptions in documents that were password-protected. The hard copies were kept in a locked drawer and were not shared with anyone. This is in line with the caution by (Guest et al., 2013, p. 333) that “the most serious risk and potential for harm is typically related to the issue of data confidentiality”.

In addition, there is an explanation in the data collection instruments on the benefits that the research will have for the various respondents. This has been done in a bid to elaborate beneficence, that is, the positive benefits that the proposed research will have on all those involved (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Lastly, the researcher obtained a research permit from the
government. The permit was issued by the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

Summary

This chapter has detailed the research methodology that the study adopted. The chapter began by describing the research design that was used. This was followed by a description of the population of the study. The population was identified as news bloggers (those who blog privately not as members of the mainstream media) who reside in Kenya and key respondents from the communication sector.

In the sample section, a number of sources were used to rationalise the choice of the sample size, a key issue that most qualitative researchers grapple with. The sample size of the study was a total of 35 participants. There were 20 news bloggers, nine key respondents from the communication sector and six other bloggers who included BAKE officials. The data collection method involved the use of a number of tools; namely, in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion and a description on how the data was collected. There was a discussion on how the data instruments were pre-tested, how the data was analysed and the ethical considerations that guided the research. The next chapter will be a presentation of the data, the analysis of the same and an interpretation of the findings.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter will present, analyse, and interpret the data collected from news bloggers who are either formally constituted as a body called the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE), or who prefer not to be so associated, and instead operate on an individual agency. Part of the data will also constitute that collected from key participants from the Kenyan communication sector. The data will be presented in the form of themes and sub-themes that expose the values of bloggers, bloggers’ views about journalistic ethical principles, and the process of ethical decision making of bloggers who fall in either BAKE or non-BAKE membership categories. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key findings.

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The purpose of this research was to explore the ethical frameworks employed by Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media. The five objectives of the study were to:

i) Investigate what motivates Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream news media to blog;

ii) Examine how the normative models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant theory influence the practice of Kenyan news blogging that is not part of mainstream journalism;

iii) Find out what ethical values guide Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media in their transmission of news;

iv) Analyse the views of selected Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media, towards claims that their practice often breaches ethical standards of news gathering and publication, and,
v) Explore whether it is feasible to standardise weblog practice, how to do so, and with what standards.

Six major themes will be discussed in this chapter. The themes were motivations for blogging, emerging normative models of blogging practice, ethical values that guide bloggers in their work, ethical conduct of bloggers, feasibility of standardisation of blogging practice, and a comparison and contrast of journalism and blogging practices. The themes were derived both deductively (from the objectives) and inductively (from the data). As discussed in chapter three, themes in qualitative data analysis come from “data (an inductive approach) and from our prior theoretical understanding of whatever phenomenon we are studying (an a priori, or deductive approach)” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 55). The first five themes were derived from the objectives of the study, while the last theme emerged from the responses that research participants gave on their views on whether their blogging practice is journalism. The sub-themes emerged from the data.

Theme 1: Motivations for Blogging

This theme was derived from the first objective of the study which was to investigate what motivates Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream news media to blog. Motivation can be described as the force that pushes one to attain a goal (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2011). Motivation is important in blogging as this has been found to influence the kind of content that bloggers post and the ethical behaviour they exhibit online (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2011).

There were six sub-themes under the theme of motivations for blogging. The sub-themes emerged from the data gathered from the in-depth interviews with individual bloggers and the key participants from the communication sector. The sub-themes included blogging to disseminate information, blogging as a business, blogging for purposes of advocacy, blogging to express one’s thoughts, motivation linked to satisfaction of various other needs, and the link between motivation
and the content that bloggers disseminate. Figure 4.1 illustrates the theme of motivation and the sub themes that emerged.

![Figure 4.1: Sub-Themes under the Theme of Motivations that Influence Bloggers to Blog](image)

Sub-theme: Blogging to Disseminate Information

There was a sense among some of the respondents that conventional media outlets restricted the flow of information and the type of content, according to the restrictive prioritisations of particular media houses and their owners. They therefore saw blogging as broadening the media space, and were prompted to fill the gaps that they perceived in the dissemination of information.

Eight of the bloggers out of the 20 who were part of the in-depth interviews said they started blogging as a way of providing information that they could not get online or on mainstream media. For them, blogging filled an information gap which they believed was caused by the preoccupations of mainstream and other online media. They discovered this gap when they tried to access information that they needed for themselves. For example, BAKE 2, a lifestyle blogger, argued that before she started her blog, she looked for positive information on marriage from the mainstream media, but she could not get any. Another blogger, BAKE 3, said he could
not get the kind of business information he needed from mainstream media. The bloggers’ efforts to fill the voids in media content ended up being of benefit not just to themselves, but also to other people who needed this information.

Four other bloggers, who started their writing careers in mainstream media, said they turned to blogging because they were passionate about publishing stories that they gathered on the news beat but which were not carried by their media houses. For these bloggers, their blogs became an extra space to bring to the public, events that would not be accepted for publication in the mainstream media because of reasons such as time or space constraints, commercial interests of the media houses, editorial policies, or simply because the editors did not consider the stories newsworthy enough. Those bloggers, who were still practicing as mainstream journalists, thus deployed content to parallel writing spheres: their personal blogs, in which they were the sole gatekeepers, besides their mainstream media spaces where the content that they submitted was subjected to multiple filters of editing and framing, which often would exclude part of what the journalists had submitted for publication or broadcast.

Three bloggers started blogging so as to disseminate information that they felt was important, but was ignored by journalists who covered events. For example, BAKE 3, a Business blogger, said he started blogging as an attempt to report what the media ignored. He described an experience when he attended a Kenya Airways Annual General Meeting, where he said many of the things that happened were left out of the stories that were covered in the mainstream media. The blogger was frustrated that the public were denied a faithful record of issues of significance that he decided to start a blog where he used his expertise to report more expansively on business issues. Bloggers like BAKE 3 said although when they started out, they were just trying to obtain and disseminate information that would help themselves and others, they had grown over time to become experts on the issues they wrote about. Non-BAKE 5, a lifestyle blogger, explained:
At the time of starting out, there were mum blogs but their focus was on motherhood. So I thought I should write not just on motherhood, but also look at the other roles of a woman. How do you balance excelling in your career and also in your home? I have written on these issues for some time and I can say I consider myself an authority. (Non-BAKE 5 Interview, November 11, 2016)

Another blogger, BAKE 2, narrated a similar experience:

When I got married, there was only one source of information about what marriages looked like, and that was the breakfast shows on air. And I didn’t agree with most of them, especially their preoccupation with infidelity, violence, and other negatives. I wanted a place that had a sober conversation on marriage… (BAKE 2 Interview, September 21, 2016)

Non-BAKE 3, a technology blogger, gave similar sentiments:

When I started, I used to write on everything. Then I discovered that no one was covering technology from a Kenyan angle. I was one of the first tech bloggers. I decided to write on my expertise, technology. What was happening is that a lot of journalists were covering the story but were not going very deep. (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016)

Figure 4.2 demonstrates the different ways bloggers were motivated to blog by the need to disseminate information used their blogging space.

![Figure 4.2: Model Illustrating the Motivation of Blogging to Disseminate Information](image)

The bloggers who started their blogs as an extra space to tell their stories were trained journalists who worked for mainstream media, before making blogging a full-time venture. Some of these respondents said senior reporters took credit for their stories, while others said that editors...
would either cut out big segments of their articles or discard whole reports. BAKE 8 gave her experience of frustrations in a mainstream media house:

I was writing stories but they were not being fully published or brought out the way I wished or felt was right for the audience. That’s why I started doing more blogging. Let me talk about the area I specialise in, business. Mainstream media doesn’t give a lot of airtime to business stories, development stories, and things to do with energy and finance, which are the backbone of our economy. I thought it wise to have a platform where I give these issues the space they deserve. (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016)

But for Non-BAKE 8, the frustrations which drove her to blogging were more unsavoury than merely having her work discarded or distorted. She claimed that not only was some of her work in the mainstream media left unpublished; other work, produced by her, would allegedly turn up in the media she worked for, but under somebody else’s name.

During my first internship I was working for a newspaper in Nakuru and I would write stories but some senior reporters would steal the stories. I would see the same stories published with the senior reporters’ bylines in the newspaper the next day. (Non-BAKE 8 Interview, November 10, 2016)

Three of the respondents explained that their blogging was motivated by their passion for telling stories. BAKE 5, for example, a blogger on general matters, said he started blogging out of passion and the need he felt for giving out information. BAKE 11, a lifestyle blogger, who had employed five writers at the time of the interview, wanted a place where she could post her short stories and poems. BAKE 7, a book reviewer, gave similar sentiments. She said, “I always wanted to write but didn’t know whether I would get an opportunity in mainstream media.” (BAKE 7 Interview, November 28, 2016).

Sub-theme: Blogging to Express Thoughts Freely

Some of the bloggers interviewed said that they started blogging because it gave them a forum to freely express their thoughts and opinions about issues. An example of these bloggers, BAKE 4, who had a general blog, and four writers working for him, said he began blogging in 2006. He added that what motivated him to blog was the need to write his thoughts about the campaign period of 2006, just before Kenya’s general election in 2007. “Blogging was a place
where I could express my opinion without being regulated by anyone,” he said (BAKE 4 Interview, November, 12, 2016).

BAKE 6, a satire/political blogger, started blogging because he saw it as a place where one could “write cheaply without the cost of publishing” (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016). BAKE 10 explained her motivation when she started blogging: “I blogged for fun and to get my thoughts out there” (BAKE 10 Interview, December 16, 2016). Non-BAKE 3 explained how his blog started: “I love articulating my thoughts through words. It started as a journal, and then I discovered that I had an audience. It is a creative outlet” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016). Non-BAKE 5 said she loved sharing her thoughts and offering guidance on women’s issues, while BAKE 1 said of the freedom that blogging gave her:

I appreciate having a space that I control, where my voice can be heard without having to ask for anyone’s permission or to go through any controls apart from the ones I impose on myself. I feel that I am contributing to the debate. (BAKE 1 Interview October, 17, 2016)

Another blogger, Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist and also a lawyer, said his motivation was to write freely without the editorial constraints of a media house. He said:

I am a trained journalist and I wrote a lot for mainstream media and along the way …when you are writing for the mainstream media, especially where you are an employee, there are so many things you write formally, things that are acceptable, things that comply (sic), and things that are confined to the policies of this media house. You know the editorial policies of this media house, and their market (sic) and what they (sic) stand for. There are other things that you think are your own ideas or your own opinions and you can’t get a space for them in the formal mainstream media. These are the things that you take out to a forum controlled by you, a forum that gives you the right of expression. It is a space for your own expression. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Sub-theme: Blogging as a Business

The bloggers interviewed revealed that although making money was not their initial motivation for blogging, they had over time converted their blogs into businesses. Several of the bloggers said blogging brought them good money, with some being able to afford writers to help them post material on their blogs. The bloggers stated that they make money from the producers and marketers of products that they reviewed on their blogs. The ethical dilemma arising here,
and debated by those interviewed in the research, is the issue of companies giving free products to bloggers for their own use, and then expecting them to write reviews on the same. The question is whether and to what extent, an individual who gets freebies is able to write an objective review.

Figure 4.3 illustrates what bloggers said were the various means of income from blogging and blogging-related activities. One way to make money from blogging, according to the bloggers interviewed, is through publishing sponsored content. This is content paid for by sources who want it published. Sponsored content is therefore favourable to those who pay for it, and the question of truth-telling and objectivity does arise. Another ethical issue surrounding sponsored content which arose during the interviews, and is discussed later in this chapter, is the lack of disclosure to audiences that the content has been sponsored.

![Figure 4.3: Model Showing How Bloggers Make Money]

The following are extracts from some of the bloggers’ interviews explaining the business side of blogging. BAKE 9, a trained journalist said, “I never thought about money until five years later when I started earning from blogging. I would say I earn comfortably. My biggest source of money is business referrals” (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016). BAKE 3, a business blogger, also explained that he blogged for some years as a pastime without income. “When I started blogging, I was not making money. I blogged for eight years without getting any money, but now I am earning from blogging – decent money. It’s paying my bills” (BAKE 3 Interview,
November 7, 2016). BAKE 3 explained that he made money from advertisements on his blog, and other blogging-related activities such as participation in social media events. BAKE 5 described how she made money:

At the time I started out, bloggers were not making money. Now I can say I live comfortably from blogging. I make money from blogging but also from social media training. Someone can make an average of Ksh.120,000 per month. (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016)

BAKE 2, a lifestyle blogger, further illustrated how one can make money from blogging:

A while back, people would tell you, ‘here’s an Infinix, review it.’ And the best they could do is to give you the product and not pay you. Nowadays we make money through events. You can go to an event and live-tweet it online which does not really constitute blogging, but blogging has given you that space and made you a sort of authority. (BAKE 2 Interview, September 21, 2016)

BAKE 8 said:

I remember at some point, I used to work for a certain blog, and at the same time, I had my main job in the mainstream media where I got a salary of Ksh.20,000 a month. One day a client came and wanted one story written. I was paid Ksh. 25,000 for the story. If I could get Ksh.25,000 one day, a sum equivalent to a salary for a whole month in mainstream media, it didn’t make a lot of sense to stick to the mainstream media job. I thought it wise to go out and blog full-time, and make money out of it. (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016)

Non-BAKE 3, a technology blogger, described his experience on blogging as a business:

At the peak of my blogging which was about six years ago, I would travel to South Africa. I travelled to Europe as a blogger because somebody somewhere had seen my blog, and they seemed to think I knew what I am saying. Some wanted me to cover a conference, others an event, some a product launch and others wanted me to give them a perspective about technology in Kenya. These events can be lucrative and you can make a few thousand dollars even if they are paying for your flight. (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016)

Sub-theme: Blogging as an Advocacy Tool

Four of the bloggers explained that one of the reasons they got into blogging was to advocate against issues in society that they felt strongly about. These bloggers described themselves as people who use the writing platform to fight for those in society who have no forum to talk about matters that the government and elected leaders should sort out. Interestingly, two
bloggers who gave this public interest motif as one of their reasons for blogging had been arrested over some of their posts. Neither were members of the Bloggers Association of Kenya, which they referred to as a private business. Non-BAKE 1 said he had had 21 cases preferred against him by the state, but explained that only one case was pending. Non-BAKE 2 was at one point facing five cases, which he said were dropped when he produced documents to prove the authenticity of his reports. The use of their blogs as advocacy tools may have been the reason that that the two bloggers had gotten into legal problems.

Non-BAKE 1, who called himself a public critic, elaborated on why he used blogging for advocacy. He said, “……sometimes you feel for the common man. They have a lot of stories that need to be told. They have a lot of issues to be addressed. So that’s what keeps me going” (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016). One of the key respondents from the communication sector, Henry Maina of Article 19, explained the advocacy nature of blogging:

Remember situations when international media like CNN carried clips indicating that we were likely to go to war in the 2013 elections, and by the time the clip was aired most people on blogs wanted to know where exactly in the country the clip was shot, and could it be verified. And that quickly led CNN to ask their local correspondent whether the clip was based on true events and whether it was a current clip. It turned out that it was a clip that had been taken in 2007 and was now being used as a primer for 2013 elections as if it was happening at that time. (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016)

BAKE 1 described how his venture into blogging started as a campaign to have the state broadcaster, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), provide balanced coverage. He said:

I remember it was 2001, 2002 when Kenya was going through a massive political transformation and I noticed that the coverage of the national broadcaster, KBC was heavily biased in favour of the candidate that was supported by the incumbent at that time. Actually, I wrote to them and told them, ‘you know you are a tax payers-funded organisation, you need to present both sides of the political story here.’ And I received a very threatening email: ‘We know your name. We now know how to find you.’ I was abroad. I was like okay; ‘I’ll start up my website so that I send you the link, so that you know exactly where to find me.’ In 2007 blogging exploded and there was a feeling that bloggers are against the establishment. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)
Non-BAKE 6 argued that there is an element of advocacy in blogging where one is motivated by questions such as, “What is affecting society? Is it security, corruption or issues about children? When you know about the issues hurting the public, this information will push you to write about these issues” (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November, 14, 2016). A BAKE official concurred and described bloggers as instrumental in championing various critical issues. He said that bloggers do this through online campaigns aimed at highlighting matters that need to be attended to. “Because blogging is an unrestrained field which enables one to speak freely, bloggers can vigorously rally people towards a certain issue” (Participant One, FGD, December 19, 2016).

In this regard, scholars like Rutigliano (2012, p. 225) opined that “blogs are civic journalism on steroids: Civic journalism sought to use the news media to encourage participation and debate among the public, but blogs are interested in bringing public participation and debate into the everyday practice of journalism”.

Sub-theme: Motivation Linked to Satisfaction of other Needs

Satisfaction is defined as “fulfilment of one’s wishes, expectations, or needs, or the pleasure derived from this” (Stevenson, 2010, p. 1581). The bloggers who participated in the study gave various reasons for their motivation to blog, and the satisfaction derived from it. Figure 4.4 shows the various factors connected with blogging due to the satisfaction that one gets. For some, blogging opened up opportunities to network and interact, to secure a creative space and opportunity to share their thoughts and insights on various issues.

Some bloggers argued that they got satisfaction from using the blogging space to advocate for people’s rights, and also to vent about issues they felt strongly about. For a number of bloggers, the chance for an independent freedom of expression that was not governed by media institutional gatekeeping pressures was what excited them about blogging.
Two bloggers said they found blogging fun. Three other bloggers said freedom to freely express themselves was satisfying, and also a form of therapy for them. They stated that they blogged so as to vent about various things. Venting also helped them to advocate for various critical issues in society. For example, Non-BAKE 7, who wrote investigative pieces said, “I write for sanity” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 16, 2016). Non-BAKE 1 described his blog as a therapeutic place:

Blogging is also an avenue for you to vent. It is very therapeutic when you feel that you have too many issues and you need to vent them, or just to give an opinion about things you see. Like when you see a policeman taking a bribe, just by tweeting it and then the policeman stops taking the bribe or people take action. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

BAKE 2, a blogger on motherhood issues, started the forum as a place to discuss her experience on miscarriage. She said her blog had become a place where she discussed how miscarriage affects women. She also posted stories on fertility issues that affect women, she said. She added that the blog had opened up speaking opportunities where she was invited to hold discussions on motherhood issues.

Another respondent, Non-BAKE 9, a photography blogger, said that his satisfaction came from knowing that he has been able to have an impact on people. For Non-BAKE 2, blogging was
an avenue that enabled him to fight for people’s rights. He said: “The feeling that you have communicated something, you really feel nice. May be someone’s rights are being infringed, and you talk about it. I have communicated something and changed people’s lives” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016).

For Non-BAKE 1, therapy and advocacy are connected. He argued that helping solve problems in society through advocacy is therapeutic. The blogger revealed that his advocacy campaigns have sometimes landed him in trouble with the authorities. His advocacy included speaking out for professionals, such as police officers who are barred by their code of practice from agitating about issues. Non-BAKE 1 described an instance when his post prompted action:

Like last evening there was a lady in a matatu (a public service vehicle) from Ngara, she gave the conductor 1000 shillings but the conductor pretended to forget and failed to return the change. They reached Ngara, and people drove off. The lady was pleading saying that’s the only money she had. Someone in the bus wrote a very passionate piece to me privately. When I put it online, in the evening, I was called by the OCPD (Office Commanding Police Station), Gigiri and they told me they had arrested the guy and wanted the lady to come forward. So that’s the satisfaction you get. Someone takes action when you put out a piece. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Some bloggers saw blogging as a forum for connection and networking. BAKE 10 said blogging gave her “many opportunities to network” (BAKE 10 Interview, December 16, 2016). These views were also shared by BAKE 8, a trained journalist, who wrote a business/technology blog. BAKE 3, pointed out that his readers sometimes connected him to people he wrote about on his blog.

Non-BAKE 4, a lifestyle blogger and trained journalist, got satisfaction from interviewing celebrities and other prominent people in society and “getting to know their struggles, dreams, ambitions, and the things that keep them up at night” (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016). Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist and lawyer, argued that the freedom of expression derived from blogging gives him a lot of satisfaction. He explained:
The freedom of expression is too intrinsic. It is like the foundation of humanity. A person who cannot express themselves verbally or non-verbally….in any way (sic)…In fact many people have told me that I am not a good speaker. I have done a number of interviews, but I think that they were not very good. But when I sit to write and give my heart, and people comment on it and some criticise (sic), just the feeling that I have started a conversation, we are talking and people are engaged in it, that gives me satisfaction. Sometimes, I meet people on the street and we talk about what I wrote. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Non-BAKE 3, BAKE 6 and Non-BAKE 5 described blogging as a creative space that allowed them to share their thoughts. Non-BAKE 5 said she loved sharing information “on issues that affect women” and “being able to debate authoritatively on issues” (Non-BAKE 5 Interview, November 11, 2016). Non-BAKE 5 said she considered herself an authority on issues of parenting and on women where she drew from her own experiences and from research. Non-BAKE 8, a trained journalist, pointed out that blogging allowed him to use the journalism skills to practice what he loved, writing. BAKE 2 stated that the satisfaction she derived from blogging included being able to communicate to a global audience. She said:

I remember one of the exciting things that happened to me was when a preacher, a very famous person read a post I had written when the movie, Fifty Shades of Grey came out and I wrote a very opinionated piece on the same. It’s very satisfying to be able to bump into people and they say, ‘I have read your blog’. (BAKE 2 Interview, September 21, 2016)

BAKE 1, who is referred to by some as the grandfather of blogging in Kenya, said he had been online since the late 1990s but that he began his blog in 2001. He revealed that his initial participation on online platforms was intended to help keep him abreast with events in Kenya. “There were no online newspapers then, and most of us had just gotten an email address. So this was one way to stay connected to home and the world” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016).

BAKE 7, who ran a book review blog, said her satisfaction came from “being able to give back to authors and having some readers tell me they read the book [that] I [had] reviewed on my blog” (BAKE 7 Interview, November 28, 2016). Another blogger, BAKE 11 pointed out that blogging had optimized her love of writing. For her, it had “always been about writing - about
being able to tell people stories. I always wanted to be a writer. I feel good that people are reading and liking what I write” (BAKE 11 Interview, November 15, 2016).

Non-BAKE 7 gave similar views on the issue of satisfaction, saying that through the use of historical stories – for example, a story about a forgotten hero or villain whom Kenyans have forgotten about, he attempts to answer questions and share information with lessons from past events. The blogger explained that keeping people interested in his stories takes a lot of creativity as he has to write his articles in an interesting way that would make them attractive to an audience that comprises of avid social media users.

BAKE 5 said satisfaction came from sharing important information with people. He explained: “There is someone who used an article I had written on *nyumba kumi* (ten houses initiative) for his undergraduate research. He wrote to me and told me of the insights he got (from the blogger’s article)” (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016). *Nyumba kumi* (ten homes) is an initiative that was started by the Kenyan government as a way of encouraging people to know their neighbours. The aim was to fight terrorism by asking Kenyans to expose neighbours who they suspect of involvement in terrorism-related activities. BAKE 5’s views were similar to the argument of BAKE 3, who said he used his blog to give his readers a background on various issues in society. He said, “I write stories and people can now make sense of things. For example, this is the fourth time that Uchumi (a leading supermarket chain in Kenya) is in trouble. A blogger will examine past stories and documents and also interview sources to give people a perspective of the current situation” (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016).

BAKE 10 loved blogging because it provided her a flexible working schedule. She argued that as long as there was internet access she could work from anywhere. BAKE 8, a trained journalist, also had similar views. He said he loved blogging and did it as a full-time occupation because he is his own boss and does not have to go to an office.
Sub-theme: How Motivation Affects Production of Blog Content

The bloggers interviewed said that motivation affected the kind of content they posted, and they elaborated on how motivation influences the production process of blog content. They argued that their motivation for producing quality content drives them to research, conduct interviews, and verify facts. Research could be done by going through documents to verify claims made by a source. Verification of facts was through research and using a number of sources for their stories. Non-BAKE 7, for example, explained that he conducted research and interviewed various sources before writing his stories. For other bloggers, motivation to give the audience accurate reports, compelled them to carry out thorough research before posting their stories. Accurate reports, the bloggers argued, would ensure that their readers regard them as authorities in the subjects of their blogs.

Some of the bloggers talked of how the motivation to give their audience educative and helpful content inspired them to undertake research, and to interview credible sources. These bloggers explained that their motivation was to tell credible stories, and not just to build an audience through which to make money through advertising. Some bloggers revealed that they had hired writers to help them source for quality stories for their blogs.

The bloggers interviewed said that their motivation propelled them to post quality stories – quality in this case is linked to the research and thoroughness put into writing the stories. The motivation of the bloggers interviewed also influenced their ethical conduct as they blogged. According to the bloggers, some of the unethical practices they avoided included: posting rumours on their blogs and click baiting – a practice that involves putting up a sensational headline to bait a reader to click on a story. The bloggers further said they adhered to ethical principles such as truth.

Figure 4.5 indicates how motivation affected the type of content bloggers posted, the process that they took to produce content and their ethical conduct as they posted their stories.
Motivation is linked to ethics because a blogger’s goal for blogging determines how he or she handles ethical issues. For example, if one’s main motivation is to make money, one may be tempted to engage in unethical conduct such as writing unverified sensational stories so as to attract an audience which will in turn attract advertisers on one’s blog.

Figure 4.5: Influence of Bloggers’ Motivation on Content, Ethics and Production Process

The section below looks at excerpts from the bloggers’ interviews that talked about how motivation is linked to the type of content they post, and the production processes they engage in. Non-BAKE 1 and Non-BAKE described the danger of looking at money as the main motivation in blogging:

The challenge is that some bloggers may be looking for numbers. To gain followers, they may opt to post scandalous stories. This is called click baiting. You write a crazy headline just to bait someone to click on it, and if you are paid per click, you want many people to click on the story. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)
Non-BAKE 2 argued:

If you are motivated by money, then if money does not come, you will not blog. Money from blogging does not come every day. Money comes from adverts and some people even sponsor to have content posted. But, you must choose which sponsored is worth posting and which is not. (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Non-BAKE 6 explained how his motivation to disseminate information in a free space affected his writing:

Because, I am not writing to make money, I can write freely without looking over my shoulder to see if I am offending somebody or not defending somebody who has financed me. That’s one of the major constraints in mainstream media, where you cannot write negative stories on advertisers. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Non-BAKE 7 told of how his desire to give quality posts influenced his writing: “I have to vet my stories, to check whether they are educative and entertaining. This affects how I do research. I believe in going all the way to get a good story or not writing at all” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016). BAKE 2 gave similar views, explaining that she took time researching her articles. She said: “I would rather not post at all than post something that is not well researched” (BAKE 2 Interview, September 21, 2016). Non-BAKE 8 concurred on the importance of quality: “I read a lot and I research a lot so as to write quality content on my blog. Sometimes, I travel as far as Mombasa to conduct an interview” (Non-BAKE 8 Interview, November 10, 2016). Non-BAKE 3, a technology blogger, contended that because blogging has become a competitive practice, he always aimed at writing quality stories so that he can be considered an authority in his content area. He said: “There are several other people doing similar stuff to what I do. They run their blogs like companies but on my blog, it’s just me. I want to be the first to tell the story but also the best” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016).

BAKE 8 and BAKE 9 both pointed out that their motivation to help people propelled them to look for positive stories that will have an impact on society. This was echoed by Non-BAKE 9, who stated that his photography blog carried “love stories with the aim of showing the power of
love to the audience” (Non-BAKE 9 Interview, November 11, 2016). BAKE 1, BAKE 5 and BAKE 9 linked motivation and the ethical conduct. BAKE 1 said:

If you want to have a credible, authentic voice, then you must be very careful what you write. For example, the steps I take to verify information, and the steps I take to establish the authenticity of what I am writing, takes very long. Previously, I would write a number of posts in a number of hours. Currently, it takes me days when I decide I am going to write something. I research and go deeper because I want to be careful what I publish. All these quoted as received, where one rushes to be the first to post any rumour that one hears, or even deliberately posts false information, is being done by people who purport to be bloggers but are not. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)

BAKE 5 explained that it is his membership with the journalism professional body, the Media Council of Kenya that motivated him to write credible stories. He said: “Because, I have a Media Council accreditation card, I have obligations on what kind of stories I should write” (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016). BAKE 9, a journalist, said: “The values and ethics of a blogger determine who they trade with. For me, even if the money being offered is very good, I will not write a story that goes against my ethics” (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016).

Interpretation under the theme of motivation:

The above discussion showed that the main reasons that motivate the bloggers interviewed to blog are: a need to disseminate information; a desire to make money, advocacy for certain causes; and the satisfaction one gets from blogging. Disseminating information may involve telling stories ignored by media, posting information that one feels is crucial but is unavailable or an extra space to tell stories that bloggers who work in media collect in the news beat but are not reported. However, some bloggers cautioned that some of the motivations for blogging such as making money could lead to unethical practices such as click-baiting. In a bid to disseminate information, some participants also felt that some bloggers rush to be the first to post stories and end up posting rumours. The data further revealed that the bloggers felt that their motivations affected the kind of content they posted on their blogs. In order to produce quality content, the bloggers said they conducted research, interviewed sources and verified their facts.
Apart from the personalised nature of blogging where sharing one’s experience and thoughts is a big part of the practice for some bloggers, it is evident from the bloggers interviewed that some of their motivations for blogging are journalistic in nature. This is illustrated by the fact that those interviewed revealed that they are interested in gathering information and disseminating it to their readers.

The personal nature of blogging is also seen from the bloggers’ descriptions of the kind of satisfaction that they got from blogging. Some of those interviewed explained that they wrote about what troubles them. While, their intentions for doing this is to vent about what they think is wrong, they end up playing an advocacy role by championing issues that matter to society. It also emerged from the data that while the bloggers interviewed did not begin blogging to make money; they have now embraced the business side of blogging. Some of the bloggers interviewed revealed that they left jobs in the mainstream media to do full-time blogging.

Theme 2: Emerging Normative Framework for Blogging Practice

The word normative when used in connection with media refers “to an ideal way for a media system to be structured and operated” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 98). In the study, normative media framework for blogging refers to the ideal structure which news bloggers should use when making ethical decisions.

![Figure 4.6: Sub-Themes under Normative Framework of Blogging Practice](image-url)
As shown in Figure 4.6, the three sub-themes under this theme include the normative models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic participation in relation to the blogging practice, blogs as alternative media and the debate on regulation of bloggers.

Sub-theme: Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Democratic Participant Models

a) Bloggers’ views on the three normative models

The key principle of libertarianism is the argument that media should be free from government control because human beings are rational and they are able to differentiate between the truth and a lie (Baran & Davis, 2012). According to McQuail (2005, p. 172), the main principles of social responsibility theory are: the media have obligations to society, and media ownership is a public trust; news media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant; the media should be free, but self-regulated; the media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct; and under some circumstances, government may need to intervene and safeguard the public interest.

While the key issue in libertarianism is freedom of expression, self-regulation and public interest are two important issues in the social responsibility model. Public interest in this study has been defined as the expectation that media act for “the good of society” by meeting “the needs of their audiences” (McQuail, 2005, p. 565). Therefore, if news bloggers are regarded as part of media, they are then expected to make posts that are for the good of society and not for selfish interest. Still under social responsibility theory, news bloggers are expected to self-regulate themselves if they do not want the government to intervene. Democratic participant model attempts to address the bureaucratic nature of mainstream media and advocates for media that exist at the grassroots level and that highlight the issues of the community. Media that reach out to the grassroots as explained by the democratic participant theory have been described as alternative media. The data collection instruments had questions that probed the participants’
views on which of these three models they felt would be suitable as a basis for coming up with norms to guide bloggers’ practice.

Figure 4.7 shows the number of bloggers either supporting each of three normative models or a combination of the frameworks. Eleven bloggers out of the 26 who participated in the research favour a combination of social responsibility and libertarianism models. The words self-regulation and free speech were mentioned by the bloggers who favoured a blend of libertarianism and social responsibility. Their view was that a framework that guides news bloggers should be a combination of the two models. The argument here was that government regulation should be avoided but bloggers be allowed to practice self-regulation. The bloggers also described blogs as alternative media that is free from editorial and advertising constrains that limit mainstream media.

Eight other bloggers were for a framework that combines the three models of social responsibility, libertarianism and democratic participation. These bloggers felt that blogging should be allowed to flourish freely but that individuals should exhibit responsibility in their writing, while also demonstrating the boldness of alternative media.

Five bloggers felt the best model was that of social responsibility. Bloggers who were in favour of social responsibility felt that government should be allowed to intervene if individuals
failed to adhere to ethics while posting content on blogs. One favoured a combination of social responsibility and democratic participant theories, while another argued that blogging should be totally libertarian. The following section highlights parts of the interviews from bloggers explaining their views.

BAKE 3 said, “Blogging should be libertarian. I don’t think government should regulate. Blogging is about self-regulation” (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016). BAKE 11 said that the reason blogging has thrived is because it does not have the restrictions of mainstream media. BAKE 6 gave similar sentiments. He said, “As long as there is nothing illegal, I think blogs should be allowed to do their thing, those that serve public interest let them be, and those that don’t let them be” (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016). Non-BAKE 1, argued for freedom of expression:

The moment you try to regulate blogging, many people will go anonymous. This might destroy blogging. There is little insanity in everyone. We should encourage self-regulation, for people to use their real names. Today, if you do not like what I write you can take me to court. Blogs should not be treated like mainstream media. We should encourage self-regulation. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

BAKE 1, while agreeing that freedom of expression is crucial in allowing blogging to flourish, emphasised the need for self-restraint:

We need to call out those who have a reputation of publishing defamatory, sexist, insensitive, tribal remarks and tell them this is unacceptable. As one of the older bloggers, I find myself doing that a lot. The older senior bloggers have a reputation and have a responsibility to use their reputation to call out those bad apples among us. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)

Other bloggers favoured public interest; a concept under social responsibility that urges media to be mindful of their audience needs (McQuail, 2005). BAKE 9 and BAKE 5, for example, said they always considered the needs of their audience when blogging. This was also echoed by participant four in the focus group discussion:
Public interest in blogging works because instead of having a few voices, we have thousands of voices, which are able to reach different people who care about different things. So if I care about cars or I care that hospitals are closed, there is someone catering to me in terms of those stories rather than waiting for five media outlets to tell me that I should only care about certain things. (Participant four FGD, December 19, 2016)

Non-BAKE 6, strongly advocated for public interest:

Any blogger worth his salt is blogging along the line of public interest. What will affect society? It is security, corruption or matters concerning children. Of course, there are bloggers who write on fashion, beauty and that’s what interests them. That has nothing to do with public interest. But any blogger who’s passionate about public interest, this is what moves them. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Non-BAKE 8 said he always thought about public interest in his stories on technology. Non-BAKE 3 stated, “Sometimes I write articles that help people make decisions about what products or services to get. This is public interest. I think about the public good. Sometimes it is a technology issue or news” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016). Non-BAKE 5 also said that she always considered public interest when posting on her blog. Non-BAKE 7 was of the view that although, public interest is important, it is not the most crucial issue. However, BAKE 4 argued that public interest depends on the context. He said:

It depends on what issues, when you go political or talk about issues like religion, you also have to consider how society will react. And when you have a huge readership, you know you are reaching in a month close to half a million people, you have to be careful what you are feeding them. (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016)

Non-BAKE 2 argued that public interest is not a big issue in blogging like in mainstream media:

Blogging is majorly expressing of opinions. If I have to express facts in blogging I will. For example, when the Westgate attack happened, mainstream media had to do away with other programmes such as soaps to report on the siege. This does not always apply to blogging. (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Some respondents were of the view that it is up to the blogger to decide whether they will serve public interest or self-interest. “If a blogger decides he or she doesn’t care about the good of the readers, or the public good, then it’s probably after they wrong someone and legal action is taken that they will realise, they made a mistake” (Participant four, FGD, December 19, 2016).

One participant in the FGD explored this balance further:
It’s sort of a balance of the two because as a blogger, it was self-interest that made you start your blog. It’s also your job, so you definitely have self-interest in content creation but of course you have to think about public interest as you reach out to your audience. (Participant five, FGD, December 19, 2016)

However, BAKE 1 felt that public interest is a subjective term that has been used to propagate interests of a powerful minority, especially politicians. He argued:

Who determines what public interest is? Who decides when to stay silent about an issue? Silence is usually determined by the current power structure. Do not say anything that will rock the country as it is currently, because the power that rocks Kenya needs the country as it is. If there is public interest why don’t you tell us who owns your paper? Why don’t you tell us where you are getting the money to follow these politicians around? I think public interest is a convenient label to suppress voices that you do not want heard. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)

Non-BAKE 1 raised similar points:

Who decides what public interest is? Who is society? In the internet, you are operating at a global level. Theories of journalism and media may not apply so much in blogging because mainstream media cover a specific geographical area whose interests might not be as divergent as those covered by the internet. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

BAKE 2 supported self-regulation pointing out that it is important for one to ask whether one is defaming anyone. BAKE 1 favoured a model that cuts across the three models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic participation. He said, “We have freedom of expression and I lie on the side that we should be allowed to say what we want to say. However, I believe we have a responsibility not to shout fire in a crowded theatre,” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016). BAKE 1 explained why he thought the democratic participant model has a place in the African context:

Blogging can be in the democratic participant place where they are multiple voices. Blogging increases the democratic space by allowing people to speak. I used to say that blogging is a very African thing. So blogging is one of the most African things you can do online. We are a continent of story tellers, so I agree with the democratic participant model. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)
b) The key respondents’ views on the three models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic participation

Table 4.1 Communication Experts’ Support for the Different Normative Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normative Models</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The three models</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libertarian model</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social responsibility &amp; Libertarian models</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libertarian &amp; democratic participant models</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social responsibility and democratic participant models</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four respondents from the communication sector supported a normative framework which blended the three models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic participation models. The essence of this argument is that respondents advocated for blogging that has elements of freedom, self-regulation, and also plays the role of alternative media. Those who supported a blend of the three models are the two ICT government officials, the NCIC commissioner, and the Ministry of ICT secretary. The Article 19 regional director argued that the libertarian model was the best model for blogging practice. The MCK CEO and the media trainer favoured a blended version of libertarianism and democratic participation. The KUJ and AMWIK officials supported a social responsibility model. An illustration of the number of respondents who supported the different models is shown in Table 4.1.

The following are segments from interviews with the key respondents from the communication sector. Maina described the libertarian model as the best practice for news bloggers but added that media literacy to help citizens decipher the good and the bad in blogging was necessary. He felt that the democratic participant theory can only work when blogs operate in a small community. He said, “Let blogging space be free but educate the public on the positives and negatives of blogging” (Maina, Interview, October 6, 2016). He illustrated why the democratic participant theory may not apply to blogging:
You may start as a mild person on your blog but once you have a big following you become bolder. This is a challenge to democracy because the few people who try to be sober are demonised and ostracised. There’s a cadre who attack on your behalf and push off those with a counter narrative. The very nature of blogging that would bring interactivity then suffers. Blogs enforce negative ethnicity – this is a challenge to democracy. Sober voices are shouted out. (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016)

The question about the real meaning of public interest was also posed by Maina of Article 19:

Most of the times it is the big players who want to define what is of interest to them and portray it as though it is the interest of the masses. You need to ask yourself if these bloggers have no other interest apart from public interest. In reality, I think it is when bloggers start that they tend to have what you may call generic interest where they are not serving a certain segment of society. However, when they grow and get more readers, they get skewed in serving a certain section of society. So what may be seen as public interest is in fact serving either people who are advertising on their site or are likely to advertise on their site. (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016)

Getao of the Ministry of ICT concurred with Maina that there is need to educate the public on how to critique information posted on social media and blogs. She said the framework for news bloggers work should cut across the three models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic participation. She added that the overriding rule should be the Judeo-Christian law of “do not give false witness about your neighbour” stating that this would ensure that news bloggers strive to tell the truth at all times. Kemunto, a media trainer agreed with Getao that blogging lies under all the three models.

Maryana, an AMWIK member said social responsibility should apply where bloggers carefully consider the kind of content that they post online. She added that some online platforms have ways of bringing down content that may be harmful to society. Mwangi of MCK said:

There can never be a rule because there are bloggers who are out there not because they have public interest in mind and there are bloggers who are out there because they would want to pursue personal interest. Sometimes it is activism geared towards political goals and sometimes it is activism that is purely oriented towards human rights but again with some connotation of self-interest. Some of them are self-serving. Some of the bloggers are people who have been denied opportunities in mainstream media or employment in some certain quarters. And sometimes they get into blogging to revenge. So, it is not all bloggers who respond to the clarion of public interest. (Mwangi, MCK Interview, October 31, 2016)
Mwangi’s views were echoed by Oduor of KUJ: “The professionally-run blogs are serving public interest. Not like the rogue bloggers who are using the space to harass and to malign people and organisations” (Oduor, KUJ Interview, October 4, 2016). Mwangi further argued that news bloggers should ideally serve public interest, but he noted that most bloggers in Kenya focus on content that is not news, hence, their orientation towards self-interest. He described the normative framework for bloggers as a mixture model of libertarian and participatory structures:

Bloggers are more libertarian, in my own view, but of course with a participatory process with many interactions between bloggers and their readers. And of course, when you talk about the libertarian model, there is the sense of non-restrain. It also connotes lack of rules, lack of limitations; it is extremely liberal, and is without checks. But when you talk about the participatory model, there is interaction between the bloggers and members of the public who read and post information. Most of the bloggers actually get information from citizen journalists. (Mwangi, MCK Interview, October 31, 2016).

Sub-theme: Blogs as a Form of Alternative Media

The term, alternative media is best explained by comparing it to the term, mainstream media. Mainstream media are “news outlets that produce content specifically conceived and designed to reach and appeal to a large audience” (Moody, 2008, p. 16). These are the big media corporations which in the Kenyan context are governed by the Media Council Act of 2013. Alternative media, on the other hand, can be looked at from two sides. First alternative media can refer to media that are not part of the “formal corporate mainstream media” (Ndlela, 2010, p. 87) or second, to media that give a voice to small communities and sometimes oppose the hegemonic bureaucracy of government and mainstream media (McQuail, 2005). Blogging has been described as a form of alternative journalism which represents people from backgrounds that range from “amateur political commentators, disaffected professionals, soldiers, politicians, academics, and students” (Atton and Hamilton, 2008, p. 47).

Nearly all the respondents, 34 out of the total 35, felt that blogs are a form of alternative media. All the 26 bloggers who participated in the research argued that blogs are alternative media. Some of the respondents argued that blogs are bolder than mainstream media and so report
on issues that the latter ignore. Another segment of respondents argued that blogs are alternative media because they operate in a liberal space, which lacks the structures that control mainstream media.

The bloggers interviewed felt that blogs are alternative media because they are not subjected to the editorial and advertising constrains that face mainstream media. Others considered blogs alternative media because they advocate for issues in society. Bloggers further contended that blogs are alternative media because they are easy to set up, hence, allowing anyone with internet access to start a blog. They further argued that blogs are alternative media because of the levels of interaction with their audiences.

However, one blogger, BAKE 3, argued that some bloggers did not understand the meaning of alternative media, adding that they had taken the notion of boldness to mean “free to make unsubstantiated allegations” (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016). The Ministry of ICT secretary, Getao did not feel that blogs can be wholly termed as alternative media. She said that while, she hailed blogging for opening up space for ordinary people to disseminate information she felt that most bloggers, were “regurgitating” information carried in mainstream media (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016). Figure 4.8 illustrates the views on blogs as alternative media.

![Figure 4.8: Respondents' Views on Blogs as Alternative Media](image_url)
Oduor of KUJ viewed blogs as alternative media because they break news disseminating it in real time. He further claimed that they also “touch on sensitive topics that traditional media will not immediately tackle,” (Oduor, KUJ Interview, October 4, 2016). An ICT official contended that blogs are alternative media because they offer a different perspective of a story that has not been offered by mainstream media. He said, “Blogs are bolder because mainstream media have structures of operation, they have boundaries. Blogs are first to break stories, mainstream media must confirm before they break the story” (ICT official, one Interview, November 24, 2016). These views were shared by Non-BAKE 4, BAKE 4, Non-BAKE 4, BAKE 5, BAKE 7, BAKE 8, Non-BAKE 8, and BAKE 9.

Non-BAKE 6, said “a lot of scandals are exposed by blogs. Yes blogs can be more fearless because they are personal and it’s a free space” (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016). These respondents attributed this freedom to the lack of editorial constrains in blogging. A commissioner with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission concurred. His argument was: “Blogs are alternative media. They are bolder because they have no structure. They are expanding the space for social interaction. You cannot censor them” (Naituli, NCIC Interview, November 15, 2016).

Kemunto, a media trainer was in agreement: “Blogs run stories in a liberal space. The dilemma is whether to accommodate bloggers as journalists” (Kemunto Interview, November 5, 2016). BAKE 3, argued that blogs in Kenya are alternative media because they enjoy a lot of freedom when compared with those of other countries and even in East Africa. For BAKE 11, blogs are alternative media because they are “a new form of telling stories” and have “allowed Africans to get back to their old tradition of telling stories” (BAKE 11 Interview, November 15, 2016). Non-BAKE 7 said:
Yes, blogging is alternative journalism and blogs are alternative media. Mainstream media cannot cover everything. Blogs have evolved from hobbies and become niche blogs. I think blogs are alternative because people fear bloggers than journalists now. People from all walks of life call us to tackle various stories that mainstream media are unlikely to touch. Some blogs have more traffic than websites of traditional media. Blogging is becoming more important than journalism. (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016)

Some bloggers argued that blogging can be considered alternative because it is free from advertising constrains of mainstream media. According to the bloggers, their non-monetary goal made them more candid in their reporting when compared to mainstream media. Non-BAKE 3 said:

In mainstream media little editorial integrity is maintained because one is both a master and slave because of the advertising aspect. Blogs have the luxury to be brutally honest but even for us, depending on your motivation, you may not go all the way and insult a particular brand because if they are paying and giving you freebies like phones and all, how much of that will you get if you continue criticising them. (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016)

BAKE 4, agreed:

Sometimes, one can be biased towards corporates but when you are independently blogging, you are not compromised. I am one hundred per cent sure there are hundreds of stories that are not published because a journalist writes the story but it’s killed by an editor because of commercial or even political reasons. So I think blogging offers that extra courage to publish some things that would not be published by mainstream media whether they are true or not. (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016)

But some respondents posited that not all blogs can be considered alternative media because some just replicate what happens in the mainstream media. BAKE 1, stated:

Some blogs are part of the alternative media but some are not. If all we are doing is cut and paste. If we are being bought by politicians, then are we alternative? The ideal thing is that we should present an alternative voice. Not exactly in opposition, an alternative voice can still be in support of that issue. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)

Getao of the Ministry was reluctant to refer to blogs as alternative media. She argued that she would not go to a blog to confirm the truth. She said:
Yes, people believe that the blogs expose but they could also be lying. I believe in let’s have all shades of opinion, let people judge for themselves what is true. Is blogging playing the same role as investigative journalism of the 70s and 80s? I don’t think so. It doesn’t seem to command the same respect. People just go there to confirm what they already believe. I don’t think blogging has gained the stature of the best of investigative journalism. Most bloggers have neither the resources nor the capacity that is required to do an expose. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

But there was debate with some respondents on whether blogging is alternative media or has now transformed to become mainstream. Non-BAKE 3, noted that for the generation that is under 30, blogging and social media is mainstream because that is where the group gets information. He argued that in such a case it is mainstream media that is now becoming alternative. Non-BAKE 6, a lawyer and trained journalist also pointed out that there are times mainstream media is the alternative. He said:

Blogging is faster than conventional journalism. I have seen many times when I start putting up posts on a topic and later in the evening, it’s a topical issue in the news. Other times, I write about an issue for a while such that I get called by a media house, either for an interview or to write for their pages. We are at such times that one is the alternative of the other. Sometimes, the mainstream becomes the alternative of the other. Sometimes, the mainstream becomes the alternative and other times what trends on social media is what is happening in the mainstream press. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Maina of Article 19 agreed:

Yes, blogs are alternative media but in some instances they operate as the main media and mainstream become the alternative. Sometimes they break news and sometimes they are the only ones offering a wholistic point of view. And therefore, what we know as mainstream becomes the alternative because most people are first going to go to blogs for the first set of information or for wholistic set of information. (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016)

Sub-theme: Debate on Regulation of Bloggers

This sub-theme looks at the respondents views on regulation. What did regulation mean to the news bloggers? Is debate on regulation necessary? Who should be involved in the debate? Who should lead the debate? What is the role of government in regulation of bloggers? Should there be enactment of new laws to regulate bloggers?
Regulation is part of the normative framework of social responsibility that argues for government intervention in media practice that goes against the public good. Debate on regulation has also been a part of creation of standards for mainstream media both in the Western world and in Kenya (Baran & Davis, 2009; Mutere, 2010; Obonyo & Peel, 2012). From the data gathered, it emerged that the word regulation means various things to the respondents, namely, government control, censorship, a process to shut down social media and a restriction to freedom of speech. Twenty one of the bloggers interviewed were opposed to regulation. These bloggers termed the debate on regulation, a ploy by government to control the blogging practice. Several respondents contended that that there is no need for new regulations and described the current laws as sufficient. The argument was that existing laws are sufficient to deal with bloggers who infringe on other people’s rights.

Other respondents argued that it is impossible to regulate the internet because of its vastness. Respondents who supported debate on regulation of bloggers said that the debate should be held by a multi-stakeholder forum involving all parties concerned such as bloggers, BAKE, the communication sector and government. Some respondents said the debate on regulation is necessary so as to create awareness on the legal issues that may face bloggers. Figure 4.9 shows the perception of those bloggers who were opposed to regulation.

![Diagram](image.png)

*Figure 4.9: What Regulation Means to Bloggers Opposed to It*
A blogger opposed to regulation said: “You see what’s happening with Ezekiel Mutua and film regulation, that’s what is going to happen if you regulate bloggers” (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016). A BAKE official argued: “They want to regulate the internet so that they can control conversations, so that they can put you to jail as an example to other bloggers” (Participant two FGD, December 19, 2016). Another blogger said: “What I have noticed about regulation is that it is about protection of political or commercial interests” (Participant five FGD, December 19, 2016). BAKE 6 said:

It’s a futile thing to regulate bloggers. What does that even mean? Leave bloggers alone. If they break the law, they will face consequences. There are many mechanisms. As long as you have not broken the law, no one should bother you. (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016)

These views were also given by BAKE 1: “There is no need for special regulation, the law and the constitution are sufficient” (BAKE 1, October 17, 2016). Non-BAKE 7 also opposed regulation: “The debate to regulate bloggers is not coming from a genuine place. It is coming from a paralysing fear. So far, it has been more about censorship than growing the space” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016).

Non-BAKE 1 argued that regulation of blogging would be encouraging anonymity:

There is a little insanity in everyone. We should encourage self-regulation for people to use their real names. If you don’t like what I write, you can take me to court. Blogs should not be treated like mainstream media. We should encourage self-regulation. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Non-BAKE 2 gave similar views: “Regulation of bloggers is unacceptable. We have enough laws in Kenya. If a blogger has maligned you, you have a right to go to court and sue that person” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016). For Non-BAKE 5, blogging should not be regulated as that would be “regulating free speech”.

However, some bloggers did not totally oppose regulation: “…if regulation means that bloggers be held to some standards, for example, if as a bare minimum, one should fact-check what one posts, then there are some things that I am beginning to agree with” (Participant 5 FGD,
December 19, 2016. Non-BAKE 8 said it is important to have a debate on the kind of content posted online. Non-BAKE 6 who supports the debate on whether blogging should be regulated said: “The debate is necessary. All stakeholders must participate in the debate. We need to know where we are coming from and where we are going. Bloggers have been known to start fires” (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016). BAKE 11 supported the debate on regulation of bloggers but argued it should be more about teaching bloggers responsibility: “The focus should not be on regulation. Interested bloggers should be trained on the law of the land and how to be responsible” (BAKE 11 Interview, November 15, 2016).

BAKE 4 argued for guidelines rather than regulation:

I would say the focus should not be stopping people from blogging about certain issues such as politics. But there are people who got to extremes. There are people who promote hate and tribalism. There should be guidelines on how to tackle such issues. (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016)

BAKE 5 contended that the debate on whether blogging should be regulated is healthy as it would help bloggers understand legal and constitutional constraints to their practice. This is a position that was supported by BAKE 9 who said some bloggers are unaware of existing media laws.

One of the major issues debated in media regulation is the role of government. In the social responsibility model for example, government is allowed to intervene when the media fails to promote public interest (Baran & Davis, 2009; McQuail, 2005). The argument here is that media ownership is a public trust. Does this apply to the blogging practice? The key respondents from the communication sector argued that the government should play the role of a stakeholder in the regulation debate instead of that of a body creating rules for bloggers. However, three respondents argued that the government should participate in creating guidelines for the blogging practice. Those respondents who strongly advocated for government participation in creating rules were the AMWIK official, the NCIC commissioner, and one of the government officials from the ICT sector.
Figure 4.10: Proposed Government Role in the Regulation Debate

Figure 4.10 illustrates the views of the respondents from the communication sector on the role that government should play in the regulation debate. Some argued that government should only get involved when the laws are broken. Others felt that government should participate in creating awareness of the existing laws. One respondent talked of the need for government to demonstrate good blogging practice through the content put up by government bloggers. Another respondent argued that government’s role should only be in laying out internet infrastructure. Other respondents however, said that government is mandated to give guidelines or pass laws to guide the blogging practice.

The following is a presentation of the various views of the respondents:

Kemunto, a media trainer was of the view that government cannot be kept out of the debate given that associations like BAKE are registered by government under the Registrar of Companies. However, she noted that government should only come in when there are security concerns such as the propagation of ethnic animosity. Oduor of KUJ said the role of government should be in ensuring the law is followed so that people can operate freely. He pointed out that some “bloggers use the blogging platform to intimidate and harass others and even spread hate speech” (Oduor Interview, October 4, 2016).
Maina of Article 19 was of the view that the government should not interfere with blogging and should only play the role of ensuring that internet infrastructure is in place. Mwangi of MCK said government should not interfere with blogging. He advocated that blogging borrows the practice where government allows mainstream media to operate freely under the Media Council Act. Getao of the Ministry of ICT felt that government should play the role of demonstration rather than regulation. She said:

By demonstrating, I don’t mean standing with a placard, but by showing how things are done. Like one of the ways to show how to practice blogging is by government having good bloggers. Demonstration is even more powerful than regulation. We can even create a standard through it. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

However, some respondents from the communication sector contended that government is instrumental in the regulation debate of bloggers. For example, Maryana of AMWIK explained why government involvement is important in giving guidelines to bloggers:

There is freedom of speech, but there is also responsible speech. People fear the word regulation because they think it means that government will shut down blogs. We are taught at BAKE that when one is putting up information, exercise freedom but also be factual. (Maryana Interview, December 7, 2016)

Naituli of NCIC also argued that the government, which he termed a major stakeholder in the fight against hate speech, must be involved in regulating blogging. But government ICT officials interviewed in this research held divergent views on regulation. While one respondent said the government had the right to offer guidelines on how blogs should be run, the other government ICT official said the government’s role in regulating blogging was “a grey area” that needed more research. Maina of Article 19 opposed regulation and described the current laws as sufficient.

Several of the bloggers interviewed were resistant to prospects of new regulation, although they were not opposed to a voluntary non-legal code of ethics (a code of ethics to guide bloggers but which is not legally enforceable). The code of ethics is further discussed under the theme of feasibility of standardisation of the blogging practice.
Non-BAKE 1, Non-BAKE 2 and BAKE 2 did not see the need for new laws to regulate blogging and argued that those aggrieved by bloggers’ posts could use existing media laws to seek redress. Non-BAKE 2 said: “We have enough laws in Kenya and if someone feels a blogger has maligned them; they have a right to sue that person in court” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016). BAKE 1, who was in favour of self-regulation of bloggers through BAKE, said:

Let me be clear. I believe that people should be allowed to publish freely and I believe that the current laws are sufficient to monitor what we write. We do not need any new legislation. There are very strong laws on libel and inciting hatred. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016).

Another blogger said: “We want freedom to point out when things are done right and when they are done wrong. All we need to know is what the law says and stick to that. The law is adequate as it is” (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016).

We are not saying that bloggers are special, they are not. They are real people who live offline lives. If they break the law online, offline laws should be used to punish them. This is something that applies to everyone. For example, if I defame someone, then I should be sued. (Participant two FGD, December 19, 2016).

Another participant in the FGD who advocated for self-regulation through BAKE, argued:

Why should we have extra laws? I feel like this is baggage and just making it more complicated. The laws exist. For me, if someone wrote something false about me and refused to pull it down, I would tell them, “See you in court”. (Participant four FGD, December 19, 2016).

Interpretation under the theme of emerging normative framework for blogging practice

The data has inferred that many bloggers are uncomfortable with instituting legal frameworks for blogging practice. As the preceding interviews and focus group exchanges reflect, bloggers would rather that aggrieved consumers of their content use existing legal forms of seeking redress, including lawsuits. Constructing a regulatory framework specifically for bloggers would curtail the libertarian practice that makes the blogosphere the alternative media to mainstream news outlets that are governed by stringent gatekeeping of their own, often in favour of political and commercial considerations. Scholarship in Kenya and abroad has championed the expansion of this public sphere. Nyabuga (2015, p. 45) has analysed the preponderance of...
commercial and political considerations in “diminishing the media’s credibility as a trusted purveyor of information and fundamentally important platform for the expression, aggregation, and formation of public opinion”. Nyabuga went on to say that:

The maximization of profit and exploitation of audiences for commercial purposes means the media in Kenya often privilege mostly elite issues, marginalising smaller and poorer sectors of potential audiences. This is exacerbated by creeping concentration where the five monolithic media corporations – the Nation Media Group, the Standard Media Group, Royal Media, Radio Africa, and Mediamax Network – now define the media landscape in Kenya. Although they have expanded the public sphere and enriched audience choices and experiences, the Kenyan media conglomerates are often interested in attracting audiences that are economically viable and thus lock out poorer segments of the population. (Nyabuga, 2015, p. 45)

Alternative media can refer to media that are not part of the “formal corporate mainstream media” (Ndlela, 2010, p. 87). According to the arguments advanced by informants and respondents in the data gathered, blogging is assumed to be unlike mainstream media to the extent that, collectively, it embraces a wider diversity of sentiment than do the conventional media outlets. To that extent, many of Kenya’s bloggers believe that their products demonstrate McQuail’s (2005) democratic participant theory. Blogs are bolder, faster in breaking news, more interactive with their audiences, easier to set up (thus democratising information dissemination), they lack structures that would constrain them, and are used as advocacy tools for issues in society.

Figure 4.11 shows a possible normative framework that might be used to guide blogging practice. Such a framework would interlink the libertarian, social responsibility and democratic participant models. Bloggers interviewed consider blogging as free speech and want freedom from government control. However, bloggers also value self-regulation either through the bloggers’ association, BAKE or through individual efforts to embrace ethical behaviour. Bloggers and respondents from the communication sector who were interviewed argued that the blogging practice is subject to existing Kenyan laws and hence, there was no need for extra laws.
Figure 4.11: Emerging Normative Framework for News Bloggers

As Figure 4.11 further shows, the ethical conduct of news bloggers is determined guided by a range of factors. These include guidelines from BAKE, ethical guidelines that may be formulated through a multi-stakeholder forum, existing media laws and personal ethics.

Theme 3: Ethical values that guide news bloggers in their practice

This theme was derived from objective three in the study which examined if news bloggers who are not part of the mainstream media are guided by any ethical values when they transmit news. The second part of objective three was to analyse the ethical values the news bloggers considered in their practice. Three sub-themes emerged under this theme. These are sources of values of bloggers, bloggers’ views about journalistic ethical principles and the process of ethical
decision making. Figure 4.12 illustrates the sub-themes that are part of the theme of ethical values that guide news bloggers in the practice.

Figure 4.12: The Sub-Themes Under the Theme of Ethical Values of Bloggers

McIntosh (2013, p. 1735) defines values as “the beliefs people have about what is right and wrong and what is most important in life, which control their behaviour”. In this study, ethical values were defined as the standards that guide journalists and bloggers in their practice of news dissemination. These values in turn influence their ethical conduct. Journalistic ethical principles are ethical standards contained in the code of ethics for the practice of journalism in Kenya.

Sub-theme: Views of Respondents towards Journalistic Ethical Principles

a) Sources of bloggers’ ethical values

This section begins with a look at the sources that contribute to bloggers’ ethical values. Values are important because they aid in the ethical decision making process and also determine the ethical conduct of a blogger. Day (2006, p. 15) described four sources of values as “family, peer groups, role models, and societal institutions”. Day further expounded that the level of influence that these groups have on people is based on “the unique circumstances of each individual” (Day, 2006, p. 15).
Figure 4.13: Source of Bloggers’ Ethical Values

Figure 4.13 demonstrates the source of bloggers’ ethical values. The bloggers interviewed identified the sources of their values as the profession, religion, family, themselves and the bloggers’ association. Some of those who described the profession as a source of values are trained journalists who are knowledgeable of the standards expected of those who are registered members of the Media Council of Kenya. For others it was the values that were ingrained in them from their family background. A group of others relied on values from religious teachings. Members of BAKE relied on the set of values given to them by the association. Those who gave the self as a source of their values said they considered certain things such as their reputation when they blogged. The responses about sources of values emanated from a probe in the question on the data collection instrument that asked the bloggers what moral principles guided them when they face ethical dilemma. The following are narrations from bloggers on the sources of their ethical values. Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist and also a lawyer, said he was guided by his knowledge of the law, as well as the ethics of journalism.

The blogger added, “I also care about my character, protecting my name” (Non BAKE 6 Interview, November, 14, 2016). BAKE 4 considered family values as an important inspiration for his blogging. He explained: “I try to keep my values. I have daughters and whatever I publish remains online. I want my kids to see (that I have exercised) responsibility in what I do” (BAKE 4
Interview, November 12, 2016). BAKE 5 said, “I am always guided by ethical considerations. I use the code of ethics” (BAKE 5 Interview, October 15, 2016).

For BAKE 8, said the source of his values is religion. He said, “I look at religious values before putting out content. I also consider the marginalised. How will my article affect the marginalised in society? Will my article oppress the marginalised in society?” (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016). BAKE 1 stated that he valued his reputation and would not publish anything that would tarnish it.

b) Modelling bloggers’ principles on journalistic ethics: Preliminary Observations

The respondents were interviewed for their views on the suitability of using journalistic ethical principles to guide blogging practice. Before, the interviews and focus group discussion were held, the research participants were informed that questions on journalistic ethical principles would be based on the Kenyan code of ethics for journalists.

The rationale for using journalistic ethics as a paradigm for discussing standards in the blogosphere is drawn from other efforts worldwide, including by cyberjournalists.net, an online news website which contrived a code of ethics for bloggers by adapting principles from the code of the US-based Society of Professional Journalists (Baran & Davis, 2009). However, the code is yet to receive widespread acceptance among American bloggers as some insist that it does not apply to them as they are not journalists (Davis, 2009). Another scholar, Singer (2015, p. 132) concurred with the adaptation of journalistic standards for online disseminators like blogs and argued that the blogosphere “may lean more towards offering opinions and commentary than offering ‘news’, but the ethics of the communication process are remarkably similar for both bloggers and journalists, regardless of the content”.

In this study, the respondents’ perspectives were sought about 10 ethical principles that are contained or, in one case, implied, in the journalistic code of conduct for Kenyan journalists, as embraced in the Media Council Act of 2013. The ethical principles included: article 2
(accuracy and fairness), article 3 (independence), article 4 (integrity), article 5 (accountability), article 6 (opportunity to reply), article 8 (confidentiality), article 10 (obscenity, taste and tone in reporting), article 14 (privacy), and article 16 (gender non-discrimination).

The 10th ethical principle put to the respondents was that of minimising harm, a principle not expressly stated in the journalistic code, but strongly implied in article 2 (accuracy and fairness), article 4, sub-section 1 (respecting “the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subject of news”) and sub-section 2(a) (protecting confidential sources from harm), article 5 (especially sub-section b, “respond to public concerns, investigate complaints, and correct errors promptly”), article 6(1) (“a fair opportunity to reply to inaccuracies”), article 10, sub-section 3, where “an alert shall be issued to warn viewers or readers” of offensive material, article 19 (protection of children), article 20 (withholding identification of victims of sexual offences), article 21 (taking care with use of pictures and names), article 22 (not identifying innocent relatives and friends of convicts), and article 26 (hate speech). The pervasive motif of minimising harm was deemed to be an important concept that needed be tested as part of what bloggers may consider as potential ethical guidelines for their practice. The decision to use only 10 of the ethical principles was guided by an observation that some of the sections in the code of conduct in the Media Council Act are repetitive.

However, some respondents in this study felt that the ethical principles extracted from the journalism code to guide the data gathering could have been expanded. BAKE 7 argued that issues of copyright and intellectual property ought to have been included in the list of ethical issues. Also, Non-BAKE 4 considered defamation a serious issue to be considered, one which needs to be dealt with both legally and also from an ethical perspective. She was concerned that many bloggers did not consider the consequences of writing articles or making presumptions that unfairly injured the reputations of people. “I feel that defamation is something that needs to be
taken seriously in Kenya. In other countries, if you defame someone, your whole channel is blocked” (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016).

The comments of BAKE 7 and Non-BAKE 4 are not unreasonable feedback. Issues of copyright and defamation are, however, not directly addressed in the Media Council code for journalists used by this study as a comparative model with which to interrogate a Kenyan blogosphere which is not entirely comfortable with any regulation – voluntary or statutory. Therefore, the scope of the study attends to the ethical principles that have been codified by the co-regulatory MCK framework, which is both self-governing and subject to an Act of Parliament (Obonyo & Peel, 2012).

c) Views of respondents towards specific journalistic ethical principles

The most contested ethical principle was obscenity, taste and tone in reporting which had the lowest, and a minority number of respondents, 17 out of the total 35, indicating that bloggers should consider it a guiding principle, against 18 who felt that bloggers could and should do without it as a regulatory principle. Privacy was the second most contested principle with seven respondents out of 35 objecting to its inclusion as an ethical principle for bloggers.

The rest of the principles had 30 respondents and above arguing that they should be included as ethical guidelines for blogging practice. Figure 4.14 summarises the data on the number of respondents who supported the inclusion of each of the ethical principles that the study focused on. As indicated earlier in this study, the total number of respondents was 35 – of these, 26 were bloggers and nine were key participants from the communication sector.
i) Obscenity, taste and tone in reporting

This is an emphasis on avoidance of “obscene or vulgar material unless such material contains news” (Media Council Act, 2013). The code also cautions against using graphic images of “bloody incidents” unless this is in the public interest, and a prior caution is given to audiences. Respondents who did not consider this to be an appropriate guiding principle for blogging, and who were in the majority, felt that the stipulation could be interpreted variously by different people, and therefore would be problematic to implement. They would not want it as an ethical principle advocated for bloggers.

On the other hand, the minority opinion – 17 in number – argued that bloggers needed to keep obscenity from their blogs for the sake of maintaining respectability. Non-BAKE 5 shared similar views: “Stay away from obscenity but taste and tone depends on what you are writing about” (Non-BAKE 5, November 11, 2016). Maryana of AMWIK also argued that the principle is important. She said: “Even when you are talking about something really bad, use proper language. You can use euphemisms to describe something without being insulting” (Maryana Interview, December 7, 2016). Some among the minority of respondents who were clear that content
considered “obscene” to a critical mass of readers should be avoided and discouraged, were less clear on the variable of “taste and tone”, saying it was a requirement that was relative and difficult to define. For example, BAKE 4 stated: “I believe people should self-regulate and think of how whatever they write affects society. Taste and tone can be two-way, but obscenity I don’t agree with it (sic)” (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016).

BAKE 3 dismissed the entire principle of “obscenity, taste and tone” as a restraint on what to publish, saying that decency, taste and tone can only be determined by the blogger.

Ultimately the blogger makes the decision. It can be good taste to one person and bad taste to another. For example, a friend of mine blogs about motherhood, abortion and stuff like that. Someone might say it is in bad taste as it is encouraging young people to have premarital sex, but as a young person that is what she has chosen to write about. (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016)

BAKE 11 gave similar sentiments: “A blog is a personal writing space … you cannot decide for someone what is obscene” (BAKE 11 Interview, December 16, 2016).

Other respondents feared that the obscenity, taste and tone principle may be used to censor bloggers from free dissemination of information. One of the respondents who held this view, Oduor of the Kenya Union of Journalists, said such censorship would prevent blogs from playing the role of alternative media. This notion that the principle may be used to censor bloggers was also raised by the participants in the focus group discussion. The participants wondered whose taste would be used to gauge taste standards, and also how levels of obscenity would be measured. “That’s censorship” (Participant six FGD, December 19, 2016). “Whose taste, what is the measure of obscenity?”(Participant five FGD, December 19, 2016). Participant four in the FGD was of the view that the question of obscenity and taste depended on the kind of content one specialises in: “If you are posting content which leans towards erotica or if you’re a gossip blogger, taste and tone may not apply to you” (Participant four FGD, December 19, 2016).

Even the respondent from the government’s Ministry of ICT had a strong opinion on why the obscenity principle should not be part of blogging standards: “People’s levels of obscenity are
very subjective. For some people a woman bearing her breasts is very offensive; for the Turkana, that’s nothing. Taste is also a matter of opinion” (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016). And the Regional Director for East Africa of the free speech advocacy organisation, Article 19, Maina, argued that this principle is not applicable to bloggers. He said:

This understanding of tone… what is it? What is it telling us? That we can agree and agree in a good tone? This is a vague concept that also appears in the code of ethics for journalists. We cut and paste these principles from other places. What do we mean by tone and even decency? There are bloggers who attract readers by attracting dissent. That is, if I know this (content) will annoy many Kenyans and a million readers will reply to me and Google Sense will start paying me for ads on my site, then this is what I will post. How do you define what is obscene? What is an approved tone? (Maina Interview, October 16, 2016)

The 26 bloggers who participated in the research agreed that that the principles of integrity, accountability, confidentiality and minimising harm could be proposed as ethical guidelines for bloggers. One blogger out of the total of 26 did not think that accuracy should be an ethical principle required of bloggers:

Sometimes you need to post something even when you do not have all the facts. For example, you may not be sure how much money a corrupt official has stolen, but you know for sure some money was stolen. You can write the report then verify the amount of money stolen later. (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016)

![Figure 4.15: Bloggers’ Support for the Various Journalistic Ethical Principles](image)

Figure 4.15: Bloggers’ Support for the Various Journalistic Ethical Principles
As shown in Figure 4.15, obscenity, taste and tone was regarded as a subjective term prone to varying definitions, and was supported as a relevant ethical principle by only 11 bloggers out of 26. Four bloggers felt privacy does not always apply in blogging. For example, Non-BAKE 2 and Non-BAKE 8 argued that respect for privacy depended in the type of blogging, one was engaged in. According to Non-BAKE 2, “entertainment blogs like Ghafla and Mpasho [two Kenyan blogs that specialise in gossip] would not exist if we allowed privacy” (Non-BAKE 2 interview, September 30, 2016). Three bloggers felt that conflict of interest may not apply to bloggers because a blog is a personal space that an individual sets up for personal reasons. Two bloggers did not see the need for the gender non-discrimination principle – a concept which the Media Council Act of 2013 explains as one that advocates for women and men to receive equal treatment as either sources of news or subject of stories.

The following section looks at how the 35 respondents, who included the key respondents from the communication sector, regarded each of the ethical principles, apart from obscenity, taste and tone in reporting which was discussed above.

ii) Accuracy and fairness

The code of ethics for Kenyan journalists describes accuracy and fairness as the expectation that journalists write “a fair, accurate and unbiased story” (Media Council Act, 2013). The question here was whether this obligation should be extended to bloggers. Thirty-two out of the 35 respondents agreed that accuracy and fairness is an ethical principle that bloggers should follow. However, three of the respondents were reluctant to endorse it as an ethical principle that should be considered by bloggers. BAKE 1 wondered who would set the standards of what is accurate and fair. Non-BAKE 2 felt that what sets aside bloggers from mainstream media is the liberty which bloggers have to disseminate, and then verify the facts later. “For example, you may not be sure how much money a corrupt official has stolen but you know for sure some money was
stolen. You can write this story and then get more facts later” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016).

Meanwhile, Non-BAKE 4, a trained journalist, said she agreed with accuracy but considered fairness relative: “What I consider fair is not what another blogger would consider fair” (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016). She found support from a participant in the focus group discussions, who said:

Accuracy is about being factual. It is about fact checking. I believe people should be accurate when they present information. But when you talk about fairness, what is fairness? For example, if I review a film and say it’s horrible from my perspective, someone will say I am unfair. So I feel we can be accurate, but fairness is subjective. (Participant four FGD, December 19, 2016)

But, Maina of Article 19 argued against both notions of accuracy and fairness: “You can’t say that you are the sole carrier of truth. By their nature, bloggers are not going to say that they will interview every possible source” (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016). According to Maina, while audiences may not necessarily have expectations that bloggers will be accurate, they require mainstream media to verify information by interviewing different sources that will give a report authenticity.

iii) Independence/Conflict of Interest

Independence/Conflict of Interest is described as the resolve to resist any outside influence when reporting (Media Council Act, 2013). Thirty of the 35 respondents said bloggers needed to demonstrate independence when posting their stories. Some of those who argued that independence would be a good ethical principle for bloggers to adhere to, felt this would determine bloggers’ success as the alternative media that boldly reported on issues that the mainstream media would not engage with. These respondents were of the view that if a blogger accepted payment from a news subject for writing positively about them – whether deservedly or nor – then the blogger would lose his or her independence. The KUJ secretary general said: “We need bloggers to be independent,
because when they become (compromised), they negate their role of filling in the gap of news dissemination” (Oduor Interview, October 4, 2016).

For some bloggers, independence raised the question of integrity. Non-BAKE 3 said: “Independence is strength of character. Finding this balance can be a challenge for both bloggers and journalists” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016). An officer in the Ministry of ICT asked: “…. which of us is independent? There are bloggers who are paid to give a certain slant and similarly [in] media houses, editorial policies are affected by advertising” (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016). BAKE 6 pointed out how commercial interests made it difficult for bloggers to be independent:

Some bloggers post something and pose like they are independent when they are being paid. I have no problem if you are being paid, but your readers should know that you are. If you’re being paid to write about a product, I need to know so that I know that you may not be impartial. The problem here is not you being paid, what’s wrong is if you are posing as if you are writing an independent piece. (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016)

However, some respondents were of the view that independence should not be forced on bloggers. After all, they argued, the question of independence and conflict of interest is not a problem confined to bloggers, but one that affects mainstream media too. “Biases? There are biases everywhere. If one has a bias, they are free to exercise it on their blog” (BAKE 10 Interview, December 16, 2016). For Non-BAKE 6, bloggers cannot fully embrace independence because of the nature of their practice:

Bloggers write a lot about things that they have interest in. No one is telling you depart from this space because you have interests. A lot of people may blog about cases they have dealt with or things in their social life; things they are interested in. They want people to know them. The blogs are an extension of themselves. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Others, for example, Article 19 regional director, Maina felt that the audience is intelligent enough to tell when a blogger has written the post at the behest of someone. “You do not need a third party to tell you that you are not independent” (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016).
iv) Integrity

The Kenyan journalism code of ethics describes integrity as reporting of news with decency and avoiding acts such as giving gifts to get news or accepting or soliciting gifts so as to report news in a certain way (Media Council Act, 2013). All the 35 respondents were in agreement that integrity is an important ethical principle for bloggers. However, Getao from the Ministry of ICT was sceptical on the practicality of enforcing this on bloggers. She said: “Integrity is a moral principle. I subscribe to it. I wish that all bloggers would have integrity but it’s not something that I can legislate” (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016).

v) Accountability

Accountability has been described as the responsibility that journalists have to themselves, their profession and the public (Media Council Act, 2013). Thirty-two respondents said that accountability should apply to bloggers, suggesting that those who blog should not be impulsive, but should consider their own reputations as well as those of others, and how what they publish will resonate with the reading public. Yet even amid this overwhelming majority affirmation, the issue remained how to enforce accountability when significant numbers see blogging as a personal, rather than a fraternal-professional pursuit. Non-BAKE 6, and Article 19 regional director, Maina, although of the minority view in this instance, felt that it was unnecessary to impose the requirement of accountability as a motivation on bloggers, arguing that the law, and the effects of audience response, have a way of ensuring restraint.

vi) Opportunity to reply

Opportunity to reply according to the Kenyan code of practice for journalists is the right accorded to those who want to respond to “inaccuracies” in stories (Media Council Act, 2013). Thirty-four respondents concurred with the notion that bloggers should adhere to the principle of opportunity to reply. However, Non-BAKE 5 disagreed. He argued: “Opportunity to reply does not always apply to bloggers. You are not obliged. There are those who do it and those who do not”
Another blogger, Non-BAKE 3 told of his experience, when a reader asked for right of reply: “I had a situation where someone wrote a nasty piece as a reply and was telling me to publish it. I told the person, I came up with this blog, I choose who and what to publish!” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016).

Non-BAKE 1 who agreed that opportunity to reply was a value that bloggers should follow said: “Yes, this should be there for any respected blog. I post the reply as it is given to me, and I don’t even allow editing even if there are grammatical errors” (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016). BAKE 4 felt that opportunity to reply comes easily in blogging because it is an interactive forum. Non-BAKE 6 said that it depends on the type of article one was posting. “If I am writing on something that somebody needs to reply on or something that I consider serious and of national importance then I will always look for a reply but if it is an opinion, I don’t” (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016).

vii) Confidentiality

This is the protection given “to confidential sources of information” (Media Council Act, 2013). Thirty four respondents viewed confidentiality as an important ethical principle. However, the ICT secretary in the Ministry of ICT felt that this is a concept that people use to spread information that is not true. She said:

If you think that you will get in trouble then don’t say anything. I think anonymity is something people hide behind so that they will not be held accountable. If you believe in something so strongly, you should be willing to die for it. I think what’s scary is the number of people who like whispering things in the dark. I think people would be a lot more accountable, if we take away anonymity. If you are not willing to die for something then don’t say it. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

viii) Privacy

Privacy is the principle that cautions against intrusion into people’s private lives, unless the matters being reported on have a public interest angle (Media Council Act, 2013). Twenty eight of
the 35 respondents agreed that privacy was an important ethical principle for bloggers, while seven were sceptical of the proposal to include it as a guideline for bloggers.

BAKE 1, who supported privacy as a proposed ethical principle for bloggers, said: “Having a blog does not give you a right to violate someone’s privacy” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016). Non-BAKE 6 contended that although some bloggers make money from gossip, there should be a limit to privacy violations:

If you are a blogger concerned about standards you should be aware of the constitutional provisions of the right to privacy. If you choose to violate someone’s privacy, you should know how far you can go and the consequences of your actions. For example, if you get hold of someone’s medical reports and you publish them, you can be sued. I think breach of privacy is only justifiable when it is for the public good. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Maryana of AMWIK also emphasised the need to think whether the violation of someone’s privacy is in public interest:

I think privacy is a very important component because even before you post a story, journalistic principles say verify your source, or get confirmation or talk to the source and tell them I want to publish this. If they do not want you to publish the information and it is about their private lives, then you must ask yourself your motive for publishing the report. (Maryana Interview, December 7, 2016)

Some of those who felt that it would be hard to adhere to privacy attributed this to the fact that some bloggers ran blogs that specialise in violating people’s privacy. Non-BAKE 2 said:

What people don’t understand is that once you become a public figure your private life ceases. So let those bloggers who are stalkers continue stalking celebrities so that we know what they are up to. If I am a blogger and I want to expose something, I will stalk you until I get the information that I need. You know we have entertainment blogs like Ghalfa and Mpasho and those blogs would not exist if they considered people’s privacy. (Non-BAKE Interview, September 30, 2016)

Others were of the view that privacy only holds when someone is in a private space. Maina (Article 19) explained the intricacies of protecting one’s privacy in the era of social media:

Those who blog do not owe me privacy, I must keep my privacy. If I choose to do things publicly and bloggers write about it, I shouldn’t blame anyone. I think social media is beginning to redefine what we have been calling private spaces and public spaces. One must strive to protect their privacy. (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016)
Getao (ICT Ministry) argued that individuals are to blame for some of the violations of their privacy:

I think individuals give up their privacy and then blame bloggers. You are the one who chooses to put your photos on Facebook. I think people should just realise that privacy no longer exists and get on with it. Though we have created norms in things like dressing and language over the centuries, we are yet to create norms for privacy. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

ix) Gender non-discrimination

This deals with the advice to news sources and news subjects equally regardless of their gender (Media Council Act, 2013). Thirty of the respondents considered this concept, an important ethical principle for bloggers to follow. However, five of the respondents argued that given the niche-nature of blogging, some blogs may be geared towards focusing exclusively on women issues. Maryana of AMWIK was one the respondents who pointed out the importance of gender non-discrimination:

The gender spaces have become a combative arena. It goes both ways. In some spaces we represent women interests, so we cannot have a man saying anything. On the flip side, women may not be allowed to voice their opinion in some spaces. (Maryana Interview, December 7, 2016)

Non-BAKE 8, Non-BAKE 5, Non-BAKE 6 and Maina of Article 19 argued that blogs should not be used to incite against one gender. But in their responses, they also posited that the concept of gender non-discrimination may not apply to those blogs that focus on a particular gender. Oduor (KUJ) said it is important to protect women from online bullying. However, Getao of the Ministry of ICT termed gender a non-issue:

I am not a firm believer in gender. I don’t really understand what the issue is. A human being is a human being. Blogging is in its very nature discriminatory and blogging gives you a choice not to read it. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

x) Minimising harm

Plaisance (2010, p. 306) defined the concept of minimising harm as “acknowledging the potential to cause harm” and “placing a premium on efforts to minimise that harm”. The same
author further stated that minimising harm involves “multiple dimensions and manifestations, ranging from inflicting physical pain, to damaging one’s economic options, to not treating others with dignity and respect” (Plaisance, 2010, p. 306). Although the code of ethics for the practice of journalism in Kenya does not expressly talk about minimising harm, it has sections that touch on issues that have to do with the concept. These include, protecting children, protection of victims of sexual assault, and caution against intruding into people’s grief.

All the 35 respondents were of the view that minimising harm is an ethical concept that is good for bloggers. Non-BAKE 4 was of the view that a lot of bloggers do not adhere to this concept. She said: “I have seen and read many stories where some blog posts have harmed people and their families, for example, by writing defamatory stories and infringing on people’s privacy. I think it [the principle of minimising harm] should apply to bloggers. However, will it work?” she asked, suggesting that enforcement and compliance in the blogosphere could be problematic (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016). Non-BAKE 6, felt that minimising harm should be embraced without fail. He argued:

First, it should be your conscience as a human being that guides you. Secondly, the fact that you are typing away at some keyboard somewhere means that you have some level of education. It would be understandable if one was illiterate, but sometimes even one without education will not do some things. If you take photos of dead people, how much of that should you publish? What kind of human being are you? So yes, bloggers should consider minimising harm before they put up some things on their blogs. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

However, Getao from the Ministry of ICT contended that while it was good for people who disseminate information to consider the concept of minimising harm, it should not be forced on bloggers. She argued: “The goal should be towards education and equipping rather than censorship. That’s something where the government, in its communicating role, can do the equipping” (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016).

Maina of Article 19 said that the minimising harm concept should not be used to conceal the truth. He posited that while it would be prudent to protect the vulnerable when reporting certain
stories, the truth should nevertheless be told. He explained the genesis of minimising harm which he posited was a term borrowed from genocide. His view was:

For example, if you are reporting about rape and you say some women were raped while it is a large number of women from a certain descent who were raped, the two mean different things. The first report appears to be downplaying the crime. That’s what I mean when I say; do not use minimising harm to downplay a serious vice in society. (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016)

xi) Ethnicity and hate speech

This principle was derived from the National Cohesion and Integration Act of 2008. The Act defines hate speech partly as publication of “threatening, abusive or insulting words” aimed at stirring up “ethnic hatred”. Ethnic hatred has been described as “hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins” (NCIC Act, 2008). Social media and blogs have been termed as purveyors of ethnic hatred and hate speech. The discussion on hate speech was confined to the in-depth interviews carried out with the 20 bloggers.

All the 20 bloggers interviewed said they do not post material that contained ethnic hatred or hate speech. One of the bloggers, BAKE 4, said he has a code of ethics that guides his writers on how to handle matters of negative ethnicity and hate speech. Some bloggers said they moderate the readers’ comments section to ensure that no hate speech is disseminated through that section. Other bloggers called for a discussion on what constitutes hate speech. BAKE 1 pointed out that it is crucial to define hate speech and dangerous speech. He argued that the government had on occasions used the hate speech law to limit citizens from freely expressing themselves. He said, “If we get this definition, then we’ll deal with this in our online speech. The freedoms that we are entitled to offline, we are also entitled to online” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016).
Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist, stated that although hate speech is a crime that should be avoided, there is need for debate on the issue:

There are some things on ethnicity that should be confronted. We avoid this debate as a country, but this is not right. Sometimes, I go to forums where people write a lot of things that border on ethnic hate and stereotypes and I expose the negativity of these things. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Non-BAKE 1 and Non-BAKE 2 also advocated for a debate on the definition of hate speech and argued that some people had been arrested for simply airing opinions. Non-BAKE 1 said:

If you call for violence or for arms to kill a group of people, then you should be arrested. If you want to regulate the internet, then regulate the leaders first. If you insult someone, that’s an opinion which should be countered with another opinion. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Non-BAKE 2 stated: “I try my best to act within the Kenyan law. If you put hate speech on your blog, you’ll be arrested. But there are things that look like hate speech but they are not hate speech.” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016). He argued that some people had been arrested for holding discussions on prevalent stereotypes about the various Kenyan ethnic communities. Non-BAKE 2 termed these arrests wrongful, as according to him, these stereotypes are not hate speech but a way for the Kenyan communities to poke fun at themselves by associating a newsmaker’s demeanour and conduct with a stereotype associated with their ethnic background. Non-BAKE 8, a political blogger, explained how he deals with hate speech:

I try not to post tribal posts. I try not to allow my political blog to become a platform for people to spread hate. I am my own gatekeeper, I control what I post. I have to approve any comments that appear on the readers’ comments section. (Non-BAKE 8 Interview, November 10, 2016)

General views on the principles

According to the key respondents from the communication sector, the ethical principles flouted most by bloggers include accuracy and fairness, independence, integrity, confidentiality, privacy, obscenity, taste and tone in reporting and minimizing harm. The six bloggers who participated in the focus group discussion identified accuracy as the ethical principle that is
flouted the most. But, participant two in the FGD argued that the issue should not be about the
ethical principles bloggers flout, but about the ethical issues they struggle with:

> You cannot do something wrong which you didn’t know was wrong. It is not like media
where you have these ethical issues ingrained in you. Media people do not follow these
rules because they care so much, it’s because they are afraid to get in trouble. They know
they could be sued, so they are careful. (Participant Two FGD, December 19, 2016)

However, Maina of Article 19 explained the reason why bloggers are reluctant to follow
any guidelines: “These people have understood something that we have refused to understand.
That is the way they do headlines. They know that you will click the stories and they will get the
Google ads” (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016).

The bloggers who participated in the focus group discussion felt that all the principles
outlined above apart from obscenity, taste and tone are important in the blogging practice.
According to the key respondents from the communication sector, important ethical principles for
bloggers include accuracy and fairness, confidentiality, integrity, accountability, independence,
minimising harm, privacy, opportunity to reply and obscenity, taste and tone in reporting. One of
the respondents described the importance of accuracy by explaining her frustration with the
quality of most blog posts. She said:

> You see a pouring of this undigested, unresearched (sic) information. But for me, it is a
matter of taste as well. I see a lot of rubbish on the blogs. Here, we’ve been given one of
the biggest resources in history, a chance to almost change the world. And then some
people sit and use it to broadcast rubbish, 24 hours a day. Rubbish that not only destroys
people but also gives out information that is not useful, not well thought out, and not
thought provoking. And I am saying this is an expensive resource and someone is using it
so recklessly. So, quality is a big issue that is lacking in blogging. (Getao Interview, 
December 22, 2016)
Sub-theme: Bloggers’ Process of Decision Making

This section examines the ethical theories that guide the bloggers work, and the various groups in society bloggers owe a moral duty to.

a) Ethical theories that guide bloggers in their work:

Scholars have identified deontology, teleology and virtue ethics as key ethical theories that help in moral reasoning (Patterson & Wilkins, 2014; Plaisance, 2009). These theories help individuals deal with ethical dilemmas that confront them (Plaisance, 2009). Each of these theories has a distinct focus. Teleology focuses on the outcome weighing in how much pleasure it provides as opposed to harm, deontology focuses on the action and weighs whether it is one that can be applied universally, while virtue is concerned with the character of the person performing the action (Patterson & Wilkins, 2014).

The bloggers gave varied responses on the ethical theories that apply to them when they are making a decision whether to post or not post something. Three of the respondents said they considered the consequences of their action, four said they thought about their moral duty, four said they were concerned about how what they post would reflect on their character, four respondents used all the three theories, three considered both consequences and duty, two thought about character and the consequences of their actions.

Figure 4.16 summarises the views that the bloggers gave on the ethical theories that guide them in their practice. The illustration shows that there was almost an equal number of the bloggers interviewed that think about the action (deontology), the outcome (teleology), and the character (virtue). Those that use the three theories are equal to those who consider the theories individually. Ten bloggers consider character, 12 think about consequences, while eleven are concerned about using rules that they would like to see applied universally. Below are some excerpts of the some of the bloggers on the theories that guide them in making ethical decisions.
BAKE 5, a blogger who had also registered with the Media Council of Kenya, said: “I am a teleologist, I think about the consequences of my actions” (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016). BAKE 1 said he thought about how his posts reflected on his character and credibility. He said: “If I don’t want to believe a story, I verify it twice. If I want to believe a story, I verify it three times. This is one area we can learn from journalists and their code of ethics” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016). BAKE 4, described himself as virtue ethicist:

I try to keep my values not because of the consequences that may arise but because I have three daughters and what I will publish will remain online. I want my kids and the people I work with to see responsibility. (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016)

Non-BAKE 4 explained she considered the consequences of her action: “The people I interview have families, bosses and friends. If I go out and tarnish their names, I don’t think I will be able to sleep at night” (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016).

b) Moral duties/accountability of bloggers interviewed

Christians et al. (2012) outlined five categories of those that one may owe moral duty to. These are the different categories of people that one has an obligation to (Turow, 2014). These are oneself (listening to one’s conscience); duty to one’s clients/subscribers/supporters (people who pay one’s bills); duty to one’s organisation; duty to professional peers and duty to society (social
responsibility emanates from this duty). Patterson and Wilkins (2014) contended that professional ethics is all about the obligations that one has, to whom they are owed and the values that reflect these values.

Who were the Kenyan bloggers interviewed in this study accountable to? To answer this question, it is important to define the term accountability. Waite (2008, p. 10) defined accountability as “liability, answerability, responsibility”. Pritchard (1991) described media accountability “as the process by which news organisations or journalists are obliged to render an account of their activities to recognised constituencies such as audience members, news sources, advertisers, professional colleagues, or government regulatory bodies”. He went on to describe an account as “an explanation, or justification, of one’s conduct”. The Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism contained in the Media Council Act, 2013 has stated that journalists are accountable to “the public, the profession and themselves” (Media Council Act, 2013, p. 1230).

According to Nemeth (2000), there are various ways in which media organisations try to deal with accountability. This is through “ethics codes, news ombudsmen, media criticism, and press councils” (Nemeth, 2000, p. 42). However, Nemeth described the accountability process as “a simple process, one that occurs countless times every day without the benefit of formal mechanisms of media accountability” (Nemeth, 2000, p. 42). The scholar argued that smaller media organisations are better at dealing with media accountability because they have less bureaucratic structures making them closer to their audiences. This argument could explain why the bloggers interviewed in this study felt that besides themselves, the audience is their next important level of accountability.

Table 4.2 illustrates the views of the bloggers on accountability. The fact that the word self appears seven times in the nine categories is a demonstration that the bloggers interviewed viewed accountability as something that concerns them more as individuals rather than their peers. The
only other group that seemed to also matter a lot to the bloggers in the issue of accountability is their audience.

*Table 4.2: Accountability Views of the Bloggers Interviewed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Number of Bloggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self and BAKE/Peers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self and Law</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self, audience and God</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self, audience, law and profession</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self, clients &amp; audience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self and audience</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers given by the bloggers to explain accountability reveal the individualised nature of blogging. Sixteen of the bloggers interviewed included self as one of the groups whom they owe accountability to. These bloggers argued that they are individually, the major determinant of the kind of content put up on their bloggers. Thirteen bloggers included the audience as one of the groups that they are accountable to. Two felt that besides themselves, the law and the profession were the groups they are accountable to. Only two of the bloggers interviewed said they thought about BAKE and fellow bloggers when deciding on what to post. One blogger said he is accountable to society and one said he thinks about God and his Christian faith when putting up his posts.
Like discussed earlier, Figure 4.17 clearly illustrates that the bloggers interviewed valued accountability to themselves and their audience. They also valued accountability to the law and the profession. Those bloggers who mentioned the profession were bloggers who are trained journalists, with some being registered members of the Media Council of Kenya.

Non-BAKE 3 explained this concept of self-accountability: “As things stand we are accountable to ourselves but remember there are laws in place and someone can take you to court” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016). Non-BAKE 2 gave similar views: “Bloggers are not accountable to anyone; we just say we are accountable to the audience” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016).

However, BAKE 8 underscored the feeling that bloggers are more accountable to their audience rather than peers. He said, “I am not accountable to BAKE or my fellow bloggers. I am accountable to my readers” (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016). BAKE 6 differed “I am accountable to myself. It is up to the person posting to regulate themselves. For me, I will not post anything that is false. I will not break the law. It is really up to me” (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016). BAKE 1 argued that he is accountable to himself and his audience. “I have respect for my

Figure 4.17: Representation of How the Bloggers Regard Accountability

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audience. I consider them intelligent and rational people. It is up to the writer and up to the reader” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016).

One blogger, BAKE 5 emphasised the importance of the blogging community. She said, “I think you are accountable to everyone online. Once [something is posted on] the internet, the internet cannot forget. But I think that the primary people that you are accountable to, is your community, which in this case is BAKE” (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016). BAKE 2 also stated that she is accountable to her fellow bloggers and BAKE. The contention of BAKE 2 and BAKE 5 is contrary to the views that of some bloggers, who feel that they do not need the association to hold them accountable. For example, Non-BAKE 5 said: “I am accountable to myself because this is my blog” (Non-BAKE 5 Interview, November 11, 2016). Non-BAKE 2 also opposed accountability to BAKE: “I am not accountable to other bloggers. I am campaigning for an independent association that won’t police bloggers, but guide them” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016). On accountability to society, Non-BAKE 1 said:

I am accountable to society in general. It is easier to be accountable on social media than mainstream media because on mainstream media you can give an apology but you won’t necessarily give the same prominence to the story. On social media, someone can counter you, if they don’t agree with you. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

c) How bloggers make ethical decisions

There are various factors that influence the ethical making decision process of the bloggers interviewed. These include scrutiny by peers, especially for those who are members of BAKE; accreditation by professional associations like the media council; the audience; demands of the law; and personal values.

Peer scrutiny is the process through which bloggers who are members of BAKE ensure that their colleagues adhere to ethical standards. Through their association as a blogging fraternity, bloggers who are members of BAKE can be called out on unethical behaviour and content by their fellow members. But as the research shows, there are those bloggers who resist a formal association, and BAKE in particular, and who want to be left to their own devices. For those,
personal values may be the yardstick and influence used in their practice, especially since many of the non-BAKE members argued in the interviews that they did have individual principles which guided their ethical decision-making.

Another option for peer scrutiny might be the Media Council of Kenya – but only if the bloggers concerned are also *bona fide* journalists. MCK accreditation is possible for bloggers who are trained journalists, those who have previously worked for mainstream media, or those who are professionally associated with institutions of good standing. These bloggers would be expected to adhere to the ethical principles outlined in the Media Council Act (Mwangi Interview, October 31, 2016).

Conformity to legal parameters is another way of ethical compliance. Legal requirements are the various media laws that influence the blogging practice. Some of these laws are the Defamation law, the Hate Speech law, and the constitutional requirements of privacy, among others. In addition, accountability to the audience is also instrumental in ethical decision-making. This was indicated by the data gathered from the in-depth interviews which showed that 13 bloggers out of 20 think about their audience when they are posting material online.

For example, BAKE 9, a trained journalist who had a business/development blog, said she applied both professional and personal ethical values:

I am a trained journalist and I know what to publish and how to say it before I publish it. Number two, being a journalist who is accredited by the Media Council, we have a code of ethics; there are things I will not publish because I take my blog as any other media house. (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016)

BAKE 6 said he used the law and personal values. BAKE 4, who ran a blog that had several employees, stated: “I have several general rules which are in-house for the people who I work with. I avoid as much as I can, defamatory stories, stories that might destroy people’s lives, relationships and self-esteem” (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016). Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist and also a lawyer, argued that he considered professional ethics and personal values.
BAKE 2, a lifestyle blogger, said she tries to put up posts that highlight family values. BAKE 11 said she relies on personal values.

Non-BAKE 2 said: “Sometimes, I am duty-bound and sometimes I think about consequences” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016). Non-BAKE 7 said: “I ask myself how my story might affect the people I am writing about, they are real people and I don’t write with a motive of destroying their lives” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016). BAKE 11 spoke about grappling with catering for audience needs versus clients’ demands. She pointed out:

Do you tell your audience that the content you have put up is sponsored? Sometimes it is obvious that content is sponsored, but sometimes it is not obvious. In Kenya we have not reached a situation where you are compelled to declare sponsored content. There are also sponsors who do not want you to give the slightest hint that the post is sponsored. (BAKE 11 Interview, November 15, 2016)

Interpretation under ethical values theme

The discussion in this section indicates that the news bloggers interviewed adhere to a number of ethical values. Some of the ethical values are journalistic in nature; others are personal; while others are those prescribed by the bloggers association, BAKE. The data also showed that bloggers interviewed consider most journalistic ethical principles important in the blogging practice. However, the respondents had issues with the ethical principle of obscenity, taste and tone, arguing that it is a subjective concept that can be interpreted in various ways by different people.

A few of the bloggers were also not convinced that the ethical principle of privacy applied fully to bloggers, arguing that those who run blogs that focus on gossip, cannot adhere to this concept. The bloggers also acknowledged that although accuracy is one of the important ethical principles in publishing, it remains a challenge to bloggers as their products often do not undergo stringent verification processes that are common in mainstream media houses.
Figures 4.18 and 4.19 in the previous page illustrate how some bloggers end up causing harm when they post unverified information. The blogger, Cyprian Nyakundi had posted a tweet saying one of Kenya’s veteran broadcasters, Leonard Mambo Mbotela had died in a road accident. It was later established that it was a politician who had died. After being criticized by other social media users for his inaccurate information, Nyakundi was forced to apologise (Figure 4.19).

While making ethical decisions, the bloggers felt their responsibility lies with self and their audience. Interestingly, although most of the bloggers interviewed (11) were from BAKE, only two felt that they owed a duty to the association when making an ethical decision. This finding reinforces the personalised nature of blogging when one compares the practice with journalism,
where peers from the media fraternity form a large part of those that a journalist is accountable to.

Theme 4: Explaining the ethical conduct of Kenyan bloggers

The theme of ethical conduct emerged from objective four which examined bloggers’ views on claims that their practice breaches ethics. Foreman (2011, p. 5) defined ethics as “a set of moral principles, a code – often unwritten – that guides a person’s conduct”. Conduct is “the way in which a person behaves” (Waite & Hawker, 2009). Ethical conduct therefore, describes behaviour that conforms to the expected principles or standards of information dissemination.

**Figure 4.20: Sub-Themes under the Theme of Ethical Conduct of Bloggers**

Figure 4.20 shows the three sub-themes that emerged under this theme of ethical conduct. The sub-themes are perceptions of bloggers on claims of unethical conduct, perceptions of key communication respondents on ethical conduct of bloggers and factors that influence the ethical conduct of bloggers.

**Sub-theme: Perceptions of Bloggers on Claims that they are Unethical**

This sub-theme was derived from objective number four which was to examine the bloggers’ views on claims that their practice breaches ethics. Figure 4.21 illustrates the bloggers’ views on claims that their practice is unethical.
Twenty-one out of the 26 bloggers who participated in the research were of the belief that the majority of Kenyan bloggers are ethical. However, two of the bloggers interviewed described the conduct of bloggers, as a “mixed-grill” and another spoke of “50-50” giving the view that there is an equal number of good bloggers to that of unethical bloggers. Three other bloggers felt that accusations of unethical conduct were valid.

Those who were of the view that Kenyan bloggers were, in the main, ethically responsible, often repeated concerns that a few bad cases were tarnishing the work of the conscientious majority. Take Non-BAKE 7’s argument that the perception that bloggers are unethical was not correct. “Bloggers are not as bad as we are made to believe. The blogging world is an open field. The focus has been on the few rogue bloggers, ignoring the majority who are providing helpful and enlightening information to the society” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016). His contention was that bloggers play a huge role of disseminating information. BAKE 4 claimed that it is only “a small number” of bloggers, who are unethical (BAKE 4 Interview, November, 12, 2016). This contention was backed by BAKE 1, who said: “Kenyan bloggers are largely much more positive than negative. You can probably count one or two instances when bloggers have crossed the line” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016). BAKE 8 concurred and said that by his assessment, 80 per cent of the bloggers are ethical, while only 20 per cent are unethical. And yet,
he added that it was the few transgressions by the 20% that lead to the smearing of all bloggers are unethical. Non-BAKE 8 gave a similar view, arguing that there are many types of bloggers and some are doing good work.

Participants in the FGD argued bloggers had been labelled unethical because of the conduct of one or two bloggers. Participant one in the FGD, a BAKE official, offered the following analogy:

It’s the same thing when you go to a market: at one corner, you find this mentally challenged person shouting, saying anything he wants to say. You know he will say anything, right? When you go home what do you remember about that market, the one crazy person at the corner. But go back and answer me again, who runs the market? That one person doesn’t buy anything, he’s just there but who runs the market? The people you don’t remember. The reason why I am bringing this up is that that one loud-mouthed person defaming people has defined what Kenyan blogging is, which is not true. (Participant One FGD, December, 19, 2016)

An interesting observation is that during the focus group discussion, the issue on whether bloggers perceived their practice as unethical became an occasion for censuring journalists. The participants felt that the accusations that bloggers were unethical were propagated by mainstream journalists. The participants claimed that journalists were afraid that bloggers were encroaching onto their profession.

One of the BAKE officials argued: “This has been the issue between journalists and bloggers. Journalists feel that bloggers are getting into their space, so they want the bloggers to be subjected to the same standards that they are subjected to (Participant One, FDG, December 19, 2016). The official felt that this should not be the issue because according to him, journalists do not adhere to the standards of their profession in any case. Another participant in the focus group discussion, also a BAKE official, was in agreement with the statement that journalists are unethical. He said:
Journalists are people who fuelled [the Kenyan post-election violence which killed and displaced thousands of people in] 2007. Journalists are some of the people that have been used by politicians to drive certain conversations. So, if we are talking about standards, I don’t want to be a journalist because their standards are low. (Participant Two, FGD, December 19, 2016)

A participant in the FGD talked about a few “rogue bloggers” tarnishing the reputation of the blogging community. He argued: “How many bloggers have defamed people? The people who have been sued for defamation are not bloggers, but one or two social media users” (Participant three, FGD, December 19, 2016).

Three bloggers termed the accusations of unethical conduct as an attempt by government to force regulation on bloggers. Non-BAKE 3 termed unethical bloggers “bad apples”, while Participant Four in the FGD said: “It was just a matter of time. You cannot agitate for better governance and then expect to not get a backlash from those in power” (Participant four FGD, December 19, 2016). Non-BAKE 1 also questioned the motive behind the allegations of unethical conduct: “I don’t know what unethical means. Any government will test the reach of its power. Citizens should not leave this matter to the government. Do not judge them unless you point out a certain blogger or content” (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September, 30, 2016). Non-BAKE 5 had similar views:

How come it’s always political? How come it’s never commercial? How come these people calling for regulation have political issues? Blogging is a growing industry. There are lots of mistakes here and there but overall the kind of impact that blogging has had on this country is more positive than negative. (Non-BAKE 5 Interview, November 11, 2016)

BAKE 3 explained that there is an exaggeration about the unethical conduct of bloggers. He contended that the few unethical bloggers got a lot of attention because people like reading “controversial stuff.” (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016). BAKE 8 described how the accusation that bloggers are unethical had affected him. “That’s why I told you I am changing my name from a blogger to a mediapreneur [a word used by one of the bloggers to describe the business of blogging]. The name blogger just makes people fear you” (BAKE 8, September 24,
Non-BAKE 8 shared a similar sentiment. “I do not like people referring to me as a blogger, because of the negative connotation of the word” (Non-BAKE 8). He added that he preferred to be called “a content developer” (Non-BAKE 8 Interview, November, 10, 2016).

BAKE 11 said, “Ethics is a very slippery slope. I believe in the principle of do no harm. I would put the bloggers on a scale of 50% unethical and 50% ethical” (BAKE 11 Interview, November 15, 2016). BAKE 6 contended, “It is a mixed grill. There are those who are ethical and those who are not” (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016). Non-BAKE 2 said, “Some bloggers are out of order, they have gone to extremes. Some are good. In Kenya we have serious bloggers and those who are not serious” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016).

The three bloggers who felt that the concerns about the ethical conduct of bloggers were valid were unequivocal about there being an acute problem in the Kenyan blogosphere, which they said should not be trivialized. Non-BAKE 9 said: “Yes, there is definitely some truth in the criticism. Some bloggers are just after popularity and nothing else. Thus they end up being unethical” (Non-BAKE 9 Interview, November 11, 2016). Non-BAKE 4, who gave the ethical conduct of Kenyan bloggers a rating of 4 out of 10, argued: “The reason I am giving 4 out of 10 is because of political blogging, war blogging and the feuds promoted in some blogs” (Non-BAKE Interview, November 11, 2016).

BAKE 2 was also concerned about the conduct of bloggers. She said: “The accusations are well-grounded. We don’t pause to think about how our writing affects other people. We need to stop talking about good and bad bloggers. All of us need to be responsible in our writing” (BAKE 2 Interview, September 21, 2016). Non-BAKE 3 called unethical bloggers “attention seekers” willing to “do anything to be seen, including slandering people” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016). Two bloggers tried to explain why bloggers engage in unethical conduct. According to BAKE 6, bloggers engaged in unethical conduct because they were unaware of what
was expected of them. BAKE 5 was of the view that sometimes unethical bloggers had a valid point but did not know how to convey it:

Like in every society there are those who tarnish the name of the profession. But they are not many, they are few. They use vulgar language. Unfortunately, sometimes they have the truth because they can back up what they are saying, through their sources. But the language they use to communicate makes them lose credibility. (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016)

A number singled out political, gossip, celebrity and entertainment blogs as the main examples of content that has contributed to the perception of bloggers as unethical. For example, BAKE 7 argued that most bloggers are good but pointed out that celebrity bloggers are among those that are unethical. He alleged that the celebrity bloggers post rumours in their bid to make their blogs popular. Similarly, Non-BAKE 6 said:

One of the things we tend to confuse is that we think that all bloggers are gossipers and political. There are people who blog on flowers, on cultivation – these are good bloggers. In Kenya, the hot areas are gossip and politics. In those two you find a number of people who are careless about what they write. Those are landmines. But in other blogs such as those on fashion, you find no problem. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November, 14, 2016)

![Ethical conduct of bloggers](Figure 4.22: Perception of Bloggers on Claims of Unethical Conduct)

Figure 4.22 summarises the perceptions that the bloggers interviewed had on claims that they engage in unethical conduct. The bloggers interviewed seemed to categorise ethical and unethical bloggers into those who blog mainly on content that excludes politics and gossip, and those who focused mainly on politics and gossip.

According to the interviewees, the non-gossip, non-political bloggers tended to be ethical while those who focused on gossip and politics were likely to engage in unethical conduct. For
example, BAKE 4 said: “There is need to create awareness and train people to be responsible, especially in political blogging where people can get very nasty” (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016). BAKE 1 posited: “By and large Kenyan bloggers are very positive contributors in society. It is only in issues of politics that people get wary” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016). BAKE 5 singled out bloggers who run gossip blogs as an example of those that engage in unethical conduct. BAKE 7 said: Some bloggers engage in unethical conduct, for example, those that post on celebrity gossip. Most of the other bloggers give informative content” (BAKE 7 Interview, November 28, 2016).

Perceptions of respondents of communication sector on ethical conduct of bloggers

Two of the participants from the communication sector felt most bloggers are unethical. One respondent did not have a definite response for the question. She argued that one needs to define the word blogging to determine whether there should be a requirement for them to be ethical. Another respondent argued that bloggers cannot be termed unethical because they are a reflection of society.

Five respondents from the communication sector elaborated on the ethical mix of bloggers. For example, the ICT secretary in the Ministry of ICT said, “There are millions of bloggers all over the world. There are very good bloggers, there are terrible bloggers” (Getao, Ministry of ICT Interview, December, 22, 2016). This position was also adopted by the government ICT officers interviewed. One of the officials stated, “There are some who are very responsible. Some are very irresponsible. It’s a mix” (ICT official one, November, 24, 2016). Another respondent from AMWIK argued that while there are bloggers who are unethical, there was a group of bloggers that was serving the community by providing crucial information.

Mwangi, the MCK’s chief executive who has operated at the coalface of ethical regulation in the information sector, said that ethics among bloggers was a matter of concern and differentiated between bloggers who run their blogs as media houses and those who do not. He
said those who operate blogs like media houses are more professional as they have the same structures used in newsrooms. Mwangi’s explanation has been expounded by Lowery, Parrott and Meade (2011, p. 243) who posit that blogs take on “organisational form” by “adopting rules and policies, employing staff and pursuing revenue”.

In this study, blogs like the one owned by BAKE 4, who has several employees, and who claimed to have a code of ethics guiding him and his team, could be deemed to be those that the MCK CEO referred to as being run like media houses. The CEO described the media house structure as one “likely to be more accountable, more professional and is really online journalism” (CEO, MCK Interview, October 31, 2016). He said these blogs ran like media houses were professional when compared to those that he called “a one-man show” which he said lacked a gate keeping process (CEO, MCK Interview, October 31, 2016).

Article 19 Regional Director, Henry Maina argued that bloggers cannot be termed unethical as they were merely a reflection of the Kenyan society. On the other hand, Kemunto, a media trainer, said it was important to define what blogging is before one can discuss the ethical conduct of bloggers. However, The Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ) official said that there was misuse of the blogging platform by some bloggers. He said that some bloggers use their blogs to defame and spread rumours. A commissioner from the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) gave a similar argument, saying most bloggers were unethical and published rumours. He added that he would give bloggers a score of two out of 10 in terms of ethical conduct.

Sub-theme: Factors that Influence the Ethical Conduct of Bloggers

According to the bloggers interviewed, there are various factors that influence the ethical conduct of bloggers. These factors that are illustrated in Figure 4.23 include the period one has blogged, professional training in media or communication-related courses, membership in professional journalism/blogging associations and treating blogging as a business.
Figure 4.23 further demonstrates the various factors that denote ethics in the blogging practice. These are: the ethical conduct of a blogger; the ethical values a blogger; and the use of journalistic principles. Ethical conduct as described earlier refers to behaviour that is morally acceptable when one is disseminating news. Ethical values are the standards that guide journalists and bloggers in their practice of news dissemination. Journalistic practices are principles that journalists follow when disseminating news. These principles include, verification of facts, research, giving right of reply among others. The factors that influence the ethical conduct of bloggers have been derived from interview data with the respondents.

![Figure 4.23: Factors Affecting Ethical Conduct of Bloggers](image)

Discussion on how the length of time they had blogged influenced their conduct, some of the respondents said, that although when they started, ethics was not one of their main concerns; they had over time integrated ethics into their blogging. For example, BAKE 4, who had blogged since 2006, said that he had a code of ethics that his team used when deciding the type of content to post. He said he developed the code when he was the only person working on the blog. He pointed out that the code had given him credibility over the years. On his part, BAKE 1 revealed that in the past, he would write many posts over a number of hours, but he had lately resorted to taking days doing research even for one post. “Rushing to be the first to post any rumour you hear … or
deliberately giving false information is done by people who purport to be bloggers and are not” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016).

The second factor in Figure 4.23, journalism training and MCK accreditation, targets bloggers who have worked for the mainstream media. These bloggers are registered as journalists by the media council. The question is how journalism training and registration with MCK influence their ethical conduct. Several of those interviewed spoke of a positive influence. For example, BAKE 6, BAKE 9, Non-BAKE 6 and BAKE 11 – all trained journalists – said that they follow journalistic ethics when writing their posts. BAKE 5 and BAKE 9 said their MCK accreditation influenced their ethical conduct. BAKE 2, who trained in Information Technology and was at the time of the interview studying for a Masters in Communication, said she valued journalistic ethics. She explained:

We should teach ethics to bloggers. We are not trying to make them journalists but there are things in the journalism profession that they can benefit from. For example, if I am the first at an accident scene, is it ethical for me to take those shots? (BAKE 2, September 21, 2016)

The third factor, BAKE membership, elaborated how belonging to a blogging community influences ethical conduct, the ethical values and the use of principles of journalistic practice by a news blogger. According to respondents, the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) provided a community and peer support where bloggers with technology expertise helped others start their websites. They also helped each other to network. Non-BAKE 6, although, not a member of the association, because by the time of the interview he did not know much about BAKE, felt it was important to have such as a body.

He said:

I don’t know the association well. I think they bring bloggers together to educate them. I think the association is good because if you have a problem with a certain section of bloggers or all of them, you have a forum to deal with. Yes I would encourage a blogger to join. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)
BAKE 11 said the association emphasised ethical conduct among bloggers:

They are training people on what to expect. I think it would be hard to enforce something like ethics. For example, doctors can get banned from practice if they flout media guidelines but you cannot ban a blogger. I would encourage bloggers to join for training and networks. (BAKE eleven Interview, November 15, 2016)

A key communication sector respondent from AMWIK explained the influence of BAKE on bloggers and their ethical conduct:

The name blogger has been spoilt by a few people, so whenever one says he or she is a blogger, you may not be allowed to cover a news event. But if you say you are a blogger and produce your BAKE card, the way journalists produce their media cards then you will gain access. (AMWIK official, Interview, December 7, 2016)

In addition, bloggers whose blogs were business brands also ensured that they adhered to ethics as so as to attract corporates to work with them. For example, participants in the FGD described how some bloggers who started off as unethical had over time reformed their conduct in a bid to please advertisers.

There was a time when Ghafla could not get Coca Cola adverts because of posting nude photos on their sites. So now bloggers who want to get business from corporates like Coca Cola have removed pornographic content from their sites. Bloggers work to have interesting content within the ethical boundaries. (Participant two, FGD, December 19, 2016)

Interpretation under theme of ethical conduct of bloggers

The contention of respondents was that unethical conduct of a few bloggers was the cause of condemnation of the blogging community. The respondents pointed out that the claims of unethical conduct ignored the fact that there are other types of bloggers who blogged on non-controversial matters. The experts from the communication sector termed the ethical conduct of the bloggers as a mix, with some being unethical and the others unethical.

Theme 5: Feasibility of standardisation of blogging practice

The fifth objective of the research was to find out what the respondents think about having standards guiding the blogging practice. The term standards was defined in chapter one as the ethical principles that should guide bloggers in their practice. To standardise is to “cause to
conform to a standard” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 1407). The question addressed by this theme is the possibility of causing the blogging practice to conform to some standards.

The issues addressed under this theme were whether the standards should be part of a code of ethics to guide bloggers, if the proposed code should be tailored after journalistic principles, and whether a code of ethics for bloggers should be voluntary or part of the law like the Media Council Act. Some of the findings presented below compare to those of Cenite et al. (2009) which indicated that while it would be a good idea to have a code to guide bloggers, it would be difficult to agree on one that would be accepted by the blogging community as a whole. This ties in with views of Brown (2011, p. 29) that the strength of a code of ethics is not only based on the principles it contains but depends also on the “legitimacy and power” granted it by “those for whom it is written”.

McQuail (2005, p. 173) described codes of ethics for journalists as “a set of principles of professional conduct that are adopted and controlled by journalists themselves”. The scholar outlined the principles likely to be found in a journalistic code of ethics as: “truthfulness of information, clarity of information, defence of the public rights, responsibilities in forming public opinion, standards for gathering and presenting information, respecting the integrity of the sources” (McQuail 2015, p. 174). McQuail explained that codes were adopted by media as a strategy of self-regulation that would protect media organisations from government control.

McQuail’s contention is critical in this research given that findings presented in some of the earlier themes, show that bloggers interviewed favour self-regulation – some from an individual level and others from the blogging community, BAKE level. The question then is whether bloggers should formulate a code of ethics to guide their practice, and also protect them from the threats of government regulation. Other issues that arise would be the process that would help generate this code of ethics and how it would be enforced. Examination of the issues of the
process of formulation and the enforcement of the code would help answer the question of “legitimacy and power” raised by Brown (2011, p. 29).

Brown (2011) pointed out that flexibility is an important aspect considered when formulating a code of ethics. He said that “a code is neither as subjective as personal beliefs and opinion nor as rigid and enforceable as the law” (Brown 2011, p. 29). The sub-themes under this theme are: respondents’ views on formulation of a code of ethics for bloggers, standardisation of blogging practice under the Media Council Act, and standardisation of blogging through BAKE.

Figure 4.24: Sub-Themes Under the Theme, Feasibility of Standardising Blogging

Sub-theme: Views on formulation of a Code of Ethics for Bloggers

Seven Non-BAKE bloggers, out of the nine interviewed supported the formulation of a code of ethics for bloggers, while two only partially supported the idea. The two Non-BAKE bloggers, who only partially supported the creation of a code, argued that it would be better to come up with some simple rules instead of developing a document of strict guidelines. It was interesting to note that among the seven Non-BAKE bloggers who supported the development of a code of ethics for bloggers, are two bloggers (Non-BAKE 1 and Non-BAKE 2) who strongly opposed the work of BAKE. Non-BAKE 2 said the code of ethics should be developed by an independent association. Non-BAKE 1, a controversial blogger who had been arrested severally over some of his posts said:
I have always advocated for a code of ethics. Even before social media, we used to have chat rooms like MSN and Yahoo Messenger. These chat rooms were guided by etiquette. We can have netiquette. Let the stakeholders come up with some guidelines. (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist, strongly supported the development of a code of ethics. He argued that it would be good for the blogging community to set standards now when the industry is still young so that those who start blogging later would embrace ethics. Non-BAKE 9 who advocated for the code said: “There needs to be a code of ethics to govern people in every field. Blogging is not an exception” (Non-BAKE 9 Interview, November 11, 2016).

Although, Non-BAKE 8 and Non-BAKE 5 supported the formulation of a code for bloggers, they were apprehensive about how the enforcement would be done. They argued that enforcement of the standards might be challenging because not all bloggers are members of BAKE. Non-BAKE 5 also felt that the demands for development of a code were coming from journalists. “Journalists fear that bloggers are taking up their space. My question is have journalists forgotten what their role is (Non-BAKE 5 Interview, November 11, 2016)?” Non-BAKE 3 supported a code that has a set of easy-to-follow guidelines rather than “strict and hard laws” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016). Non-BAKE 4 advocated against the use of the name code saying she preferred “guidelines” rather than “limitations”. I think if you call it a code, then people will start interpreting it differently” (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016).

Non-BAKE 7, who did not fully support formulation of a code, contended:

I feel like any point of regulation will be the first drop of blood. We are playing everywhere. It is hard to define who a blogger is. Is it someone who updates a Facebook post? This could be a social media user. This could be just the start of censorship. Standards should involve a lot of concession and negotiation. (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016)

Participants in the FGD, who advocated for a voluntary code, were concerned about the process of coming up with the guidelines. Participant five in the FGD said: “We want a living
document that is more about everyday behaviour, not just a document that people sign and forget about” (Participant Five FGD, December 19, 2016). Another participant argued:

We are very litigious country, everything needs rules and regulations and we write all these documents to regulate everything. It’s like we are obsessed with laws and stuff like that, instead of focusing on why people are behaving the way they are. Why is this happening the way it is? So I feel, yes, we can come up with all these documents, but if you are not inclusive – it’s coming from outside, coming in, instead of from inside and then out, then it might not work. That’s why I think guidelines work at the association’s level. (Participant four FGD, December 19, 2016)

All the BAKE bloggers said they support the formulation of a code of ethics to guide blogging practice but two pointed out that it might be difficult to implement it. BAKE 11, who only partially supported the creation of a code said: “Bloggers are citizen journalists. How do you impose a code of ethics on bloggers? This is not practical. Blogging is a successful venture because it is free” (BAKE 11 Interview, November 15, 2016). BAKE 3 was of the view that a code of ethics should be “a reference guide but it should not bide anybody” (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016). BAKE 8 and BAKE 10 said they supported a code of ethics for bloggers as long as it was one developed by the bloggers themselves. Participants in the FGD said the code of ethics should be developed by BAKE members and implemented at the association level.

BAKE 5 and BAKE 6 were worried about how the code of ethics would be implemented. BAKE 6 said: “I can sign anything but if I break the rules, what happens to me? You could tell me that I have broken the code of ethics but what happens to me? Who ensures that I follow the code” (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016)? BAKE 5 pointed out: “Even if BAKE tells you that if you flout the code, they will excommunicate you, they cannot stop you from posting stuff on your blog” (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016). BAKE 1 felt that the code of ethics should not be imposed but “should be a badge of excellence that should make it easier for my readers to trust me” (BAKE I interview, October 17, 2016).
BAKE 4, who said he was one of the founding members of BAKE, and who advocated for a statutory code, explained that when the bloggers association was started one of its main goals was to develop a code of ethics for bloggers. He argued that BAKE was mandated to sit with government and other stakeholders to discuss issues such as censorship. He said: “Like any other industry, we need a code of ethics so that we can know our boundaries. Blogging can get very explosive because people can say anything and you have a chance to incite people” (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016). BAKE 9, a trained journalist and a registered member of MCK, was of the view that blogging should have tougher rules than mainstream media. She advocated for a legal code:

Blogging platform is uncontrolled and very powerful, and then again it can be overly misused. If I have a problem with you, I can go and post stuff about you. As a blogger, I am the writer and also the editor, and there may be no fact checking. (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016)

BAKE 2 contended that a code of ethics should apply to those bloggers who specifically disseminate news:

You may not be a trained journalist, but you are operating like a journalist. If I come to your blog, I want to get correct information. You don’t have to be as strict as a journalist but you need some basics. Is it true? Have I verified it? So that by the time the story goes to your blog, even if you don’t have a 100 per cent of the story, we know that 90 per cent of it is true. (BAKE 2 Interview, September 21, 2016)

Eight of the respondents from the communication sector supported a code of ethics for bloggers. However, Maina of Article 19 argued against formulation of a code of ethics. He described any efforts to develop a code of ethics as “an exercise in futility” arguing “bloggers are not homogenous. I see different sets of bloggers who agree and disagree at the same time. Each of these sets can have their own internal mechanisms” (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016). Odour of KUJ looked at formulation of a code of ethics as a good way for bloggers to keep away government control.
Oduor argued: “The bloggers should come up with a code of ethics promptly. They can do this through BAKE or come up with another organisation. Let them not allow the government to come in and start regulating them” (Odour Interview, October 4, 2016). One of the government officials of ICT said: “There should be a code of ethics. We want to bring sanity. Bloggers should have certain standards” (ICT official Two Interview, November 24, 2016). Maryana of AMWIK said that the code of ethics should be developed through a multi-stakeholder forum which should include bloggers. This was echoed by one of the ICT officials interviewed: “This is a grey area which calls for a multi-stakeholder debate that has participation from bloggers and other stakeholders” (ICT official one Interview, November 24, 2016). However, Getao of the Ministry of ICT advocated for a simple code rather than a detailed code of ethics. She said:

It should be something simple to remember like the 10 commandments. But I don’t believe in signing a document because some of those people who sign codes of ethics are the biggest hypocrites. Yes it’s good for people to know a better way of doing things, and it may be good to come up with something simple to memorise, because most of us are simple people. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

The code of ethics for journalism practice in Kenya is enforced under the Media Council Act. The question here regarding bloggers in Kenya is whether a code for their practice should also be enforceable in law? A majority of the respondents 28 out of the 35 who participated in the research, argued for a non-legal code of ethics as opposed to a mandatory statutory code. Six respondents favoured a statutory code. One respondent opposed the formulation of a code. Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 show the number of respondents who supported the different codes.

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Table 4.4: BAKE Bloggers Who Advocated for the Different Codes of Ethics

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Table 4.5: Non-BAKE Bloggers Who Advocated for the Different Codes of Ethics

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<th>Type of Code</th>
<th>Number of Non-BAKE bloggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-legal code</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory code</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-BAKE 9, who supported a statutory code said such a document, would ensure that bloggers who breach the standards are dealt with using the laid down rules. Three officials from the communication sector were for the formulation of a code. One of the officials said: “BAKE standards are good but like Koigi wa Wamwere said we cannot live at the mercy of good people. We need to institutionalise these standards” (ICT official two, Interview, November 24, 2016). Naituli, a commissioner with NCIC also argued for a statutory code to ensure that bloggers adhere to laid down standards.

However, Oduor, of KUJ and Getao, Ministry of the ICT opposed a statutory code. Oduor said, “If bloggers allow the code to be enforceable in law, they’ll just be tying their hands and handing themselves over to the government” (Oduor Interview, October 4, 2016). Getao argued:

For me a code of ethics should be a reminder to the 10 things one should keep in mind when blogging. These 10 things should help those who act out of ignorance. For me a code of ethics is not for signing but for reducing ignorance. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

Getao’s sentiments seem to echo those of Davis (2009, p. 105) who argued that although bloggers should not be compelled to adhere to a code of ethics “its existence would differentiate in the public’s mind those bloggers who adopt such a standard from those who refuse to agree to
community standards of behaviour”. Two of the bloggers who supported a statutory code cited protection and responsibility as their reasons for doing so. BAKE 9, a trained journalist, said:

It is good. It will protect more than harm you. For example, as a journalist, the Media code of ethics protects journalists even if one writes a story that powerful people do not like. Because of the code of ethics for journalists, the Media Council will come in and protect you if someone wants to punish you for something you’ve written. But as a blogger, you are alone when you get into trouble. I would rather be in a safe place, even if I am controlled. All bloggers in Kenya should be made to follow certain standards in the same way that journalists are required to follow the code of ethics for journalists. (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016)

BAKE 4, argued:

You see what the law does, is it creates responsibility. And I know that I am in a country that is governed by a constitution. This means that whatever I do has consequences. I am not saying that the code should cut down on the freedom that people have but it should give legal and ethical guidelines to bloggers. (BAKE 4 Interviews, November 12, 2016)

Sub-theme: Standardisation under the Media Council Act, 2013

Davis (2012, p. 57) contended that one of the ways that journalism has influenced blogging is in the professionalisation aspects with bloggers “being held to standards of professionalism that journalists created”. The Media Council Act of 2013 contains the standards expected of Kenyan journalists. This section discusses the participants’ perceptions on possibilities of the Media Council Act being used to regulate bloggers. The justification of a discussion on regulation in a study whose focus is ethics can be explained by the contention by Singer (2015, p. 80) that ethical issues that affect media practice tend to have “legal implications”. For example, although propagation of hate speech would be seen as a breach of ethics, there is a law that seeks to punish those who spread hate.

As shown in Figure 4.25, 19 of the 26 bloggers who participated in the research opposed standardisation through the Media Council Act, while seven of them were in favour of the idea. The following discussion first looks at the views of BAKE members.
Figure 4.25: Views of Bloggers on Standardisation Under Media Council Act, 2013

Fourteen of the bloggers out of the 17 who are BAKE members were opposed to the idea of using the Media Council Act to regulate bloggers. Only three BAKE bloggers supported standardisation under the Media Council Act. BAKE bloggers who opposed the MCK standardisation argued that blogging should be allowed to thrive without any controls. The bloggers were also against the use of journalism standards to regulate them contending that even mainstream media flouted most of these rules. A participant in the FGD said: “What is blogging? A lot of bloggers are not writing on news. For example, how will you regulate a fashion blogger? It is important to allow people to speak freely” (Participant four FGD, December 19, 2016).

The three BAKE bloggers who supported the use of the media act to regulate bloggers have some form of training in communication. One is studying for a master’s degree in Communication while the other two have diplomas in journalism and also worked in mainstream media. One of the bloggers, BAKE 7 said the Media Council Act would enable bloggers to show responsibility in their reporting. Another blogger, BAKE 8 stated that while he supported the use of the Media Council Act to regulate bloggers, the Act should be amended to introduce new regulations specifically drawn for the blogging practice.
BAKE 9, who had a business blog, exhibited a lot of enthusiasm for the media Act. When questioned on her view of bloggers being regulated under the Act she said: I will say yes. Then again I say yes. I say three yeses……And you know that not everyone has good values, so there is need to regulate. If is there is regulation for hawkers, why not for bloggers?”(BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016).

BAKE 4 and BAKE 10 said the Media Council Act should not be used to regulate blogging as this would stifle free speech. BAKE 5 felt that using the media act would mean excluding some people from blogging because the media law outlines some requirements such as some academic training for those recognised as journalists. His argument was that blogging be left as free as it currently is. BAKE 1 and BAKE 6 pointed out that the Media Council Act referred specifically to journalists and does not include bloggers.

For BAKE 2 and BAKE 11, the problem is the lack of a definite definition of what blogging entails and a lack of clear delineation between the practice and information dissemination done using other forms of social media. BAKE 11 stated: “The Media Council Act should not regulate bloggers. The definition of a blogger is unclear. How do you regulate the blogosphere? The laws of the country such as libel laws should apply” (BAKE eleven, November 15, 2016). BAKE 2 said:

Bloggers fall under social media. How do we regulate social media? And who is a blogger? Is it someone who posts on Facebook, or on Twitter, or is it someone who has a full blog? The media act does not address these issues. (BAKE 2 Interview, September 21, 2016)

Five non-BAKE members rejected the idea of having MCK regulate bloggers, while four supported the move. Those who opposed the use of the Media Council Act as a standard for bloggers gave various reasons. Some felt that regulation would be an attempt to stifle freedom of expression while others said an attempt by MCK to include bloggers in those it regulates would be overstepping its mandate. Some bloggers argued that MCK did not understand the intricacies of blogging and claimed the council would constrain the practice, rather than encourage growth.
Non-BAKE 2 said it would be ridiculous for the Media Council to attempt to regulate the millions of Kenya who use social media. “Let them continue regulating journalists, trained journalists as indicated in the media Act. The Act talks about journalists. Let them allow bloggers to remain bloggers,” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016). For Non-BAKE 7, his contention was that the MCK cannot regulate what it does not understand:

> The blogosphere is the Wild West, how do you regulate it? The element of self-regulation is coming up. As a blogger, your name is your bond. MCK may try to regulate bloggers but they will not succeed. Kenyans are very enterprising and standards are coming from the community of bloggers. (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016)

A participant in the focus group discussion expressed her opposition to attempts to apply journalistic standards to blogging:

> A lot of times we want to squeeze blogging into traditional media standards yet we’ve already talked so much about how the internet is different, there are all these things that we need to understand. Instead of trying to force something new as Jesus said ‘putting new wine into old wineskins’. That’s what we are doing here and it’s not going to work, it’s going to leak. Instead of focusing on this, I would prefer we talked about how if there is fake news how do we deal with that. Instead of talking about traditional media because we know very well that journalists are also unethical. (Participant Four, FDG, December 19, 2016)

Non-BAKE 8, a trained journalist, said that although he would not advocate for MCK regulation, he supported a situation where the media council would work with bloggers to create awareness on ethics and laws governing media. Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist, who also practices law, was of the view that the blogs that have run as media houses should be regulated as per the Media Council Act of 2013 provisions. His argument was that some laws affect all those who engage in some form of journalism, whether in media houses or in the blogosphere. “The only way that bloggers will feel respected is if they accept some laws. While freedom of expression cannot be curtailed, it can be checked within the law” (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016).

Four respondents from the communication sector were of the view that bloggers should be regulated under the Media Council Act, while five others felt that the blogging practice did not fit
under the media act. The An ICT official from the government advocated for a revision of the Media Council Act to include bloggers. “The space needs to be managed. It can be quite beneficial but it can also be disastrous” (ICT official two Interview, November 24, 2016). Maryana of AMWIK gave similar sentiments that the Act be reviewed to accommodate bloggers. She posited that since bloggers operate in the same space with journalists, the two groups could be regulated under similar rules. Naituli of NCIC, who supported the notion of regulating bloggers under the Media Council Act, was however, not sure how it could be done. He said: “Bloggers are too many, too spread out; they come in all shades and colours” (Naituli Interview, November 15, 2016).

The CEO of MCK, Mwangi who opposed the idea of including bloggers under the media regulation, said:

There is no provision for bloggers in the Act. In the definition of journalism, bloggers are not included and anyway bloggers do not want to be regarded as journalists. A journalist is that person who collects, disseminates information through various platforms and is guided by a professional code of conduct. (Mwangi Interview, October 31, 2016)

Mwangi however, clarified that a blogger who runs his or her blog as a media house may be considered for regulation under the media council, if the blogger requests for the same. He added that given the continued change of what constitutes journalism, the media council was willing to consider bloggers who have “the structure of media houses and work within the confines of the MCK regulation” (Mwangi Interview, October 31, 2016).

Maina of Article 19 said the Media Council Act has nothing to do with bloggers: “It is very clear it applies to journalists. Let bloggers freely express themselves” (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016). Getao of the Ministry of ICT argued that blogging and journalism were different and could therefore, not be regulated using the same standards. Getao argued: “Much as I had said earlier that blogging has roots in journalism, I still think it’s a slightly different medium. And this is an emerging thing, it’s not been there before, it’s new”
Odour of KUJ explained the complexity of whether bloggers should be regulated under the Media Council Act thus:

There were bloggers who wanted to be declared journalists but the Media Council Act clearly says who a journalist is. So if there are bloggers who fit within the definition of journalists, so be it. If not, bloggers can continue operating under the platform they are currently using as the Media Council Act is very clear who a journalist is and what the qualifications are. Not all bloggers have the same qualifications as journalists. So if the definition fits some of the bloggers that’s okay. However, those who do not fit the definition of a journalist should not be subjected to the Media Council Act. (Oduor Interview, October 4, 2016)

Sub-theme: Creation of Standards through BAKE

The respondents interviewed were of the view that the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) is a good initiative that has brought bloggers together and created some standards for members. Some of the positive things the association was praised for included training bloggers on blog set-up and standards of the practice. One other good initiative mentioned by the bloggers was the annual awards that celebrate outstanding bloggers.

However, some respondents felt that BAKE needs to do more in creating awareness about blogging and in holding talks with the government and the larger communication sector about freedom of expression. Some added that BAKE needs to link Kenyan bloggers to the global blogging community. A few other bloggers said the organisation had failed in its mandate to protect and represent bloggers.

Although all the key respondents from the communication sector felt that BAKE was a positive venture, some argued that the organisation needed to do more to make bloggers accountable. An ICT official from the government said: “User generated content is becoming very important in Kenya. You are talking about personalities, people with families and organisations. Therefore, bloggers need control” (ICT official Interview, November 24, 2016). The official suggested that BAKE might need statutory recognition, like the Media Council, so that it would
be empowered to enforce legal and ethical standards. But, Getao of the Ministry of ICT advocated for the formation of more bloggers associations to create diversity:

I hope as the blogging industry grows there will be more associations so that it is like the civil society. This will mean that when the government wants to hold discussions with bloggers, instead of calling individual bloggers, we’ll be able to have input from various interest groups. (Getao Interview, December 22, 2016)

Maryana looked at BAKE as a way of helping give structure to blogging:

Anyone can be a blogger. But if you want to relate to corporate organisations, if you want to relate to communities, they will want to know who you are affiliated to. So, I believe BAKE is helping bring that structure, helping create authority and generally helping shape the blogging industry in Kenya. (Maryana Interview, December 7, 2016)

Maina of Article 19 explained why he did not see BAKE as a representative of all bloggers:

My argument has been that it is a good way of bringing bloggers together and creating a platform where they share their challenges and opportunities and ways of making their lives better. But whether it is going to bring bloggers together and set standards, I think that remains to be seen. I don’t think that if you’re an engineer who blogs or you’re a doctor who blogs or a journalist who blogs, a lawyer who blogs that you’ll run to BAKE to tell you what to do. You’ll flock towards your professional colleagues. What BAKE has done is bring together people whose occupation was previously unknown. (Maina Interview, October 6, 2016)

However, Oduor of KUJ and Maryana of AMWIK argued that BAKE is an important avenue for bloggers who want to succeed. Oduor said that he would encourage all bloggers to join BAKE:

We need to professionalise blogging. Right now there are many opportunities out there and a blogger who goes professional can compete with traditional media. Once a blogger joins BAKE he or she can get these opportunities. That’s the same problem we had in mainstream media where some journalists were unwilling to join professional associations. (Oduor Interview, October 4, 2016)

Nine BAKE bloggers interviewed were happy with the work of the association, while two were not. For Non-BAKE members, five were happy with the bloggers’ association, two said they did not like BAKE, one other blogger said BAKE had failed the blogging community, while one
said he did not know much about the organisation. Table 4.6 demonstrates the number of bloggers who hold the various perceptions about BAKE.

Table 4.6: Blogger’s Views on BAKE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloggers’ views on BAKE</th>
<th>Number of bloggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAKE is doing a good job</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAKE is not doing a good job</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogger has little knowledge on BAKE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The BAKE bloggers who were happy with the work of the association commended its work in helping their own blogging practice. They said BAKE trained them on how to run their blogs, educated them on the business side of blogging, and taught them on ethical standards required in the practice. However, some of the bloggers, although happy with the work of the association, felt that BAKE needs to do more in the creation of standards for blogging and in the participation in debates about regulation. These bloggers argued that BAKE was not creating adequate visibility for the Kenyan blogging community. BAKE 5, a blogger who was happy with the work of the association, said:

I think BAKE plays an important role because they equip people on responsible social media use. There is also the other arm of BAKE that supports bloggers to grow their businesses. There is also the arm of advocacy and that of litigation which provides a lawyer to a BAKE member who gets into legal trouble. (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016)

BAKE 1, who had been in blogging since the late 1990s, had good words to describe the association:

BAKE is important. It is trying to organise and codify what is acceptable among bloggers. It is doing important work. Although it shouldn’t be mandatory to join BAKE, if they get it right they will find many bloggers congregating around them. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)
BAKE 8 also praised the association:

BAKE is doing a lot to educate bloggers. In one of the training sessions when I joined blogging a few years ago, we were taught a lot including the ethics we are talking about. We were also taught how to share content on social media so as to avoid defaming people and spreading lies. (BAKE 8, September 24, 2016)

Nonetheless, two BAKE members were not happy with the association. One of them, BAKE 7, said she had not achieved much by being a BAKE member. She however, pointed out that an association is good because it can help a blogger who gets in trouble. BAKE 4, who said he was a founder member of the organisation, claimed it had abandoned its initial mandate:

BAKE, and I am sorry to say this, follows a few individuals’ interests. These are people who will say we represent BAKE, but at the end of the day they will take business and put it into their own pockets. BAKE was never supposed to be a business entity, it was supposed to be a welfare organisation and when BAKE is doing business with corporates, it is conflict of interest. (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016)

Five non-BAKE members were of the view that BAKE is doing a great job while three felt it was a private business that does not represent bloggers. Non-BAKE 6 said he could not comment on BAKE’s work as he had not interacted with the members. Two of the bloggers who did not like the work of the association, Non-BAKE 1 and Non-BAKE 2 had in the past been arrested over posts they had put up on their blogs. The two said they would want another association to represent bloggers. Non-BAKE 1 said: “BAKE a private company... I can’t join, won’t join. Bloggers should come together and develop a code of ethics. We also need to develop a welfare association to tackle emerging issues” (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016). Non-BAKE 2 gave similar views: “They have failed. That’s my answer. It is a private business…We want an independent bloggers association interested in representing the rights of bloggers” (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016). Non-BAKE 5, who was previously a member of BAKE, argued that the association had deviated from its original mandate:

The intentions were very good when we started, but somehow it has veered towards how much money one can make, forgetting that a lot of content creators do not do if for money. Most just want to express their views. (Non-BAKE Interview, November 11, 2016)
Other Non-BAKE members however, praised the efforts of the association.

Non-BAKE 7 said:

BAKE offers a fantastic starting point. It is one of the best places to train. However, BAKE should do more in driving the conversation in the blogosphere. It needs to do more in collaborations with universities and even journalists. I would encourage young bloggers to join BAKE so as to learn about the blogging community and the business models of blogging. (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016)

Non-BAKE 3 said:

I think it’s brilliant. They have put the spotlight on bloggers. They have managed to organise the collective. There was no such thing before. They brought it to a certain level but I think there’s more work to be done. But it’s brilliant; they have sort of created a focal point so that even brands who want to reach bloggers as a collective can go to one place. (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016)

Non-BAKE 9 was happy with the awareness bloggers get from BAKE: “BAKE is an incredible organisation. It has given bloggers a chance to showcase their work and has also made Kenya and the world aware of the bloggers in Kenya and the wonderful work they do” (Non-BAKE Interview, November 11, 2016).

Figure 4.26: Model Showing How BAKE Supports Bloggers

Figure 4.26 demonstrates the various ways that the bloggers said BAKE assists the Kenyan blogging community. The two major ways that the association aids bloggers is in creation of some standards for the blogging practice and giving peer support. Standards are created through BAKE guidelines given to guide the bloggers on ethics, and through training of bloggers on legal
issues that affect the blogging practice. Peer support is done through help to set up one’s blog, legal assistance, training on how to make money through blogging, and the BAKE awards that recognise outstanding bloggers.

Interpretation under theme

As data presented under this theme has shown, bloggers interviewed are not altogether opposed to having some standards guiding their work. However, the bloggers prefer to have voluntary, rather than legally enforced regulation. This resonates with the contention from Brown (2011, p. 29) that a code of ethics does not have to be “as rigid and enforceable as the law”. Kenyan bloggers also prefer to have those rules formulated by bloggers, not journalists. This is in agreement with the views of Brown (2011) that a code of ethics requires “legitimacy and power” from those who will be expected to adhere to it. The findings indicate that this legitimacy would be given if bloggers play a huge part in deciding the standards that ought to guide their work.

![Figure 4.27: The Challenges of Standardising Blogging](image)

However, as Figure 4.27 indicates there are several hindrances to this process of creating standards for the blogging practice. One of the key challenges is the issue of defining the practice, which is elaborated by Davis (2009, p. 105), as the “inability to determine whether blogging is journalism or merely commentary, or perhaps, with the growth of blogs by traditional political actors, merely a mouthpiece of existing players”. The scholar argued that this “absence of a clear
definition of blogging’s role makes setting the rules of engagement even more difficult” (Davis, 2009, p. 105).

Other challenges that hamper the creation of standards are the vastness of the internet, the diversity among bloggers, and the dissenting perceptions of BAKE, the one blogging association in Kenya that might be a starting point for such standards. The respondents were of the view that it is difficult to regulate blogging as the practice is part of the internet which is vast and open to all. Various terms were used to depict the difficulty in regulating the internet. One blogger called it a “jungle”, another respondent termed it a “wilderness”, another “the wild west”, while another referred to it as an “unrestrained field”.

Theme 6: Comparing Journalism Practice with Blogging Practice

Waite (2008, p. 990) defined practice as “to work at or to pursue as a profession”. The theme in this section compares the journalism practice and the blogging practice. This theme was derived from the questions on whether bloggers consider their practice journalism and the reasons for their answers. Data on the sources that bloggers use for their stories and their news dissemination processes also contributed to this theme. Besides the bloggers, the respondents from the communication sector were also interviewed on their views on whether the blogging practice can be considered journalism.

Brown (2013, p. 19) posited that journalists and bloggers play a similar role of disseminating information to the public but that the latter lean more on opinion and cannot therefore “be relied upon in the same way as the traditional news source”. The other difference between the two groups is the issue of independence, with bloggers being the sole decision-makers on what appears on their blogs, while journalists have to work according to the structural processes in the newsroom (Brown, 2013).

There are four sub-themes under this theme: sources of stories; types of stories; the perceptions of bloggers on whether blogging is journalism; and professional standards and structures.
Sub-theme: Sources of stories

Examining the sources that bloggers use to tell their stories can demonstrate how blogging practice compares with journalism. Bloggers revealed that they use a variety of sources for their stories. The sources included personal experience, current affairs, news releases, mainstream media, online media, interviews, and documents.

BAKE 9, who has a diploma in journalism, described her sources as “normal news beats” (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016). She added that she also gets content from an international site called African Press Organisation. Non-BAKE 8, also a trained journalist, said he sourced his stories from “interviews, conducting research, press releases, journalists, mainstream media, and guest writers” (Non-BAKE 8 Interview, November 10, 2015). Non-BAKE 6, a lawyer who is a trained journalist, got his stories from other journalists, Public Relations officers, and other news sources. The sources called, texted, or emailed story ideas. BAKE 11 and Non-BAKE 4, who have undergraduate degrees in Journalism, got their stories from interviews and online research.

According to the data gathered, the sources used by bloggers who had no training in journalism were not different from those used by bloggers trained as journalists. The main sources used by bloggers who were not professionally trained in journalism included mainstream media, news releases, social media, internet, life, observations, people, media events, current affairs and documents. An interesting finding from the data collected from this group of bloggers is that although they were not trained journalists, research was a big part of their news gathering process.

Non-BAKE 2, Non-BAKE 7, and BAKE 3 were good examples of bloggers who are not trained in journalism, but who valued research as a key aspect in news gathering. Non-BAKE 7, who writes historical pieces and investigative stories, described his main sources as “people, court documents, books, mainstream media, books, and archived library material” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016). BAKE 3, who writes business stories, said he uses journalistic
sources. Some of his sources are “company adverts and annual reports” (BAKE 3 Interview, November 7, 2016). Unlike several bloggers who said they do not use mainstream media as a source for their news, BAKE 3 said that the newspaper is one of the places that he goes to for story ideas. He added that because he writes on business, documents such as company annual reports are one of his main sources for stories. Non-BAKE 2 who writes on judiciary matters said he uses court documents a lot.

BAKE 5, a blogger trained in diplomacy but who had worked as a journalist, talked about his sources in journalistic terms. When asked the sources of his stories, he said: “current affairs from media, newsmakers and contacts” (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016). BAKE 2, a lifestyle blogger trained in IT, but who was studying for a master’s degree in Communication, said people were the main sources of the stories she writes on marriage, parenting and relationships. BAKE 4, a political scientist with a blog that had employed writers, gave his sources as people and social media. On whether mainstream media was one of the sources for stories for his blog, BAKE 4 said, “Mainstream gets stories from us” (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016).

Non-BAKE 3, who wrote on technology, identified his sources as a mix of his own inspiration and other journalistic sources. He outlined his sources as, “companies, news releases, new happenings, curiosity, social media, the internet and mainstream media” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016). BAKE 10, a lifestyle blogger gave purely journalistic sources: “media events and press releases” (BAKE 10 Interview, December 16, 2016) Non-BAKE 5 got her stories from “current affairs, personal experiences and online media” (Non-BAKE 5 Interview, November 11, 2016). Non-BAKE 1 who called himself a public critic, said his main source of news is “the common man”. He said:
If you are going to talk about governance, it’s unlike before where I used to give my opinion about issues I observed every day. Now it’s mostly people telling me to ask questions because they think I am an opinion leader. That would mean someone in Garissa telling me, ‘we have not had water, there’s drought. Can you ask the governor to do something?’ (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016)

However, BAKE 1 who has blogged since 2001 was opposed to looking at blogging sources from a journalistic point of view. He argued that blogging is different from journalism and criticised bloggers who rely on the same sources as those of journalists. He said:

I am not reporting. I am not going to a press conference to get a press release. One of the sad things about bloggers is that you go to their websites and you find the exact same press release. I find that so irritating. So I am not a reporter in that sense, it’s more of commentary. There is a lot of observation about what is going on in the country. What makes a blog a blog is that it has your personal voice; it has your personal insights. If I can cut and paste a press release, there is no personal voice there. I do not report, I do commentary. It is really an analysis of issues that go on in the country. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)

Sub-theme: Types of Stories Covered

The bloggers interviewed covered different types of stories including news, business, technology, investigative pieces, politics, lifestyle, relationships, human interest, entertainment and development, product reviews and book reviews among others. Although there are perceptions that what most bloggers write is gossip, none of the bloggers interviewed associated the stories they write with it. In fact, the bloggers described those who write gossip as a group that has led to the notion that most bloggers are unethical. One of the bloggers, Non-BAKE 4 when asked whether she publishes gossip said, “No, in fact, I wouldn’t dare” (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016). Another blogger, BAKE 9 who writes on development and business issues said: “I do not do gossip, politics or crime” (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016).

Unlike journalism where stories are rarely about the writer, data collected indicates that bloggers write about things they care about and even their own experiences. BAKE 2, a lifestyle blogger for example, started one of her blogs as a journal about a miscarriage she had. Her blog has evolved to a space where she shares stories of people facing similar experiences and where
guest writers give expert advice on miscarriage, infertility and similar issues. Another blogger, Non-BAKE 5, writes about parenting and women issues because these matters affect her directly as a woman. Non-BAKE 1 talked about the stories he writes about in an interesting way: “I am just a critic, of maybe (sic) a public critic. I do a lot of criticism of the government and public figures” (Non-BAKE 1 Interview, September 30, 2016). BAKE 1 who described blogging as reporting said his stories are opinions:

    My blog carries my opinions on issues I find interesting. This is different from other bloggers who feel they have to be strategic and find a niche. I am one of the old school bloggers who write about things I find interesting and if you find them interesting too, then you’ll read them. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)

Non-BAKE 3 who writes on technology described his blog posts as in-depth stories: “I was one of the first tech bloggers. I decided to write on my expertise, technology. What is happening is that a lot of journalists were covering the stories but were not going deep” (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016).

Sub-theme: Perceptions that Bloggers on whether their Practice is Journalism

Under this sub-theme, three issues will be analysed, namely, the impact of the professional background of a blogger on the blogging practice, the perception that bloggers have of their practice when compared to journalism, and the challenges that face bloggers as they practice.

a) Impact of professional background on blogging practice

A profession – is “any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education” (McIntosh, 2013, p. 1222). Professional background in the study refers to the career training of a blogger. Eight of the bloggers interviewed had professional training in journalism and communication. These bloggers contended that their training had influenced their blogging practice and given them the required skills. BAKE 9 said her journalism training had given her good writing skills and professionalism which she had integrated into her blog. According to BAKE 9, professionalism included verification of facts, ethical conduct BAKE 11, who has a degree in communication, said her
journalism training in had impacted her with editing and writing skills. BAKE 8, a journalism diploma holder, said: “I understand the 5Ws and H of a story and I understand the ethics needed when writing a story” (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016).

BAKE 7, who studied language for her undergraduate course, and who was taking a Masters in Communication when the research was conducted, stated that her training had developed in her, a love for reading and writing. Non-BAKE 4, Non-BAKE 6 and Non-BAKE 8, all who have academic training in journalism, argued that the training had given them skills for interviewing, reporting and writing. Non-BAKE 6, who is also a lawyer, said the legal training helped him adhere to media law requirements.

Eight bloggers who took Information technology (IT) courses at either diploma or degree level also described their training as having had an impact in their blogging practice. This group of bloggers said their IT expertise had helped them set-up their blogs and manage their content. BAKE 6, who has an undergraduate degree in IT said: “I was able to configure my platform and set-up my domain, to install software and all that stuff” (BAKE 6 Interview, October 3, 2016).

BAKE 3, a Business Administration graduate said his training had given him skills needed for writing business stories. He pointed out that this educational background was responsible for his knowledge on analysis of financial reports and other business-related content. Non-BAKE 2 with an educational background in finance gave similar views. Non-BAKE 7 who studied forensics said his area of study was critical for his niche: “Being a trained investigator helps me look at a story from all angles” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016)

Figure 4.28 demonstrates how educational background influences a blogger. Those with a journalism educational background have skills in reporting, interviewing, researching and editing. Bloggers who have an ICT background know how to set up a blog, and manage content. Bloggers with a political science background spoke about analytical skills.
b) Perception of blogging practice in relation to journalism

Table 4.7 shows the perceptions of bloggers on whether they considered their blogging as journalism. While eight of the bloggers interviewed strongly argued that blogging is not journalism, an equal number said they considered the practice as journalism. Three of the respondents said blogging could partly be termed as journalism, while one of the bloggers said it is still not clear whether blogging is journalism.

Table 4.7: Bloggers’ Views on Whether Blogging is Journalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception on blogging as journalism</th>
<th>Number of Bloggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogging is journalism</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging is not journalism</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging is partly journalism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not clear whether blogging is journalism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that only one trained journalist of the six interviewed said that blogging is not journalism. Non-BAKE 8 said he studied blogging as part of his journalism course in college. Two of the bloggers who are trained journalists were of the view that blogging has some aspects of journalism such as dissemination of news but lacks other important principles such as verification of facts. BAKE 11 explained this unique aspect of blogging: “Yes, it’s
journalism because we are telling stories just like journalists do. No, because our work does not undergo the rigorous fact-checking and gate-keeping processes like those of journalism” (BAKE eleven Interview, November 15, 2016). Non-BAKE 6, a trained journalist, and also a lawyer gave similar sentiments:

Yes and No. Journalism has its own discipline. Journalism has its own rules. Sometimes I deliberately, violate those rules. And I say deliberately because sometimes those rules of journalism are supposed to hold you back. Before you say somebody has done something and even when you are sure of it, you are supposed to give this person, the option for response even before you publish it. Sometimes when I am writing an informative piece it is journalism. At other times I violate that and I go beyond. I write about people without caring whether they have a right of response or not. I just write what is in my mind. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Non-BAKE 7 explained why he did not see blogging as journalism in the past. He said, “Initially, I would have said no, but now I say yes....I think I have crossed over to journalism” (Non-BAKE 7 Interview, November 18, 2016). However, two other bloggers who are trained journalists described their work as wholly journalism.

Particularly for me it is journalism because I actually interview people. So I do research first, I contact them and [they] … agree to interviews. Journalism might not be so many things, but it… is asking questions and telling stories and that is what I do. (Non-BAKE 4 Interview, November 11, 2016)

Yes, I believe I am a journalist using an online platform and that’s why I am called a blogger. The old view of blogging as a platform where you go and talk about your beef with your husband or boyfriend is long gone. (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016)

Their views were echoed by BAKE 5:

I consider myself a journalist because I provide the same information that any journalist out there provides. I just use a different medium. And sometimes I put out information that media ignores, maybe because they don’t consider it having news value, or they didn’t have the perspective that I had, or they didn’t have the sources that I had. Sometimes people give me articles to post just like they give media houses. (BAKE 5 Interview, October 10, 2016)
BAKE 4, a blogger, who has blogged for 10 years, said he believed that his work is journalism.

So when I voice my opinion or opinions of other people, I am using blogging to shape people’s opinion and I think that is what journalism is all about. [I am] also informing people when I write my view or my research about a certain topic. (BAKE 4 Interview, November 12, 2016)

Some of the bloggers however, felt that journalism and blogging are distinct. Participant two in the FDG said, “We are not journalists. The fact that we create content to disseminate is the only thing we have in common with journalists” (Participant two, FDG, December 19, 2016).

BAKE 8 highlighted another difference: “…journalists have a target and when they are doing a story, there is the house style dictated by the media house” (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016). Non-BAKE 2 was of the view that journalists were trying to fight competition from social media by labelling blogging journalism. He argued:

Journalism is a profession. For a profession you have to go to class, you have to sit down in school for four years or whatever, you know, and come out with a certificate and all that. Plus blogging is just blogging. It came about when Google came up with a platform where you can just air out your views. (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016)

The position of Non-BAKE 3 is that although journalism and blogging have some similarities, they are not the same. He highlighted the freedom of expression enjoyed by bloggers as one of the things that make the practice different from journalism. He said:

I don’t think of myself as a journalist. I think bloggers are cooler than journalists. Our tone of voice is less professional, it is more authentic. We say things in a less moderated manner. We even say things in a fun way, I think. I don’t know. Do I carry myself as a journalist? No, I think we carry out a similar purpose but we add spice to it in the way we do it. Remember people have become very wary of what they read in the papers, the advertising and all. (Non-BAKE 3 Interview, October 15, 2016)

Another blogger, BAKE 8 explained why he felt his work is not journalism:

There are a lot of restrictions in journalism, yet there are no restrictions when it comes to blogging. Let me give you an example. When you are a journalist, you cannot just put up a story. There are many people who will check your story. These are sub-editors, editors and chief editors. They are going to scrutinise your story but in blogging all you care about most of the time is that you have correct grammar and that there is good flow. (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016)
BAKE 1 discussed the difficulties in answering the question on whether blogging is journalism, arguing that it is still hard to say who a journalist really is, as there are some famous and successful journalists who never studied journalism. The views of BAKE 1 seem to echo McQuail’s contention that “journalism has mixed connotations, reflecting uncertainty about the status of the profession” (McQuail, 2005, p. 559). BAKE 1 added that while bloggers and journalists sometimes perform a similar role of news dissemination, the two practices are different because one group operates from a media house and the other does not. He argued that he preferred the word reporting saying the term can refer to anyone besides journalists. BAKE 1 said:

.....there’s been such a blurring of the lines. Every media has blogs. Every media house has bloggers. Some of the most influential bloggers in Kenya write for media houses simply because their blogs are very good. So are they bloggers or reporters ...? This is a question that will never be resolved. (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016)

Table 4.8: Perceptions on Whether Blogging is Journalism or Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogging as Journalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It disseminates information and tells stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It shapes opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Research is sometimes conducted to get information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sources may be interviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sometimes blogs break news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Blogging is journalism on an online platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Blogs are moving from being mere journals to becoming serious news sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Media houses have blogs and bloggers who write for them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogging different from Journalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Blogging is free speech, journalism has limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Blogging lacks professional structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bloggers do not have to undergo professional training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bloggers may skip important news gathering processes such as verification of facts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 summarises various bloggers’ perceptions on whether they considered their practice as journalism. The arguments that favour perceptions that blogging is journalism appear to be more than those that state the opposite. However, despite the similarities between blogging and journalism, Garden (2011) has argued:
There are bloggers….who do not want to be “boxed in” by definitions and who do not want to be told how they should blog. They will remain adamant that blogs are simply what bloggers make of them, which is why scholars need to also pay attention to how bloggers talk about their blogging and their blogs. (Garden 2011, p. 495).

c) Challenges facing bloggers when carrying out their practice

This section will analyse the challenges that the bloggers who were interviewed said they face, including arrests, prosecution, trolls, attempts to hack their blogs and actual hacking of their blog sites, and threats through phone and face-to-face encounters. Bloggers also said that society has a wrong perception of bloggers with most of them viewing them as dangerous people. The bloggers felt this perception comes from the unethical practices of some bloggers. BAKE 9 said bloggers are seen as “anti-law, anti-government” (BAKE 9 Interview, November 9, 2016).

BAKE 1 stated that since 2007 when blogging started becoming popular in the country, there has been a perception that “bloggers are against the establishment” and are “a destructive force seeking to destroy Kenya” (BAKE 1 Interview, October 17, 2016). For BAKE 8, just being identified as a blogger “makes people fear you. I don’t tell people I am a blogger” (BAKE 8 Interview, September 24, 2016). BAKE 8 said he preferred to self-identify as a content developer. Another blogger, Non-BAKE 1 revealed that he has had 21 cases brought against by the state. He narrated his experience when he changed from blogging on technology to writing about politics:

In the tech world, people respect you even if they do not agree with you. They will not do something drastic. But in politics, you can get killed. After two or three stories on my political blog, I started having mixed feelings. Besides my site being hacked, I have also been physically attacked. I was stabbed four times in 2012. My vehicle has been hit with stones and I have been blocked on my way home. That’s Kenyan politics, it is very nasty and you can get killed. (Non-BAKE Interview, September 30, 2016)

Non-BAKE 7 spoke of the dangerous nature of blogging: “As a blogger, mistakes in a story can be costly. Mistakes can make you get killed, sued or abused” (Non-BAKE Interview, November 18, 2016). On his part, Non-BAKE 2 said he had five cases brought against over blog posts he had written. He added that the cases were later dropped for lack of evidence. He told of the other threats he has faced:
I have been trailed by people after doing certain stories. I have been severally warned. I have been forced to leave town for a number of days. There is a day I left town after my friend was attacked. Actually, my friend was attacked, his computers were burnt because of a story I did and they thought it was him. So I had to leave town for almost two weeks, for things to cool down. I don’t get scared; I try as much as possible to remain objective so that if you try to kill me over a story, you will also feel guilty. (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Non-BAKE 6 narrated his arrest after posting content that annoyed a politician:

I wrote something about a member of parliament and I was arrested by police and put in cells for about 30 minutes. I was accused of misuse of an electronic gadget. That law has now been declared unconstitutional by the court. I have never gotten into other trouble because I am not the kind of person who attacks people directly. I attack the character not the person. (Non-BAKE 6 Interview, November 14, 2016)

Non-BAKE 2 also spoke about some dangers that could arise if a blogger does not weigh the consequences of their action:

Blogging is not about martyrdom, that you have to be this hero. You might speak the truth and then wonder about your security. You might expose someone then tomorrow he shoots you. It is better to hide some truth…..You can get killed and you will be forgotten. (Non-BAKE 2 Interview, September 30, 2016)

Sub-theme: Professional standards and structures

The interviewees were in agreement that one main difference between bloggers and journalists is the existence of professional structures. Some of the key concepts in this segment are structures, standards, gatekeeping and professional training. Professional training in this study as defined earlier is media training given to journalists to impart on them standards and the skills required in the profession (McQuail, 2005, p. 564).

One of the structures relevant to media practice is the Code of Ethics for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya outlined in the MCK Act. Another useful structure is the body of media laws. The other structure is the gatekeeping process in the news gathering process. The different structures all work together to demonstrate to a journalist what is expected of them as they carry out their practice. The structures also highlight the differences between professional journalists and other people who practice a form of journalism, in this case, bloggers. Professional training
prepares the journalist for a media career. The Code of Ethics outlines the standards of behaviour expected of a journalist in the news dissemination process. Media laws spell out the legal requirements. The gatekeeping process controls what kind of information is disseminated to the public. The CEO of the Media Council of Kenya, Haron Mwangi explained how journalism standards work:

The mainstream media is guided by tools of the profession and they want to stick to the professional principles of journalism and define who a journalist is. The fact that Nation or Standard is a brand that has to be protected means they won’t just write anything. They have to be very careful about the information that they report. The news they give must be truthful and must be verified. (CEO, MCK Interview, October 31, 2016)

Professional training is part of media standards. This training refers to the skills journalists get through education so as to make them media professionals. Professionals get “special training” and are “respected” due to their “high level of education” (McIntosh, 2013, p. 1222). Training of journalists is done by various media training institutions in the country. In this study, journalists are regarded as having professional training, unlike bloggers who do not necessarily have to be trained in media. This training of journalists imparts to them writing, reporting and editing skills. The training also enlightens journalists on ethical and legal requirements that they need to adhere to in their practice. Given that bloggers do not undergo such training, blogging may be seen as devoid of these professional standards.

In addition, professional training is an important sub theme under the comparison of journalism and blogging practice because some of the bloggers who were interviewed said they were apprehensive that regulation meant they may be forced to study media-related courses. One of the bloggers, BAKE 5, argued against MCK regulation saying he did not want to be compelled to get a diploma in journalism so as to get accreditation to blog. Participant two in the FDG, who is a BAKE official, said:
The problem with being compared with journalists is that the government will want to put us in the class of journalists and impose those journalistic rules on us, force us to go to journalism schools and all that. We are easier having a conversation as online publishers because that’s who we are. If it is a law to protect publishers we would be more comfortable with that. (Participant two, FGD, December 19, 2016)

![Diagram showing differences between Journalism Practice and Blogging Practice](image)

**Figure 4.29: Factors that Influence News Processes in the Journalism and Blogging Practices**

Figure 4.29 illustrates the differences between journalism and blogging practices and how these impact news production. The figure also shows the prevailing factors during the news production processes for news bloggers as compared to journalists. For the journalist, one is expected to adhere to media standards as defined by the Media Council Act. The blogger does not have any specific standards that dictate his or her work. As demonstrated by findings presented earlier, even bloggers who are members of BAKE may or may not follow the association’s guidelines because an enforcement mechanism does not exist. There are also no newsroom structures in blogging as is the case in journalism. Newsroom structures would include the gatekeeping processes that dictate how news is gathered and reported. This means that individual bloggers are the ones in charge of the end product that appears on their blog, unlike the journalist whose piece is subjected to several gatekeepers. In addition, most journalists are people who have undergone professional training in media, while bloggers who are likely to be professionals in other fields, who get into blogging because of their love for writing.
Interpretation under the theme

It emerged from this study that Kenyan bloggers who have training in journalism or worked in mainstream media are likely to view their practice as journalism. This finding has also been articulated by Fulton (2015, p. 362) who in a study on journalism in the digital space found that “those who have worked as journalists in traditional media still call themselves journalists while others who have come into the space via other professions are cautious about using the term”. Similarly, Singer (2015, p. 133) aptly described the connection of the two:

So are bloggers journalists, and are their ethics interchangeable? No, they are different - but complementary rather than contradictory. Indeed, the relationship between bloggers and journalists perhaps can best be described as symbiotic. Interconnected blogs and their readers form a community that discusses, dissects, and extends the stories created by mainstream media, as well as producing its own commentary, fact-checking, and grassroots reporting. (Singer 2015, p. 133)

One of the major differences is the professional training that journalists undertake before getting into the career. This training which some respondents referred to as formal is undertaken in media colleges or universities where one either earns a diploma or degree in journalism or communication. The blogging practice on the other hand, is structured in a way that anyone with some writing knowhow and computer skills can set up a blog and begin writing, without necessarily having a college diploma or university degree in media studies. The respondents were of the view that bloggers should not be forced to get structured professional training like that of journalists but that they should be sensitised on legal and ethical issues of blogging.

Key Findings

Motivation of Bloggers

A key motivation for bloggers was dissemination of information to fill a void left by mainstream media priorities. Bloggers who identified this as their motivation said they told stories that could not be found in mainstream media. These bloggers said they started the blogs because they themselves needed the information. Another group of bloggers that gave a journalistic
motivation for blogging are journalists who had left mainstream media practice. These bloggers explained that they started blogs because they felt that they were collecting information which was left out of the mainstream bulletins. Former mainstream journalists turned to blogging as a way to tell stories in a space free from editorial constrains.

Another motivation that bloggers identified, and which is also sometimes exhibited by mainstream media, is advocacy. Some bloggers argued that their main motivation for blogging is to advocate about issues in society. The advocacy motivation, however, has gotten some bloggers into legal trouble, with some being arrested over their posts.

Blogging as a business venture was also a key motivation discussed by bloggers. Bloggers explained that they made money from blogging in various ways. These include, attracting advertisements for their blogs, reviewing products, posting sponsored content on blogs, and involvement in social media events. The indication here is that the bloggers interviewed took their work seriously and did not regard it as a mere hobby.

Findings show that bloggers also blog because of the various ways that the practice offers satisfaction. According to the bloggers, blogging can be fun, it is therapeutic, it helps to connect one to people, it offers opportunities for sharing, it offers flexibility for those who do not like being confined to offices, and it gives a space for one to express oneself freely.

The findings also indicate that motivation of bloggers influence the kind of content they post, the production processes and their ethical conduct. Bloggers talked of conducting research and thoroughly verifying facts so as to ensure that they gave their audience quality stories. Others talked of hiring a number of writers to help them gather quality stories for their blogs.

Ethical Values

From the data presented, it is clear that bloggers interviewed believe in ethical values. The bloggers interviewed are guided by journalistic values, personal values – which emanate from their upbringing or religion, and values prescribed by the blogging community through
BAKE. Some of the bloggers who talked about journalistic values are bloggers who have university or college training in journalism. Bloggers who do not have academic training in journalism but have worked in mainstream media also spoke about using journalistic values when making ethical decisions. Other bloggers said their values came from personal beliefs on morality. Bloggers described personal values in varied ways: family values, religious values, and moral conscience.

On accountability, findings show that the bloggers interviewed value accountability to self and the audience. These bloggers argued that their blogs are their personal spaces and hence, the rationale of thinking about what responsibility they owe themselves first, before considering the other parties who would be affected by their blogging.

On journalistic ethical principles, the respondents were in agreement that these are also required in the blogging practice. The ethical principles that all bloggers interviewed agreed should also apply to bloggers are integrity, confidentiality, accountability and minimising harm. The bloggers were however, uncomfortable with the principle of obscenity, taste and tone in reporting. According to the bloggers, the principle can be interpreted in various ways. Some participants in the FGD feared that the concept could be used to censor the work of bloggers. Another principle that a few bloggers disagreed with was the concept of privacy.

Various factors interact in the bloggers’ ethical decision process. These include: their personal values; scrutiny by the blogging community; the standards of professional bodies like the Media Council of Kenya; the interests of their audience; clients’ needs; and other legal requirements. When making ethical decisions, bloggers think about the consequences of their actions, how the action will affect their character and about rules that they would like to see followed universally.
Ethical Conduct of Bloggers

Bloggers do not believe their blogging is unethical. They argue that the unethical practices of a few bloggers are exaggerated to term all bloggers unethical. Their contention was that the claims of unethical conduct emanated from a few “bad apples” among the bloggers. Findings further suggest that bloggers who had blogged a long period of time embraced ethical practices. For example, one of the bloggers who had blogged for more than 10 years revealed that he had developed a code to guide his writers on how to conduct themselves while blogging. Bloggers who had MCK accreditation also said they were careful to adhere to media ethics. Likewise, bloggers who were members of BAKE stated they followed the association’s guidelines.

Normative models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic participation influence on news blogging

The findings indicate that a normative framework for blogging practice would cut across the three models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic participation. This is illustrated by the fact that although bloggers interviewed believe in freedom, they also argued for self-regulation. They posited that bloggers can be guided by BAKE guidelines, personal ethics or even other ethical principles that bloggers might propose. Respondents further argued that the government should not regulate blogging but should only play the roles of ensuring internet infrastructure is adequate and bloggers are aware about media laws that may limit their freedom.

Bloggers believe blogs play the role of alternative media. They do this by playing the advocacy and watchdog role where they point out evils in society and question some of the decisions made by those in leadership positions. In addition, bloggers play the role of an alternative source of news, although some respondents feel that blogs have overtaken mainstream media as the main source of news. Respondents also argued that blogs are alternative because of their interactive nature where they connect closely with their audiences. Some of the respondents argued that blogs are a new way of storytelling in the African context.
Feasibility of Standardisation of Blogging

Findings indicate that bloggers are not against having standards to guide their practice. Standards were seen by some as a way of professionalising the blogging practice and also as a way to ensure that government control is avoided. However, bloggers are against the use of the Media Council Act of 2013 as a tool for standardising their practice. BAKE was seen as a starting point for the creation of standards for bloggers. However, there was a feeling that BAKE may lack legitimacy to set standards for bloggers around the country since those who blog are not a homogenous group who can be put under one organisation.

Respondents favoured a non-legal code, preferably developed by a multi-stakeholder forum comprising media practitioners, government, communication sector and the key players – the bloggers. However, some of the respondents were sceptical of the effectiveness that the code would have in ensuring bloggers adhered to ethics, noting that enforcement would be difficult. What would happen if one refused to follow the code? The view was that a blog is a personal space where one will continue disseminating information from even if one is censured for breaching ethics.

Findings also point out that some felt would also be hard to set standards for blogging until the term is defined. The argument is that blogs are part of the wider social media network and that micro blogs are also considered part of blogging. The question then is whether it is really feasible to come up with standards to guide all those millions of people who use social media.

Journalism Practice versus Blogging Practice

News blogging has a number of similarities to journalistic practice. These similarities include the news sources used by bloggers and journalists, and the type of stories that both groups write. A slight difference in the sources used by the two groups is the fact that bloggers are more likely to use personal experience unlike journalists who are expected to be objective by writing a story free of personal biases. Blogging also differs from journalism because the latter has
professional standards and structures, while the former is a free for all practice. These professional standards are what Knight (2008) maintained differentiates journalists from bloggers. Journalists acquire the professional standards and structures of the journalism practice during the training they get as preparation for entering into the media field. Most bloggers apart from those who started off as journalists do not have professional training in media.

On whether, bloggers consider their practice is journalism, opinion is divided. Some bloggers especially professional journalists say they are doing journalism on an online platform. Others who have blogged for a long period say that while previously they would have denied they are carrying out journalism on their blogs, they now feel that is what they are doing. Some bloggers feel that blogging is partly journalism and partly not. These bloggers argue that while some news dissemination processes on the blogging practice may be similar to those of journalism; their practice does not have the rigorous fact-checking processes that guide journalists.

Summary

This chapter was a presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data. The discussion in the chapter was done in the form of thematic analysis of the data. Six themes, namely, motivations for blogging, ethical values that guide bloggers in their work, ethical conduct of bloggers, emerging normative models of blogging practice, feasibility of standardisation of blogging practice, and comparison and contrast of journalism and blogging practices, were discussed. Each major theme had a number of sub-themes. The next chapter will include a discussion of the key findings by linking them to theory and literature, conclusions, recommendations and a highlight of areas of further research.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study sought to unpack ethical frameworks relevant to Kenyan news bloggers and their practice. The ethical frameworks that emerged include journalistic ethical principles, BAKE guidelines, and other relevant media laws. Universal acceptance among bloggers of the need and practicality of ethical frameworks for their practice was not assumed at the outset of this research, and the degree of acceptance and/or contestation thereof was a key motivation to be tested. This dimension of the research problem led to questions about the feasibility of standardisation of the Kenyan blogosphere through some form of code, but what standards might be used to do this? With the aim of extending the global scholarship of communication ethics but with a focus on Africa and particularly, the East African region, the main aim of this research was to explore a normative ethical framework for Kenyan news bloggers. This chapter will examine the key findings of the research by linking them to theoretical considerations and the relevant literature discussed in chapter two. The chapter will also comprise a conclusion, recommendations and also outline areas of further research.

Discussion of Key Findings

Motivations of Kenyan News Bloggers who are not part of Mainstream Media

The first objective of the study was to investigate what motivates Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream news media. According to the findings, news bloggers have both journalistic and non-journalistic motivations. The journalistic motivations may or may not be intentional, given the sentiments of Lasica (2003) that most blogs offer some form of news even when that is not their main aim.

One journalistic motivation for blogging identified in the research is dissemination of information to fill a gap left by mainstream media. Another journalistic motivation is blogging for...
advocacy to champion issues that a blogger feels are crucial to society. Following the finding that one of the motivations of news bloggers is to disseminate news for public consumption as an alternative source to mainstream media outlets, such bloggers can be viewed as playing a journalistic role that was previously reserved for mainstream media.

News disseminators, according to the social responsibility theory, are expected to act for the public good (McQuail, 2005) and will need to be frequently reminded of their responsibility to the public (Biagi, 2016). The findings of this research pertaining to journalistic values and motivations upheld by some of the Kenyan bloggers concur with Singer’s contention that “news bloggers and journalists fill sometimes-overlapping but essentially different niches in the information environment” (Singer, 2006, p. 23).

One non-journalistic motivation for blogging that emerged from the findings is the sharing of experiences and thoughts with a wider audience. The data from the interviews and focus groups showed that for some bloggers, this sharing of experiences and thoughts took the form of advocacy; for others, it was a business opportunity through content that purposefully promoted a product or service; and yet still, there were others who shared information because they liked to, and treated doing so as a hobby. This finding agrees with the argument by Bruns and Jacobs (2006) that self-expression is one of the major motivations for blogging. It also appeared to resonate with Krapf’s (2009, p. 372) description that blogs run by individuals or a small group focus on “daily personal musings and experiences”.

While for some, blogging brought self-fulfilment and the chance for independent expression free of the mainstream media’s institutional pressures, others saw it as an opportunity for altruistic writing, a chance to “fight for other people’s rights”, as Non-BAKE 1, Non-BAKE 2, and Non-BAKE 7 averred in their interviews. Other non-journalistic motivations that lean towards self-expression are blogging to vent frustrations – which some bloggers described as therapeutic.
Motivation was also found to influence the kind of content produced by bloggers, the processes of producing content and their ethical conduct. Bloggers whose motive was to give quality content to audiences said they carried out thorough research and avoided unethical practices such as sensationalising the information that they posted. How does this finding compare to that of Gil de Zuniger et al. (2011) that looked at how motivation influences the blog topics and ethical behaviour of bloggers?

The Gil de Zuniger et al. study found that bloggers who perceived their work as journalism were motivated to report in a journalistic manner, and also tended to follow media ethical principles such as accuracy, opportunity to reply, confidentiality, and minimising harm among others. In this study on news blogging, bloggers who gave their motivation as giving quality content, which in essence is an attempt to ensure accuracy in reporting, employed stringent journalistic news gathering processes such as carrying out interviews and conducting research—and also strove to uphold ethical principles by avoiding practice such as click-baiting. This was certainly a conviction among a minority of the bloggers, including trained journalists (like the blogger BAKE 9) and those of no formal training (for example, BAKE 5).

Figure 5.1 shows how motivation can be linked to the ethical behaviour of news bloggers.

![Figure 5.1: How Motivation Influences News Gathering Processes of News Bloggers](image-url)
The Normative Influence of Libertarianism, Social Responsibility and Democratic-Participation on Kenyan News Blogging that is not part of Mainstream Journalism

The second objective of the study examined how the normative models of libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant theory influence the practice of Kenyan news blogging that is not part of mainstream journalism. As indicated in the findings, the emerging ethical framework for bloggers cuts across the three models. Bloggers value the freedom espoused by libertarianism, the self-regulation advocated by social responsibility, and the alternative media tenets postulated by democratic participant theory. The finding to a large extent falls in line with the conceptual framework that had been envisaged in chapter two. For example, to some extent, news bloggers felt the need to perform a public duty as envisaged by social responsibility theory. This is demonstrated by the fact that the bloggers interviewed said that they considered public interest when disseminating information. Another standard that emanated from the three models is that of truth as a news value. The news bloggers interviewed as indicated under the third objective contended that they value accuracy. However, as demonstrated by the findings, news bloggers favour a non-statutory framework developed through BAKE or through a multi-stakeholder forum where they play a key role.

A framework which encompasses democratic participation highlights the view among bloggers that besides dissemination of information, blogs ought to play the role of advocacy, a concept that Debatin (2011) believed should be a hallmark of citizen media. According to Debatin, adopting a normative framework that embraces advocacy would help bloggers tackle some of the ethical issues that plague the practice. Incorporating advocacy would also to a certain extent help in making bloggers socially responsible, because for one to advocate about societal issues, one would have to consider the public good.

A key area of discussion in this study was the role of government in the possible regulation of bloggers. The respondents argued against government regulation, arguing instead for self-
regulation and use of current media laws for those who defame or engage in hate speech. The findings indicate that some respondents were apprehensive that government may intervene and come up with laws to regulate blogging if bloggers do not show they are serious with self-regulation.

The on-going and challenging Kenyan debate on a normative framework for blogging mirrors the long journey on development of media policy discussed by Mutere (2010) and discussed earlier in chapter two, describing how the government and media haggled over regulation. In the end, Kenya settled on a hybrid model with a media council that has “statutory and non-statutory” status – independent but at the same defended by the state (Obonyo & Peel, 2012). As demonstrated by the findings in this study, bloggers are concerned by the on-going debate on regulation of blogging, with some viewing the discussion as a move to finally bring in censorship. Findings indicate that bloggers want to be major stakeholders in any such debate. This finding ties in with the contention by Obonyo and Peel (2012) that regulation advanced by industry players is more acceptable than that advanced by state.

According to the findings of this research, bloggers think about public good when posting online. What normally started as a personal interest by the blogger sometimes became public interest when audiences were affected by, and became interested in the issue. Findings further illustrate that bloggers consider themselves as having more freedom of expression than mainstream media, and hence more cognisant of public interest. This consideration of public interest is what, according to Singer (2006), differentiates news bloggers from other bloggers who blog on purely personal issues. However, as the findings also show, news bloggers who blog to make money, may just like their mainstream counterparts, compromise public interest because of commercial interests. This finding concurs with Helander’s (2010) study which found that while Kenyan journalists were interested in serving the public interest; their intentions were compromised by, among other factors, commercial interests.
According to the findings, bloggers view blogs as alternative media. The argument is that the blogging practice has allowed individuals who do not have resources to start a big media organisation to start blogs instead. This, in relation to the philosophical distinctions of media practice that informed the study, is a liberalisation of media to give various groups in the community a voice. This liberalisation was addressed from an African perspective by a proposition on alternative media discussed by Nyamnjoh (2013).

The fact that a number of the bloggers interviewed were not professional journalists, ties in with the premise that alternative media allows non-professionals to access media and participate in the production of content (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007). The role of blogs as an alternative form of media demonstrated in this study ties in with the finding of Gunter et al. (2009) that while blogs do not necessarily produce “pure news”, they are instrumental in providing avenues for news analysis and interpretation. It should be noted however, that the extent to which blogs promote democracy and multiple perspectives as envisaged by Banda (2010) and Touri (2009) is still under scrutiny, given that some Kenyan bloggers are aligned to key political players.

However, the findings do not strongly highlight the role of blogs as a fifth estate. The watchdog and fifth estate roles of blogging had been described as that of monitoring mainstream media, to point out the inaccuracies and biases (Cooper, 2006; Friend & Singer, 2007; Jericho, 2012). As indicated in chapter four, respondents did not perceive blogs as watchers of mainstream media, but instead criticised them for allegedly copying and pasting information derived from journalistic forums.

The findings therefore, do not fit in with Copper’s (2006) proposition of bloggers as a fifth estate that critiques media reports, scrutinises the inaccuracies of mainstream media or reframes media reports. In fact, the findings indicate that what is posted by blogs may not necessarily be factual, and one would sometimes need to verify the information through mainstream media.
In terms of being an alternative media that is part of the grassroots democratic participation model, the findings showed that blogging continues to be more of a venture of elites who have access to internet. This is in agreement with a study by Banda (2010) that argued that while citizen journalism is flourishing on the African continent, internet access is limited to a small part of the population. The limitation is in concurrence with Odinga’s (2013) study, which found that although social media was used as an alternative voice during the Kenyan elections of 2007 and 2013, its effects were mainly confined to urban areas.

To further examine a normative framework for blogging practice, it is important to compare the findings of this study on the comparison and contrast of journalism and blogging practices. The findings indicate that some bloggers believe their practice is journalism, while some do not. This contradicts the contention of Rettberg (2008, p. 85) that blogging is not journalism because “most blogs are not journalism, nor do their writers aspire to be journalists”. The findings of this research thus indicate that the answer as to whether blogging is journalism continues to be a complex one.

According to the findings, those news bloggers who are professionally trained in media are likely to consider their practice to be journalism. This finding ties in with that of Gil de Zuniger et al. (2011) who found that bloggers who perceived their work as journalism were likely to behave in a journalistic manner, and to follow media ethical principles such as verification of facts. This study found that Kenyan news bloggers who had blogged for a long period had over time started describing their practice as journalism, even though they had no journalistic training. This finding agrees with Ji and Sheehy (2010, p. 42) who observed that with time, bloggers begin perceiving blogging as “something akin to journalism, if not journalism itself”.

According to the findings in this research, journalism and blogging have a number of similarities. These include a large number of the type of news sources used, and the kind of stories that bloggers write. This negates Lasica’s contention that most bloggers engage mainly in
“random acts of journalism” (Lasica, 2003) but agrees with what Holt and Karlson (2015, p. 1796) called the “not-so-random” journalism activities:

Whereas initially, the news found within the blogosphere – and later on other social media – was characterized by vastness, incalculability, and straggyness, some phenomena have appeared on the social media horizon that actively work to organize, concentrate, and stimulate the reporting of news by citizens online in a systematic way, resembling traditional news media in matters such as editorial influence, appearance, and ambition. (Holt & Karlson, 2015, p. 1796)

The findings like those of Lowery (2006) indicated that the main difference between journalism practice and blogging practice is the professional structures and standards that govern the news production process. The findings are further in agreement with those by Lowery which contend that production in the newsroom is a long process involving editors and reporters, while the blogging process most times involves one person. In addition, the notion journalists and bloggers are collaborators rather than competitors (Oriedo, 2014; Singer, 2006) has been challenged by the findings in this study, given that the mistrust that the latter have for the former emerged strongly in the data.

Ethical Values that Guide Bloggers

Objective three in study analysed what ethical values guide Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media in their transmission of news. As was indicated in chapter four, this study used media ethical principles as a starting point for discussion on media standards for bloggers. This has been the trend globally, as demonstrated by the attempts by Blood, Dube, and Kuhn to formulate some form of standards for bloggers (Blood, 2002; Baran & Davis, 2009; Kuhn, 2007). In addition, Singer (2015) posited that the ethics required in blogging and journalism has a lot of similarities.

Findings in this study indicate that bloggers are guided by both personal and journalistic ethical principles. Personal ethics refers to those standards that are guided by one’s own moral leaning as opposed to guidelines given by BAKE or MCK code of conduct. This contention
agrees with the proposition by Friend and Singer (2007) that while journalists rely on professional and personal standards, bloggers are mostly likely to be guided by the latter.

As demonstrated in chapter four, the journalistic ethical principles valued most by the news bloggers interviewed in this study are accuracy, integrity, accountability, opportunity to reply, confidentiality, and minimising harm. The finding on accuracy concurs with the study by Kuhn (2007) cited in chapter two, which indicated that bloggers regard factual truth as an important ethical principle.

The bloggers interviewed also indicated that they avoided posting information that contains ethnic hatred and hate speech; a resolve that implies their intention to uphold the ethical principle of minimising harm. The contention by the bloggers in this Kenyan study, ties in with the argument by Dube and Kuhn (Baran & Davis, 2009; Kuhn, 2007), who in their proposed codes of ethics highlighted minimising harm as one of the important ethical principles that bloggers should adhere to.

An interesting area where the findings of this study tie in with those of Kuhn (2007) is on the area of moral duty to society. Like the Kuhn study where only one of the 32 bloggers surveyed considered society as a major stakeholder of blogs, in this study only one blogger said he was accountable to society. This highlights the individualistic nature of blogging and also showcases the value that bloggers have for free expression (Kuhn, 2007).

A study by Bosire (2013) posited that journalistic ethical principles be used to guide online journalism. In the current study, it was found that bloggers, while not being opposed to most of the journalistic principles, felt that some were not applicable to blogging. For example, they opposed the use of the principle of obscenity, taste and tone, as a guideline – contending that it is a vague concept that could be interpreted in very many ways. A contradiction emerges here because the bloggers interviewed said they value integrity, an ethical principle that may call on them to consider the kind of content they post online.
The findings in this research are in agreement with the views of Cenite et al. (2009) which found that bloggers do indeed care about ethics in contrast to perceptions that they do not. The finding also contradicts with that of Perlmutter and Schoen (2007, p. 45) who found that bloggers see their values as “antithetical” to those of journalists. The news bloggers, who participated in this research, while rejecting some of the journalistic principles, were open to most. Their only contention was that their rules be put in simpler language as opposed to that used in the journalistic code of ethics.

One of the ethical principles that news bloggers agreed is important is that of conflict of interest or independence. The bloggers argued that conflict of interest comes with the ethical dilemma of dealing with sponsored content. Like the Archer et al.’s (2014) study where Australian bloggers were found to be concerned about sponsorship where one is paid to endorse a product, this was also established as a concern among Kenyan news bloggers who participated in this research. The Kenyan bloggers were concerned that sponsorship compromises their independence. The bloggers were also grappling with the issue of whether to disclose to audiences about sponsored content, a problem also highlighted by Elliott (2009) as an ethical concern among bloggers.

Views of Kenyan News bloggers on Claims that their Practice Breaches Ethics

The fourth objective sought to solicit the views of selected Kenyan news bloggers who are not part of mainstream media, towards claims that their practice often breaches ethical standards of news gathering and publication. Findings showed that bloggers believe that most of them are ethical and that it is a few individuals who have led to the widespread perception that most are unethical. However, unlike the Archer et al.’s (2014) study where a majority of the bloggers (64%) out of the 245 surveyed felt blogging did not attract ethical issues, the Kenyan bloggers interviewed did acknowledge that there are ethical concerns about the practice. The Kenyan study
also corroborated the findings of Banda (2010) that some bloggers post material with the sole aim of attracting advertisers, thereby, ignoring crucial ethical considerations.

Nevertheless, some of the Kenyan bloggers indicated that they made it a point to call out fellow bloggers on unethical practices. Using the interpretation made by Peck (2013) on Plato’s allegory of the cave, these bloggers who go out of their way to teach others on the need for ethical behaviour can be described as those who have escaped the false reality that there is no need for ethics in the blogosphere. The bloggers, by opting to adhere to some form of standards, are beginning to acknowledge that as Bruns and Jacobs (2006, p. 76) posited, self-expression must be subjected to “market-tested standard formats”. This emerged through the findings that as bloggers transformed their practice to a business, they felt compelled to embrace some standards so as to convince advertisers and other corporate organisations to work with them.

In addition, Aristotle’s teachings that virtue can be acquired through habit (Sanders, 2003) hold true to some bloggers who revealed that when they started blogging they did not care much about ethics. However, when their practice became a serious business, they embraced ethics. This notion of accepting ethics through repeated practice is what Peck (2013) argued will teach bloggers how to apply Aristotle’s golden mean. From the findings in chapter four, the bloggers who have embraced ethics consider a principle such as accuracy important, hence, the attempts to verify reports before they publish them. Another ethical principle such bloggers apply is that of minimising harm. In this regard, news bloggers contemplate how to exercise their enormous freedom through certain measures such as avoiding excesses which may include infringing on individuals privacy unnecessarily.

As indicated in the findings, bloggers value accountability to themselves and their audience. This is a demonstration that the ethics of the bloggers, who participated in this research, to a large extent fails to subscribe to Kasoma’s Afriethics (Kasoma, 1996) where the community is the centre of moral decision-making. The findings of this study on news bloggers agree with the
contention of Nyamnjoh (2013) that a media ethical model for Africans must embrace both community and the individualistic cosmopolitan values that make up contemporary life in the continent.

Feasibility of Standardisation of the Blogging Practice

Objective number five was to explore whether it is feasible to standardise blogging practice, how to do so, and with what standards. Findings indicated that while bloggers are not opposed to standards, they prefer to be guided by a non-legal code rather than one enforced legally. To this extent, the findings are in line with one of the tenets of social responsibility that media be guided by codes of ethics (McQuail, 2005). Like the Perlmutter and Schoen’s (2007) study established, news bloggers do indeed reflect on ethics when writing on their blogs, but the findings of this research did not find them totally opposed to journalistic principles. However, the fact that the bloggers do not want a statutory code may be compared to the sentiments of Singer (2015) who stated that bloggers are opposed to codification of blogging for fear that it might destroy the innovativeness of the practice.

From the findings under this objective, it emerged that while respondents were not opposed to having a non-statutory code to guide bloggers, a number wondered how the same would be implemented given the vastness of the internet and the great diversity of the blogging community. This question was a concern raised by various scholars (Bosire, 2013; Cenite et al., 2009; Perlmutter & Schoen, 2007). Even bloggers who belong to BAKE argued that implementation was problematic as a blog is a personal space where the blogger is the sole authority who determines what will be published.

The findings also indicated that they prefer that the code is developed through a multi-stakeholder forum with bloggers as the main stakeholders. These findings concur with those of Kuhn (2007, p. 21) who posited that a code of ethics for bloggers should be formulated through a “dialogic process”. However, even as scholars and industry players contemplate standardisation of
blogging, it is essential to keep in mind the argument by Nerone (1998) that standards sometimes propagate the status quo. This would negate the very essence of blogging as alternative media.

A PhD study titled: *An Investigation of Cyber Journalism Regulation in Relation to Media Freedom in Kenya* conducted by Bosire (2013) proposed that bloggers be regulated under the Media Council Act, 2013. As the findings of this study have indicated bloggers do not want to be subjected to the Act as they feel it addresses professional journalists. However, the findings of the current study concur with those of Bosire (2013) and Cenite et al. (2009) who contended that standardisation of the blogging practice is difficult because bloggers are scattered, often work individually, and strive to work outside the regulatory constraints imposed on mainstream media houses. In fact, Cenite et al. proposed different codes of ethics for the different groups of bloggers.

Another recommendation of Bosire’s study was that the Media Council of Kenya needs “to monitor the compliance of bloggers to the standards it has set for the practice of journalism in Kenya” (Bosire, 2013, p. 127). However, as the findings of the current study suggest, bloggers are opposed to regulation by the MCK and the council also contends that it does not have the mandate to regulate bloggers.

**Conclusions**

Blogging in Kenya is undergoing a professionalisation process like that which mainstream media underwent before codes of ethics for journalists became the norm. The professionalisation of the Kenyan blogosphere has been propelled by various factors top among them, being the emergence of the bloggers’ body, BAKE which has made some efforts to come up with some form of standards for the blogging practice. The continued threats by government to regulate the sector have also been instrumental in prodding bloggers to consider accepting some form of standardisation. At the same time, desire for engagement with corporate organisations has played a role in propelling bloggers to accept that they must embrace ethics if they want to be taken seriously. In addition, the setting up of blogs by trained journalists has also brought some
semblance of standards to the blogosphere. This professionalisation process has been referred to as the “blogosphere” becoming more “mainstream” (Davis, 2009, p. 105). Davis further contended that this process will continue pressuring bloggers to adopt some form of ethics.

As the process of professionalisation of the blogging practice continues, the debate on whether bloggers are journalists will also go on. Nevertheless, as has emerged in the study, there are a section of bloggers engaged in more than what Lasica (2003, p. 71) called “random acts of journalism”. A section of the bloggers interviewed in this study were involved in the journalistic activities of gathering, reporting and analysing information in much the same way as journalists in mainstream media.

While, the current study did not result to a code of ethics for the Kenyan blogosphere, the findings derived demonstrate the ethical values that the bloggers interviewed valued most. These values include accuracy, integrity, accountability, opportunity to reply, confidentiality, and minimising harm. These are the values that might be included in a possible code of ethics for news bloggers. However, as indicated earlier in the study, there is need for further debate on the issue.

The study also showed that Kenyan bloggers are not opposed to some form of standards, but would prefer the same to come from them and not from the media or government. The argument here is that the standards would only gain legitimacy if they are developed through consensus where, yes, government and mainstream media may be involved, but bloggers are allowed to play the major role. This might produce what Ward (2011) termed a new form of ethics that combines professionalism and what is amateurish. The debate on ethics reflects Socrates’ teachings that recommended the use of the dialectic method to examine important moral issues in society (Rich, 2015; Smith, 2011). The feasibility of having these standards, therefore, remains an ongoing debate, and one of the contributions of this study is in shading light to the type of code that bloggers may eventually adopt.
The study has also found that bloggers look at ethics from both a personal and communitarian point of view. However, personal ethics take precedence over communitarian ethics given that a big segment of the Kenyan blogosphere does not have membership with BAKE. Nevertheless, BAKE remains a good starting point of rallying together a community that remains highly heterogeneous and dispersed.

The ethical frameworks employed by Kenyan news bloggers interviewed in this study included, BAKE rules, the code of conduct for journalists, other media laws and other personal moral guidelines (for example, religious values such as do not lie and love your neighbour as yourself). A possible normative framework for bloggers would be one that if free from government control, promotes a some form of social-responsibility either individually or from the blogging community level, and one that enables bloggers to articulate the issues of society boldly as an alternative voice to mainstream media.

From the study, it is evident that the Kenyan blogosphere is emerging as an important sector in the communication industry. Blogging in Kenya can definitely not be described as a “mere recreational activity” as envisaged by Cenite et al. (2009, p. 591). The blogging sector is now a source of employment both for people with media training and those without. The importance of the sector is demonstrated by the continuous debates on the conduct of bloggers. The sector’s robustness has recently been propelled by the recent court nullifications of several laws that government agencies previously used to arrest bloggers and other social media users. As the influence of this sector grows, Kenyan bloggers must continue with discourses on how to deal with the challenges and opportunities that face the sector.

Recommendations

The bloggers’ association, BAKE should reach out to more people in the blogging community so as to extend its mandate. BAKE needs to address concerns by bloggers that the association is not representative of the blogging community and that it is more of a business entity
than an organisation that champions bloggers’ rights. The organisation should be more open about its activities and intentions so as to make strides in reaching out to a segment of the blogging community who are currently reluctant to be associated with the association.

The association should also create more visibility in nationwide debates on ethical issues of the blogosphere. BAKE’s stand on ethics of the blogosphere should be extensively articulated at national and global forums and at mainstream, online and social media platforms.

There is need for a multi-stakeholder forum involving bloggers as the main stakeholders, and other players who should include the communication sector, communication scholars, the government and journalists to discuss the role that the blogging practice plays in Kenya. This forum should further extend the debate on possible standards for the blogging practice.

There may be need for more blogging organisations that may cater for those who feel they do not fit in the BAKE fold. This is the trend in other countries where several organisations cater for various groups of bloggers. Some respondents were of the view that these blogging associations could work as a type of civil society grouping that would not only advocate for standards in the blogging practice, but would also champion freedom of expression.

Scholars from the communication and legal disciplines should team up with others who have a background in media ethics and engage in continuous research on debate on standards for the Kenyan blogosphere. In addition, they can borrow from other jurisdictions that have made greater strides in proposing workable frameworks for the blogging practice.

Kenyan media training institutions in colleges and universities need to integrate blogging and social media studies into their curricula. These studies would give skills to upcoming communication practitioners to embrace opportunities in the blogosphere and in social media as a whole. The curricula may also attract those in the blogging practice who have no training in media to enrol for the same.
Government through its regulatory agencies needs to be on the forefront of promoting ethical awareness for blogging practice. Suggestions are that instead of rushing to create legislation that will control the practice, government through its blogging platforms and its bloggers should demonstrate what proper and ethical practice entails.

There is need for Kenyan bloggers and other practitioners in the communication sector to formulate media literacy programmes that would educate audiences on how to examine credibility of content. This arose from the concern that there are bloggers whose pursuit for profit has seen them disseminate sensational information full of half-truths or even totally untrue.

Areas for Further Research

Content analysis study of blogs can further enlighten on the ethics of blogging practice and demonstrate the ethical issues that arise from how bloggers frame their stories. The analysis would also enlighten on whether blogs are a form of alternative media as alluded in this research by the respondents or if they simply rehash the content of mainstream media.

There is also need for research on blogs versus micro blogs as tools of news dissemination. This would be useful in elucidating further the definition of the terms blogging and blogger; terms whose definite meaning was interrogated severally in the current research without finality.

A study on Kenyan j-bloggers can be carried out to analyse whether there is a difference between how they report on mainstream media as compared to their blogs. This would enable a comparison with study of Singer (2005) that found j-bloggers remained gatekeepers even on their blogs and that of Yu (2011) that established that j-bloggers maintained objectivity even when writing on the blogging platform. Research on Kenyan j-bloggers would also in line with the suggestion of Garden (2011, p. 495) that “with blogs emerging as a new journalistic genre, those blogs authored by professional journalists deserve attention and are worthy of attention”.

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There is need for research not just on j-bloggers but one that further interrogates how Kenyan blogosphere has affected Kenyan media. The research might include content analysis of selected mainstream online media and interviews with online editors and reporters. The study would examine how the popularity of blogs and the content they publish, influence the kind of content carried on mainstream online media. The research could also include a survey of the audience of mainstream online media to get their perceptions about the content. This study would help address the concern raised by scholars Ji and Sheehy (2010, p. 42) that: “as blogging becomes more identified with journalism, the longstanding importance of traditional journalistic procedures and standards may begin to weaken, thus possibly impacting public perception on media credibility across all platforms, not just the internet”.

A content analysis of blogs that cover gossip content and those that put up posts on politics can be conducted to further investigate claims by bloggers in this study that those who write on these sites are the ones who engage in unethical conduct.

An ethnographic study of one or several blogs would be instrumental in studying the organisational culture of these blogs and aid in investigating further the professionalisation process of the blogging practice.

A survey of Kenyan audiences of news blogs can be conducted with the aim establishing their (audience) perceptions on ethics of the bloggers and the credibility of their content. The audiences’ perceptions on blogs can be compared with their (audiences’) views on mainstream media. This would aid in examining whether Kenyan audiences are similar to the US blog readers who according to a survey done by Smith (2011) stated they have more faith in blogs than mainstream media.

Research and policy formulating multi-stakeholder forums that take up the themes, recommendations, and findings of this research are in the offing, encouraged by the interest that statutory and non-statutory players who participated in this research have shown in taking these
discussions further. Key respondents from the Ministry of ICT have extended an invitation to advance the findings of this research in exploratory meetings, which could conceivably inform policy decisions around the ethical regulation of news blogging in Kenya. In terms of non-state actors, BAKE officials have similarly indicated their intent on having further exploratory engagements, which could test the value of having normative forms of blogging practice.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide for News Bloggers Who are not Part of Mainstream Media

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Muthoni King’ori, a PhD student at Daystar University. I am carrying out this interview as part of data collection for my dissertation and also as a contribution to the debates on ethical issues and regulation of the blogosphere. This research gives you a chance to make your views about regulation known and also to have a say on what kind of standards if any, you would like to govern your work. Please feel free to be as candid as possible, and also let me know of any issues that you feel need to be addressed about the interview process.

Background information

a) Name (optional) or pseudonym
b) Gender of blogger
c) Age of the blogger
d) Education level of blogger
e) Name of blog/blogs run by interviewee (optional)
f) Professional training of blogger
g) Level of professional training, for example…certificate, degree, post-graduate
h) Is blogging a part-time venture or full-time venture
i) Length of period of blogging
j) Briefly describe the kind of stories that you post on your blog.
k) What are the sources of your stories? (Probe whether they source for stories themselves, if they get them from readers or whether they get them from mainstream media).

Research Question 1: What motivates news bloggers to blog?

1. Briefly describe the target audience of your blog.
2. How has your professional training impacted your work as a blogger?

3. Please explain the reasons that motivated you to start your blog.
   
   (Probe on whether money was a key motivator)
   
   If money was a key motivator probe on whether they would be comfortable revealing how much they earn from their blog.

4. What kind of satisfaction do you derive from blogging? (Probe whether the satisfaction derived is the reason those who have blogged for long have been doing so).

5. How does your motivation for blogging affect the kind of content you post on your blog?

Research Question 2: How does the practice of news blogging that is not part of mainstream journalism conform to normative theories of media practice, namely, libertarianism, social responsibility and democratic-participant theory?

6. Would you describe your work as a blogger as journalism? Explain (Probe on whether they view blogging as alternative journalism and blogs as alternative media)

7. How does the ethical principle of public interest influence what you post on your blog? (Probe on whether they view social responsibility theory as a model that should influence what they post)

8. The Media Council Act 2013 has defined journalism as dissemination of news through different media, including the internet. Do you think the Media Council of Kenya should also regulate bloggers? Explain.

9. What do you think about the current debate on regulation of bloggers? (Probe on whether the blogger feels the debate is necessary) Probe further on who they think should lead the debate- (bloggers themselves, journalists, the Media Council of Kenya or government)

10. What do you think about news bloggers having a code of ethics which would impose standards similar to those imposed on mainstream journalists? (Probe on whether they feel it is necessary and the explanation of their answer)
Research Question 3: What ethical values, if any, guide Kenyan news bloggers when they transmit news?

11. How do you deal with the question of accountability when you are posting on your blog (s)? (Probe on whether they engage in peer criticism)

12. How do you tackle the question of good taste and decency on your blog?

13. How do you deal with ethnicity and hate speech in your blog?

14. How do you interact with your readers? (Probe on whether they regularly read comments and respond)

15. Are you guided by specific principles of ethics in resolving whether or not to post the material that is causing you the dilemma? (Probe on whether they are deontologists i.e. guided by duty, teleologists i.e. guided by the great good/public interest or virtue ethicists i.e. character-based ethics) Which other ethical values guide your conduct as a blogger?

16. What are some of the ethical principles you have applied in the specific cases where you have faced the ethical dilemmas?

17. What are your views on whether the following ethical principles from the Media Council Act, 2013 should apply to the work of bloggers?
   a) Accuracy and fairness
   b) Independence
   c) Integrity
   d) Accountability
   e) Opportunity to reply
   f) Confidentiality
   g) Obscenity, taste and tone in reporting
   h) Privacy
   i) Gender non-discrimination
j) Minimising harm

18. Should the above principles be included in a code of ethics for bloggers?

19. What other ethical principles not included in number 21 above and in the BAKE document do you feel should be included in a proposed code for bloggers?

Research Question 4: What are the views of the selected news bloggers on claims that bloggers engage in unethical conduct?

20. What is your opinion on the ethical conduct of Kenyan bloggers? (Probe on whether they feel the accusations of unethical conduct against bloggers are unjustified, or whether they feel there is some truth in the criticism)

21. How often do you encounter ethical dilemmas in your blogging practice?

22. Describe any instances when you have run into trouble over material that you have posted online. How did you deal with the different scenarios?

Research question 5: What is the feasibility of standardising Kenyan weblog practice, and with what standards?

23. What is your view on the work of BAKE? (Probe on whether they would consider joining the association if they are not already members)

24. What is your view of the guidelines given by BAKE on ethics? (Probe on whether they feel it is adequate and if not what other guidelines they feel should be added to the document)
Appendix B: Interview Guide for Key Respondents from the Communication Sector

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Muthoni King’ori, a PhD student at Daystar University. I am conducting this interview as part of data collection for my dissertation and also as a contribution to the debates on ethical issues and regulation of the blogosphere. This research gives you a chance to make your views on online regulation known. This is crucial as you are a key player in the communication sector. Please be as candid as you like, and let me know of issues that you feel need to be addressed concerning the interview process.

Background information

a) Name
b) Organization of the informant
c) Position held

1. What role do you think bloggers are playing in democratization of the journalism profession? (Probe on whether they feel bloggers bridge the gap in journalism by reporting news that is not reported by mainstream media – and whether blogs operate as alternative media)

2. One of the key roles of media is to operate in the public interest. To what extent would you say this applies to news bloggers? (Probe on whether they feel the Social Responsibility model or libertarianism or democratic-participant theories should apply to news bloggers)

3. What do you think about the ethical conduct of Kenyan news bloggers? (Probe on whether they feel the conduct of the bloggers is a matter of concern).

4. What ethical standards do you think should guide bloggers in their work?

5. What are your views about the efforts of the Bloggers Association of Kenya, in trying to set some standards for bloggers? (Show the ethical conduct guideline from BAKE to the interviewee and ask them to comment on the rules stated)
(Probe on whether the interviewee feels bloggers who expect to be taken seriously should be members of BAKE)

6. What do you think about suggestions that bloggers should be subjected to ethical guidelines outlined in the Media Council Act 2013?
   (Also probe on whether interviewee feels that news bloggers should register with Media Council of Kenya)

7. Should the government play any role in regulation of bloggers? Please explain.

8. What role is your organization playing in the ongoing debate on ethics for bloggers?

9. What are your views on whether the following ethical principles from the Media Council Act, 2013 should apply to the work of bloggers?
   a) Accuracy and fairness
   b) Independence/Conflict of interest
   c) Integrity
   d) Accountability
   e) Opportunity to reply
   f) Confidentiality
   g) Obscenity, taste and tone in reporting
   h) Privacy
   i) Gender non-discrimination
   j) Minimizing harm

10. Which of these values listed above do you feel news bloggers flout most?

11. Which of the above values do you feel are most important for news bloggers?

12. Which other ethical values/principles not included in the list do you feel are important in guiding a news blogger in their work?
13) What is your opinion about developing a code of ethics to set standards for bloggers? (Probe on whether they feel this code should be enforceable in law like the Media Council Act 2013)

14) What is your view of the suggestion that news bloggers should be subjected to some form of training similar to that which professional journalists are subjected to?
Appendix C: Focus Group Guide for BAKE officials

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group discussion. My name is Muthoni King'ori, a PhD student at Daystar University. I am carrying out this group interview as part of data collection for my dissertation, and also as a contribution to the debates on ethical issues and regulation of the blogosphere. This research is useful in documenting your work in developing standards for bloggers and also in allowing you to give a voice to the kind of standards that you believe your members should be subjected to. Please be as candid as possible, and let me know of issues that you feel need to be addressed concerning the interview process.

Background information:

Names or pseudonyms of participants

Positions of discussants

1. What role do bloggers play in society? (Probe on whether they feel journalists and news bloggers play a similar role)

2. What are your views on whether news bloggers should serve public interest or self-interest? (Probe on their views about the Social Responsibility Model guiding the work of news bloggers)

3. What is your opinion on previous arrests and prosecution of bloggers?

4. You have been in the forefront of the debates surrounding bloggers, and whether blogs should be regulated. What are your views on the debate so far?

5. Do you think all interested parties have been involved in the regulation debate? Please explain.

6. Some quarters have suggested that most bloggers do not care about ethics. What do you think about this criticism?

7. Some people have suggested that bloggers be subjected to the same ethical standards that guide mainstream journalists. What is your view about this?

9. How did you come up with the current ethical guide for bloggers? (Probe the process: How many bloggers were consulted, or otherwise involved in the process?) (Probe also whether they intend to revise the guidelines).

10. Some bloggers have dismissed your association and talked of forming another. What is your view of this?

11. What is BAKE doing to reach out to bloggers who do not see the importance of joining your association?

12. Which other organizations are you working with in your efforts to create standards for bloggers? (Probe on whether they are working with the Communications Authority of Kenya, the Media Council of Kenya, etc.)

13. What are your views on whether the following ethical principles from the Media Council Act, 2013 should apply to the work of bloggers?

   a) Accuracy and fairness
   b) Independence
   c) Integrity
   d) Accountability
   e) Opportunity to reply
   f) Confidentiality
   g) Obscenity, taste and tone in reporting
   h) Privacy
   i) Gender non-discrimination
   j) Minimizing harm

14) Which of these values listed above do you feel news bloggers flout most?

15) Which of the above values do you feel are most important for news bloggers?
16) Which other ethical values/principles not included in the list do you feel are important in guiding a news blogger in their work? (Probe on whether they feel these values should be included in a code of ethics developed for bloggers and whether it should be enforceable in law like the Media Council Act 2013)
Appendix D: BAKE Ethical Guide

BAKE – Bloggers Association Of Kenya Social Media Ethics and Guidelines

1. State when it’s your personal opinion versus the Corporate or Organization opinion. For your personal blog, twitter account, or Facebook, we have a handy disclaimer that you can use. (Check on BAKE Disclaimer guideline Document)

2. Guide against Hate Speech. According to the Kenyan Laws
   The right to freedom of expression does not extend to—
   a) propaganda for war
   b) incitement to violence
   c) hate speech or
   d) advocacy of hatred that—
   i) constitutes ethnic incitement, vilification of others or incitement to cause harm;
   ii) or is based on any ground of discrimination specified or contemplated in Article 27

3. Don't tell secrets.
   Respect proprietary information and content, confidentiality, brand, trademark, copyright, and fair use. Know the laws and don't break them. Don't discuss client work without permission.

   You can link to other blog posts or information about services but do it subtly and only in response to a specific query. There are many ways of sharing our awesomeness

5. Give credit where credit is due.
   Always cite when quoting someone else. Make sure images are shareable through Creative Commons, and attribute them, too. Never use copyrighted material without permission.

6. Mistakes happen.
   If you make a mistake, admit it quickly. Most of the time, you can then move on. If not, let the team (BAKE) help you fix your mistakes; explain the situation and the team can come together to find a solution to any problem.

7. Share the love.
   We believe in sharing and linking to the best content from all over the web. A link is not an endorsement, so don't be shy about sharing something from a competitor if you feel it is worthwhile to your clients and friends.

8. Be a good conversationalist.
   Monitor and reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate. Add value to the conversation.
9. Be clear, but not defensive. Be polite and professional, especially when you disagree with someone. Once the words are out there, you can't get them back. If you find yourself working too hard to defend your position, take a step back, let the Community (BAKE Members) defend for you (because they will if you're justified).

10. Remember everything online is discoverable. If you can't show it to your mother or a judge, don't post it. If in doubt, ask.

11. Always be learning. This space is fast-moving and ever-evolving. Read more than you write. Ask questions. Link to others and always build relationships. That's what our work is all about.
Appendix E: Demographic Data of Respondents- Non-BAKE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogger code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Blog(s)</th>
<th>Professional Training</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Nature of Blogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Not Given</td>
<td>Public Critic</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
<td>Bachelors (on going)</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Legal/Political</td>
<td>Business/Finance</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Business/IT</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Travel/Profile</td>
<td>Journalism &amp; PR</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Women’s &amp; lifestyle</td>
<td>ICT hardware &amp; Support</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Political &amp; Legal</td>
<td>Education/Journalism &amp; Law</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Not Given</td>
<td>Historical/Investigative</td>
<td>Forensics</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Technology/Business</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-BAKE 9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Electronic/Computer Engineer</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
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</table>
# Appendix F: Demographic Data of Respondents-BAKE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogger Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Blog(s)</th>
<th>Professional Training</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Nature of Blogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAKE 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Political science</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAKE 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Bachelors(IT), MA (Communication on-going)</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAKE 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
<td></td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAKE 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>IT, Political Science</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAKE 5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAKE 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Satire/Politics</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAKE 7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Book Reviews</td>
<td>Language, Communication</td>
<td>MA on-going</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
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<td>BAKE 8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Business/tech</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAKE 9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Business/Development</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Diploma, Journalism, BA (on-going)</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAKE 10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAKE 11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>MA (on-going)</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
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Appendix G: Demographic Data for Focus Group Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Participant’s position in BAKE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant One FGD</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Two FGD</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Three FGD</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Blogger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Four FGD</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Blogger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Five FGD</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Blogger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Six FGD</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Blogger</td>
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## Appendix H: Demographic Data for Key respondents from the Communication Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCK</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of ICT</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>ICT secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCIC</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUJ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secretary General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Training Institution</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Media trainer/Media practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMWIK</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Founder Simba-Safe Kenya &amp; Missing Child Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Regional Director</td>
</tr>
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### Appendix I: Schedule for Interviews and Focus Group Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participant (s)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 21, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>6.15pm-6.50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 24, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 8</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>9am – 10.45 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>8.30am-11.30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 2</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2.15pm – 4.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 6</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>6.30pm-8.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 4, 2016</td>
<td>Oduor (KUJ)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>4.30pm – 5.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 6, 2016</td>
<td>Maina (Article 19)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>6.50pm - 9.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 5</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>11am- 12pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 15, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 3</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>3.45pm – 5.25 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 17, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>11.45am – 1.15pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 31, 2016</td>
<td>Mwangi (MCK)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>7.40pm-9.00pm</td>
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<td>November 5, 2016</td>
<td>Kemunto (Media Trainer)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>10am -12pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 7, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 3</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>9.45am – 11.45am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 9, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 9</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>9am – 10am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 8</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>7.15pm- 8.45pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 5</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2.30pm- 3.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 4</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>4.30 pm – 5.45 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 9</td>
<td>Interview (E-mail)</td>
<td>10am -11am</td>
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<td>November 12, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 4</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>10am -11am</td>
</tr>
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<td>November 14, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 6</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>7.45pm – 9.12 pm</td>
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<td>November 15, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 11</td>
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<td>10.10am – 10.30 am</td>
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<td>November 15, 2016</td>
<td>Naituli (NCIC)</td>
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<td>November 18, 2016</td>
<td>Non-BAKE 7</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>7pm – 8.45 pm</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Event Details</td>
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</tr>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 24, 2016</td>
<td>ICT officials</td>
<td>Interview 9.20am - 11.20am</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>November 28, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 7</td>
<td>Interview 1pm - 2pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7, 2016</td>
<td>Maryana (AMWIK)</td>
<td>Interview 4.18 pm – 5.28 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 16, 2016</td>
<td>BAKE 11</td>
<td>Interview (2nd session) 5am - 5.45 am</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 19, 2016</td>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>BAKE officials &amp; bloggers 6.45 pm - 8.45 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 22, 2016</td>
<td>Getao (Ministry of ICT)</td>
<td>Interview 9.30am - 11.37am</td>
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Appendix J: NACOSTI Research Permit