

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW JOURNALISTS
EXPERIENCE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PRESSURES
ON THEIR ETHICAL DECISIONS AT THE NATION
MEDIA GROUP IN KENYA**

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Abstract

This study investigates how journalists experience economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions at the Nation Media Group (NMG) conglomerate in Kenya. The study uses qualitative semi-structured interviews to examine how journalists experience these pressures on their professional ethics as they make their daily decisions. Grounded in the critical political economy of the media tradition, the findings of the study indicate that economic and political pressures from advertisers, shareholders' interests, the profit motive and the highly ethnicised political environment in Kenya largely compromise the ethical decisions of journalists.

The study draws on the work done by Herman and Chomsky in their 'Propaganda Model' in which they propose 'filters' as the analytical indicators of the forms that political and economic pressures that journalists experience may take. The study explores the ways in which journalists experience these pressures, how they respond to the pressures and the ways in which their responses may compromise their journalism ethics. The findings indicate that aside from the pressures from the primary five filters outlined in the Propaganda Model, ethnicity in Kenyan newsrooms is a key 'filter' that may compromise the ethical decisions of journalists at the NMG. The study therefore argues that there is a need to modify the explanatory power of the Propaganda Model when applying it to the Kenyan context to include ethnicity as a 'sixth filter' that should be understood in relation to the five primary filters.

From the findings, it would seem that the government is no longer a major threat to journalists' freedom and responsibility in Kenya. Market forces and ethnicity in newsrooms pose the greatest threat to journalists' freedom and responsibility. The study therefore calls for a revision of the normative framework within which journalists' and media performance in Kenya is assessed. As the study findings show, the prevailing liberal- democratic model ignores the commercial and economic threats the 'free market' poses to journalism ethics as well as ethnicity in newsrooms and only focuses on the media- government relations, treating the government as the major threat to media freedom.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMDI - African Media Development Initiative

AFIM- Association of Free and Independent Media

BAT- British American Tobacco

CCK- Communications Commission of Kenya

CSR- Corporate Social Responsibility

CEO- Chief Executive Officer

ICT- Information Communications Technology

KTN- Kenya Television Network

KANU- Kenya African National Union

KRA- Kenya Revenue Authority

KADU- Kenya African Democratic Union

KBC- Kenya Broadcasting Corporation

MIC- Ministry of Information and Communication

MCK- Media Council of Kenya

MOA- Media Owners Association

MD- Managing Director

NMG- Nation Media Group

NTV- Nation Television

ODM- Orange Democratic Movement

PNU- Party of National Unity

PR- Public Relations

TV- Television

UNESCO- United Nations Education and Scientific Congress

VOK- Voice of Kenya

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The main focus of this study was to examine how journalists experience economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions at the Nation Media Group (NMG) conglomerate in Kenya. The Nation Media Group (NMG) is the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa (Ali, 2010; 2010 NMG Sustainability Report) and it cross owns the following media in Kenya: newspapers: *The Daily Nation* (plus the Saturday and Sunday editions), *The East African Newspaper* (regional for East Africa), *The Business Daily*, *The Daily Monitor* (which is also published in Uganda), *Taifa Leo* (published in Kiswahili), *The Citizen*, *The Africa Review* and the *Daily Nation* online edition. The Group also owns two TV stations: NTV, and E-TV and radio stations: Easy FM, Q FM, and K FM.

The study explores the ways in which journalists experience these pressures, how they respond to the pressures and the ways in which their responses may compromise their journalism ethics. The study uses qualitative semi-structured interviews to examine how economic and political pressures from owners, shareholders, advertisers, the highly ethnicised nature of politics in Kenya and the operation of this media conglomerate as a commercial enterprise in search of profits may compromise the ethical decisions of journalists.

As Golding & Murdock (1973) observe, the mass media are first and foremost commercial enterprises. This in effect means that although commercial media do play key democratic roles in the society such as surveillance, informing the public, participating in public life as an independent actor by way of critical comment, advice, advocacy and providing a channel and forum for public discussion (Christians et al, 2009:116), the performance of these roles is to a large extent influenced by the inherent economic and political structural constraints that govern the media as a commercial enterprise (McChesney,2004; Hallin, 2000; Golding & Murdock, 2000; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Herman &Chomsky, 2002; 2008; Duplat, 2003).

Therefore to understand the framework within which journalists operate and to analyse media performance, these structural constraints have to be taken into account since the media as corporate social institutions can only be studied within the broad economic and political context. Any assessment of performance of the media and the individual journalist requires one to explore the underlying political and economic dynamics of the media industry (Mosco, 1996; Golding & Murdock, 1995; Boyd- Barrett, 1995).

Ansah (1991), in an attempt to explain these underlying political and economic structural constraints that influence media performance noted three crises facing African media then: the crisis of power, the crisis of ownership and the crisis of resources. On the crisis of ownership, Ansah argued that most African media were owned or economically controlled by the state or by international conglomerates that have national and regional interests.

As other studies (Ali, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Wasserman, 2010 ; Botma & Wasserman 2008;Lovaas, 2009) on independent media in most African countries have shown, private media in Africa today do not face the crisis of ownership in the form of state control, but as commercial enterprises, they are largely controlled by international conglomerates. Although the media in Kenya today do not have a crisis of ownership in the form of being controlled by the state, this crisis manifests itself in the form of corporate control. Using Ansah's argument on the crisis of ownership, it can be arguably observed that the business of the media in an authoritarian system is relatively less complicated than that of a free press in a democratic society. This is because power in the authoritarian system is concentrated only in the hands of the government, but in a democratic society, the media have to strive to find a balance between fulfilling the public interest and the commercial interests of their owners (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006:7).

On the crisis of power, Ansah argues that this manifests itself in two fold: First, the weakness of the state is related to the weakness of the media themselves. This is because weak states attempt to control the media through censorship and to give economic rewards for media owners who toe the line and reprisal for those who do not. Secondly, in weak states, the media are often directly linked to the state apparatus because state officials constantly appear in media stories. Ansah's interpretation on the crisis of power can be used to describe media performance in the pre- liberalisation period in Kenya where the state highly censored the few private media. The private media owners therefore had to toe the line in order to get political goodwill to survive in the market (see chapter two for more details on this).

On the crisis of inadequate resources, Ansah focuses on inadequate education and training of journalists in most African countries before the 1990s as compared to international standards. The crisis of inadequate resources in the Kenya's media scene explain the fact that most media houses in Kenya employ individuals who are not professionally trained journalists and the fact that most of the content in newspapers is from correspondents who are poorly paid and mostly untrained (Oriare, 2008; AMDI report, 2006).

This study focuses on the aspect of ownership structure to analyze how the operation of the media as a business with interlocking economic interests may compromise the ethical decisions of journalists as they bow to economic pressures to maximize profits and deliver consumers to advertisers at the Nation Media Group (NMG) in Kenya. The analysis will be guided by critical political economy of the media tradition drawing on the filters outlined in Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model as analytical tools for the study. Critical political economy places greater emphasis on ethical and normative questions (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:30) hence its suitability for this study, in which questions will be asked about the possible political and economic pressures that may influence journalists' ethical decisions. More on the relationship between political economy and ethical theory will be discussed later in the theoretical framework section in Chapter 3.

As Golding and Murdock (1991:20) observe, since the critical political economy approach is centrally concerned with the balance between capitalist

enterprise and the public intervention, it goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with the basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good.

The critical political economy approach therefore explicitly challenges the lack of an ethical perspective in neo-classical economics (Golding and Murdock, 2000:72-3), which is not concerned with determining human needs and rights, nor with intervening in questions of social justice, but rather with how and what conditions markets best function (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:28).

A critical political economy approach to media studies is therefore often associated with

the macro- questions of media ownership and control, interlocking directorships and other factors that bring together media industries with other media and with other industries, and with political, economic and social elites. It commonly looks at the processes of consolidation, diversification, commercialization and the working of the profit motive in the hunt for audiences and/ or advertising, and its consequences for media practices and media content (Boyd-Barrett & Newbold, 1996: 186).

This approach to media studies concerns itself with how the array of forces that exercise control over cultural production limit or liberate the public sphere (Golding & Murdock, 2000:78). A critical political economy approach generally examines the media and nature of media activity to identify the extent of corporate reach, the commodification of media

products and the changing nature of state and government intervention (Williams, 2003: 72). Such approaches to the media performance are therefore holistic and acknowledge the fact that culture is produced and consumed under capitalism as a fundamental issue in explaining inequalities of power, prestige and profit (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:31).

A central theme in critical political economy approaches to media has been the ownership and control of cultural industries and the extent to which this ownership and control may make the media to serve the interests of the wealthy and powerful sometimes at the expense of the public (Bagdikian, 1987; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2002; McChesney, 1999; 2004; Mosco, 1996; Wasko, 2004; 2005).

Therefore although this study discusses critical political economy of the media from a broad perspective (in chapter 3 on theoretical framework) touching on the works of Peter Golding, Graham Murdock, James Curran, Nicholas Garnham, Dallas Smythe, Vincent Mosco, Herbert Schiller and Robert McChesney among others, the study uses the ‘filters’ outlined in Herman & Chomsky’s propaganda model (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002), which is one example of the critical political economy approach to analyse media structure and performance at the NMG. This model is preferred largely because the ‘filters’ serve as appropriate indicators/sources of the possible economic and political pressures that journalists may experience as they make their ethical decisions at the NMG, which is the key focus of the study. The study however takes cognizance of the fact that the propaganda model has been criticised for ignoring the role of journalists in the newsroom; the ways in which journalists may exercise agency within

newsrooms (Lang & Lang 2004; Hallin, 1994; Golding & Murdock, 1991) to resist the structural pressures as outlined in the filters.

Some scholars (Pedro, 2011; Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Sparks, 2007) have therefore called for the revision and modification of the propaganda model to expand its explanatory power. This study therefore acknowledges the strengths of the propaganda model in the form of the outlined ‘filters’, as appropriate indicators of the political and economic pressures that may compromise the ethical decisions of journalists but uses qualitative interviews of individual journalists to incorporate the element of journalistic agency to expand its explanatory power. Therefore unlike Herman and Chomsky (2002; 1988) who in their original version of the model present the actions of journalists as totally determined by political and economic constraints, the researcher in this study sought to establish from the interview responses the extent to which journalists think they are able to exercise their professional autonomy to resist these pressures.

To adequately incorporate the element of the role of the individual journalist and journalistic professionalism in the news production process, the researcher therefore adopts the first level of influence outlined in Shoemaker & Reese’s (1996) Hierarchy of Influences model¹: the micro level of the individual journalist, to expand the explanatory power of the propaganda model. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996:65), the professionally related roles and ethics of individual journalists appear to have a direct

¹ Shoemaker and Reese (1996) present a Hierarchy of Influences model as a theoretical framework for analyzing media based on levels of analysis, which help classify influences operating both separately and in conjunction with each other. The five levels range from the most micro to the most macro: Individual, routines, organizational, extra-media and ideological, with each successive level viewed as subsuming the one(s) prior (Reese, 2001).

influence on content, whereas their socio-demographic backgrounds and their personal and political beliefs shape news indirectly especially when individuals are in a position to overcome institutional pressures or organised routines. This study therefore sought to establish from the interview responses the extent to which journalists at the NMG are able to influence news content at the micro level of the individual journalist despite the macro pressures at the organisational level as outlined in the filters.

There have been concerns in Kenya (Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service, 2008; Oriare, 2010) and in other African countries (Nyamnjoh, 2005; 2010) such as Cameroon and South Africa that ethnic identity shapes the political beliefs and stands that journalists and the media in general take. Nyamnjoh (2010; 2005) studies on Cameroon and South Africa show that there is a conflict between the journalists' attempt to be autonomous and neutral in their reporting as dictated by the liberal- pluralist normative model, which ignores 'the ethnic belonging of the journalist in a community'. This study therefore also seeks to establish the extent to which 'ethnic belonging' as a political pressure at the individual level of journalists at the NMG influences their ethical decisions.

This study therefore uses the notion of journalistic agency and professionalism and establishes its relation with the other primary filters outlined in the propaganda model in an attempt to obviate the criticism that the model is overly deterministic and reductionist (Corner, 2003; Golding & Murdock, 1991; Schlesinger, 1989). In this way, the study attempts to show that the propaganda model can be modified to be an appropriate instrument to examine the structural constraints that may influence media performance

in democratic societies. More on this and other criticisms and responses will be addressed in chapter 3 on theoretical framework.

The Propaganda Model (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002) was introduced by Herman and Chomsky in 1988 in their co-authored book: *Manufacturing Consent: The political Economy of the Mass Media*. Herman & Chomsky (2002: 2), point out five routes (filters) by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their message across to the public. The five filters are: (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and the profit orientation of the dominant mass- media firms (2) Advertising as the primary source of the mass media (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power (4) “flak” as a means of disciplining the media and (5) “Anti-communism” as a national religion and control mechanism through which those who own and control media power are able to ‘filter’ out the news fit to be availed to the public premised on their private interests. In this study, the fifth filter is used to mean the promotion of the dominant ideology by the powerful elite in Kenya through the mass media.

The Propaganda Model presents ‘an institutional critique of media performance’ (Klaehn, 2002: 157) and holds that corporate constraints are the dominant determinants of media performance and although professionalism allows for journalistic independence, ‘it is a flexible construct that can be shaped by the demands of those who own, control and fund the media’ (Zollmann, 2009: 97). The model emphasises the mutual

influences between social and economic constraints, political forces, ideology and other cultural dimensions (Pedro, 2011:1874). As the findings in other studies (Botma & Wasserman, 2008; Wasserman, 2010 in the South African context and Ogong'a & White, 2008 in the Kenyan context) show, this is especially the case in transitional democracies like Kenya where journalistic professional culture and the ideology of journalistic independence may be too weak to resist such corporate pressures. This study therefore sought to find out the extent to which this is true from the qualitative interviews of journalists at the NMG in Kenya. Through the interviews, the study sought to establish how the pressures as outlined in the filters are manifested at the NMG, which operates in a different social, political and economic context from which the model was originally applied (US context).

Like any other model, the propaganda model has received various criticisms from various scholars. One of the major criticisms against the propaganda model is that it is too deterministic and that it suggests a lack of agency on the part of audience and media workers. Critics (Seaton & Pimlott, 1987; Negrine, 1989) argue that the model present media workers as passive puppets of media owners and the elite class, where as audiences are portrayed as helpless victims of the highly biased content of mainstream media. Herman and Chomsky respond to this criticism by stating that their model is 'about media structure and performance, not the effects of the media on the public' (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: xii). More on this and other critiques against the model will be discussed in detail in chapter three.

On the criticism of presenting media workers as passive puppets of media owners, Herman and Chomsky maintain that media workers do not have full autonomy to make choices and decisions since their choices and decisions are largely influenced by the ‘pre-selection of right thinking personnel, internalised preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organization, market and political power’ (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: xii). The model therefore explores media discourses in relation to historical and contemporary political- economic contexts. The model makes historical and political- economic elements directly relevant to the whole enterprise of media analysis (Klaehn, 2009:48). This study obviates this critique waged against the propaganda model (of being overly deterministic and reductionist) by combining both a structural analysis of the political and economic elements that have influenced the ownership structure of the NMG with qualitative interviews of individual journalists to introduce the element of journalistic professionalism in the news production process.

It is from the interviews that the researcher seeks to establish if and how these structural constraints influence journalistic agency and autonomy in ethical decision making. This study does not therefore just apply the model, but it modifies it by incorporating interviews of individual journalists to establish the role that the individual journalists play as they exercise their autonomy in the way they respond to the constraints. As Pedro (2011) and Sparks (2007) observe, there is need to incorporate other elements in the propaganda model in relation to the five filters to provide a broader context within which the model and its components can be used. This study therefore sought to establish from the interview responses if there are other

factors that are unique to the Kenyan case which influence the ethical decisions of journalists aside from the five filters. As the findings in chapter 5 show, ethnicity in newsrooms is a key political filter that has to be incorporated to the five primary filters if the model is to be appropriately applied in analysing media performance in Kenya.

The study also specifically uses the five filters as analytical tools to examine if and how media conglomeration through cross media ownership may increase structural pressures on journalistic agency. As Pedro (2011:1877) observes, since Herman and Chomsky first presented the model in 1988, the media industry has undergone an intense process of concentration due to both a market logic whereby businesses need to be highly profitable in order to survive, and an environment favourable to deregulation. The study therefore seeks to get an 'insider' view from the interviews on if and how horizontal integration is likely to increase commercial pressures on journalistic agency.

This study therefore uses critical political economy as an approach guided by the Propaganda Model to examine if the operation of the media as a business at the NMG with emphasis on profits and the protection of shareholders' and owners' interests may compromise the journalists' and media's capacity to fulfil its normative roles in Kenya. As Muller (2005) notes, the media's obligation to the society has two dimensions: an ethical dimension, which has to do with how the media ought to behave, and a performance dimension, which concerns the quality of media content.

Aside from testing the validity of the filters outlined in the Propaganda Model as appropriate analytical tools of media performance in the Kenyan context, this study argues that economic and political pressures on journalistic ethics may be more intense in a cross media ownership structure especially in transitional democracies like Kenya where journalists' agency may be more constrained by these pressures. There have been calls (Corner, 2003; Sparks, 2007) to operationalise the model and test its validity in contexts different from the U.S. A. This study therefore tests the validity of the model in a developing world context (Kenya) in an attempt to show that the model is not 'pure conspiracy' (Entman, 1990) and it can be objectively applied in other contexts other than the U.S.A

It is argued in the study that media organisations that have horizontally integrated through cross media ownership are large media conglomerates like the Nation Media Group. Large media conglomerates are by definition involved in many different types of businesses and this creates the very real possibility of conflict of interests in a variety of fields. Therefore the capacity of journalists to report accurately and fairly on events of the day may for instance be constrained by the necessity to protect the interests of corporate companies closely related to the particular media who may need to minimize any negative news about their operations in order to promote their business interests (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Dmitri, 2002; Jackson, 2009; Richards, 2004; Singer, 2006; Price, 2009). Through the interviews of journalists, this study seeks to establish if political and economic pressures are more intense in a media conglomerate that has horizontally integrated through cross media ownership.

The study specifically focuses on how journalists experience political and economic pressures present in a cross media ownership structure in ways that may compromise their agency to observe the ethical principles of accuracy, fairness, independence, integrity, truth and accountability. These are some of the principles outlined in the editorial policy guidelines of the NMG and the Code of Conduct for Journalists in Kenya², which was first formulated in 2001 and revised in 2007 (all the principles in the Code of conduct and the editorial policy guidelines will be outlined on chapter 3 when we analyse the normative framework in Kenya).

From a normative perspective, the media enter into an implicit contract with the societies they serve. Normative theories of the media generally describe the ideal values, roles and desired criteria against which media systems may be structured and evaluated. Normative theories describe what the media should or should not do in the society (Christians et .al, 2009; Fourie, 2007; McQuail, 2005). It is therefore often observed (Christians et.al, 2009; Muller, 2005; McQuail, 2003; Kieran, 1997; White, 2000) that the special and privileged position that the media enjoy in a liberal society involves this unwritten contract to make ‘good’ use of the freedom they enjoy, not as an unfettered right, but as a trustee of the general good. In exchange of being guaranteed the freedom to publish, the media have an obligation to generally strive to promote public interest over private and/or sectarian interests (Muller, 2005:76). The media are therefore not just businesses responding to economic forces, but are also deeply rooted social and cultural institutions (McQuail, 2005:218).

² The Code of Conduct outlines 25 principles that govern the practice of journalism in Kenya among them accuracy and fairness, independence, integrity and accountability (Media Act, 2007).

The Four Theories of the Press: the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist theory advanced by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (McQuail, 2003; 2005; Christians Et al., 2009) have been highly influential in evaluating the extent to which media fulfill their normative roles in the society. These theories have since been criticised for being biased towards the West and inapplicable in the African context (Wasserman, 2006; Mwangi, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2005) as well as being obsolete and inappropriate in evaluating media performance in contemporary societies (Nerone, 1995; Christians et al 2009) among other criticisms.

Various scholars (Christians et al, 2009; Nerone, 1995; McQuail, 2005; Mwangi, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Steenveld, 2004; Wasserman, 2006) have proposed alternative normative models to the Four Theories of the Press. In their proposals, African scholars (Mwangi, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Steenveld, 2004; Wasserman, 2006) call for a more comprehensive normative framework which does not define media freedom only in terms of freedom from government control, but also positions national media networks in Africa within global networks of power. They also criticise the *Four Theories* for their Western ideological bias, which makes them ‘unfit’ for use in the African context. Other scholars from the North (Christians et. al, 2009; McQuail, 2005; Nerone, 1995;) argue that the *Four Theories* were not theories in the proper sense, but rather descriptions of four types of media systems, with guiding principles of their operation and legitimation.

This study analyses the performance of the NMG from a political economic perspective to establish how economic and political pressures influence the ethical decisions of journalists within the prevailing liberal-democratic normative framework. The liberal- democratic framework premised on the free market of ideas doctrine has been criticised (Sparks, 2009; Voltmer 2006; Wasserman, 2006; Berger, 2002) for not taking cognizance of the threats posed to media freedom by the increased marketisation and commercialization of media especially in transitional democracies. This study therefore seeks to establish the extent to which this criticism applies to the Kenyan context.

1.1 Initial Background and Context of Research

As in any other society, the development of the media in Kenya has been influenced by socio- political and economic factors. The development of Kenya's news media system is closely tied to the country's political history (Ogola, 2011). Just like in most other countries in Africa, the media landscape in Kenya took on a new configuration in the 1990s when the democratic wind of change swept through the continent with the increased cry for multi- party politics and the liberalisation and privatisation of the media (Ali, 2009; Duplat, 2003; Matumaini, 2010; Mutere, 2010; Odhiambo, 2002; Oriare, 2010; Tettey, 2001). However, the most significant changes affecting the development of the media in Kenya was the return of multi- party politics in 1992 and the ushering in of a new political dispensation a decade later in 2002. The Kenya African National Union

(KANU) government, which had been in power since Kenya got independence in 1963, was dethroned in 2002 (AMDI Report, 2006).

Up until 1992, the then KANU government strongly controlled the media, especially broadcast media and relentlessly suppressed any dissident voices; hence the media sector had experienced a stunted growth (Ali, 2009; Makali, 2003; Odhiambo, 2002; Ogola, 2011; Oriare, 2010). For a long time since independence, the only ‘voice’ in the broadcast sector was the Voice of Kenya (VOK), which was the state owned broadcasting company now called the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). But since the re-introduction³ of multi-party politics in 1992, the media in Kenya have grown significantly. Between 1990 and 2010, the media in Kenya grew from one TV station to over 20 stations, from one radio station to over 60 stations, from four daily newspapers to over 8 dailies and the licensing of over 75 Internet service providers (Ali, 2009; Oriare, 2010).

The re-introduction of multi-party politics in 1992 widened the scope of political and press freedom. Before the liberalization era (1963-1989), the government tightly controlled the media mainly through policies inherited from the colonial government at independence (Makali, 2003). Liberalization in the early 1990s led to the proliferation of private media under corporate ownership and control (Ali, 2009; Odhiambo, 2002; Oriare, 2010).

³ At independence in 1963, Kenya was a multiparty state before the ruling party KANU stifled all the opposition parties to become a one party state (Makali, 2003).

Where as in the pre- liberalization era the main concern of media scholars and media critics was the government control of the media; there has been in the past several years new concerns about media concentration, media ownership, ethics and the professionalism of journalists (Oriare, 2008) and the impact of this on the media's capacity to fulfil its democratic roles in Kenya. Increased competition in the media sector for advertising revenue in a largely de-regulated media environment continues to pose serious challenges for the promotion of the common good (AMDI report, 2006; Chaacha & Franceschi, 2010).

For some time now, the media in Kenya have been moving towards a monopoly, concentrating ownership in a few hands of big media organisations like the Nation Media Group, the Royal Media Services and the Standard Group. These conglomerates have deployed enormous resources to control the media environment as they minimize competition, reduce costs and attract more advertisers as they diversify into new areas (AMDI Report, 2006; Oriare, 2008; 2010). Driven by the profit motive, media owners in Kenya under the banner of the Media Owners Association (MOA) have strongly opposed any government proposals to limit media concentration especially cross media ownership (National Information and Communications Technology Policy, 2008), and up to date there is no clear media law or policy regulating media ownership in Kenya (Ali, 2009; Oriare, 2008; Makokha, 2010). The Kenya Communications Amendment Bill 2007, which had proposed the outlaw of cross media ownership, did not see the light of the day after intense lobbying from the media fraternity and MOA. The proposed Kenya communications Amendment Act 2009 strategically left out the clause on the outlaw of cross media ownership

(Kenya Communications Amendment Bill, 2007; Kenya Communications Amendment Act, 2009).

This extensive concentration in media ownership has resulted in a private monopoly of cross media ownership in Kenya run by the three main companies: The Nation Media Group, The Standard Group and The Royal Media services, with the Nation Media Group leading the pack. Cross media ownership, which is the common ownership of more than one mass communications medium within the same market, for instance, ownership combination involving radio or TV, cable systems, or newspapers within the same market area (Howard, 2006) has translated into fewer and fewer voices in the media market in Kenya.

As mentioned earlier, the Nation Media Group (NMG), cross owns newspapers, TV and radio stations in Kenya (www.nationmedia.com). The Standard Group cross- owns a daily newspaper *The Standard* (plus the Saturday and Sunday editions), a TV station (KTN), a radio station (Radio Maisha) and *The Standard* online edition (www.standardmedia.co.ke). The Royal Media Services cross owns the Citizen TV, citizen radio and 12 FM stations broadcasting in local languages (<http://www.royalmedia.co.ke>). Due to this increasing trend of cross media ownership, there have been concerns (Ali, 2010; Makokha, 2010; Oriare, 2008) about its impact on journalism ethics and media diversity in Kenya. This study therefore seeks to establish the validity of these concerns by analyzing if and how cross media ownership may compromise journalists' agency as they make their daily ethical decisions at the NMG.

Journalists in Kenya have also been accused⁴ of seeking to protect commercial interests at the expense of public interest under increased pressures from owners and advertisers (Mutere, 2005; Ongong'a & White, 2008). Media owners in Kenya have in the recent past also been accused of being driven by the profit motive and often ignoring their facilitative and monitorial roles especially during elections and referendum or when a major advertiser is on the public spotlight (Makokha, 2010; Mutere, 2005). Media revenue from advertising has steadily grown since 2003, and in 2008 it was estimated at \$1.9 million annually (Steadman Report, 2008) and this is consistent with the growth of additional segments of the media. This study therefore seeks to establish the extent to which these accusations are valid when the research findings are analyzed in chapter 5.

Media owners with strong political affiliations, or who are prominent politicians themselves have been accused of being politically co-opted; influencing editorial policy in line with their political persuasions. There have been concerns (Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service Report, 2008; Mutere, 2005) that during critical political times like general elections and referendum, media houses and journalists take explicit political stands, which are largely shaped by ethnicity. As Francis Nyamnjoh (2010; 2005) notes, the politics of identity and belonging prevalent in most African states present journalists and the media with the challenge of adhering to dominant media theories that demand of media practitioners' professional

⁴ The media in Kenya was accused of biased reporting during the 1997 general elections, the 2005 constitutional referendum and the 2007 general elections where journalists were seen as having been ordered to toe a particular line (Odhiambo, 2002; Oriare, 2008, Mutere, 2005; Makokha, 2010). There are also claims about reporters being assigned on 'tribal beats', journalists receiving incentives from politicians for favourable reporting, appointment of editors whose worldview is in tandem with owners' interest and direct advertisers' influence through Public Relations departments (Ongong'a & White, 2008; Makokha, 2010).

independence and their conflicting loyalties to cultural and ethnic communities.

Journalists and the media in Kenya during the last general election in 2007 and the ensuing post election violence were partly blamed (Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service Report, 2008) for dividing the country along ethnic lines by taking explicit political stands. Ethnicity was considered a key factor in the 2007 post election violence in Kenya. Nyamnjoh (2010:82) observes that discussing ethnicity and the media in Africa calls for the scrutiny of the importance of cultural identities in the lives of individuals and groups, and how these identities are actively produced and articulated within particular historical contexts and power relations. This study sought to establish the extent to which ethnicity as a political pressure influences the ethical decisions of journalists at the NMG.

1.2.0 General Research Objective

The main objective of the study is to examine if and how media conglomeration (cross- media ownership) influences ethical decision-making at the Nation Media Group in Kenya. The focus will be on how media concentration impacts on the journalists' ability to adhere to the ethical values of accuracy, fairness, independence, integrity, truth and accountability as outlined in the Code of conduct for journalists in Kenya and the Editorial policy of the Nation Media Group.

1.2.1 Research questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What contextual factors have shaped media conglomeration (cross-media ownership structure) at the Nation Media Group in Kenya?
2. How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions?
3. What potential policy interventions can journalists propose to check the impact of media conglomeration (cross media ownership) on media ethics in Kenya?

1.2.2 Assumptions of the Study

The study was premised on the following assumptions: One, several economic and political pressures that are inherent in a horizontally integrated media structure (cross media ownership) influence journalists' ethical decisions (Botma & Wasserman, 2008; Dmitri,2002; Singer, 2006; Borden, 2009; Price, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Richards, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Hallin, 2000; Mosco, 1996; Golding & Murdock,2000). When the news media are expected to be purveyors of the public interest while pursuing profits for their corporate owners, the result is often a clash of capitalist and journalistic imperatives (Jackson, 2009:146).

This in effect means that although the individual journalist is an essential unit of ethical agency, journalists are increasingly employees of large companies whose primary aim is to maximize returns to shareholders. Most of the ethical dilemmas that journalists face therefore begin with the inherent conflict between the individual's role as a journalist and his or her employer's quest for profit (Richards, 2004:119).

Two, that the present media structure and performance in Kenya has its roots in the political and economic history of the country (King'ara, 2010; Ogola, 2011). Media performance of the NMG can therefore best be understood and evaluated within the broad political and economic history of Kenya.

1.2.3 Significance and justification of the Study

This study makes a contribution to the academic literature on the political economy of the media and media ethics in Kenya. By investigating the various socio- political and economic constraints that journalists experience on their ethical decisions, this study opens an often ignored dimension in the debate of media professionalism and ethics in Kenya, namely, the link between the economic organisation of the media and ethical journalism practice. To address this gap, this study links two areas of study: political economy, which deals with the political and economic factors that underlie media structures and journalism ethics, which deals with journalistic agency.

Works on the political economy of the media in Kenya (Ogola, 2010; King'ara, 2010; Makokha, 2010) focus on the political and economic

structures of the media in Kenya, independent of ethics, while those on media ethics (Chaacha & Franceschi, 2010; Mutere, 2005; Ogonga' & White, 2008) overlook the often implicit economic and political pressures that put journalists in a dilemma as they struggle to deliver profits to the media owner and adhere to their proclaimed professional \ethical values. A review of available literature on the media scene in Kenya (Ogola, 2011; Oriare, 2010; 2008; Makokha, 2010; Ali, 2010; King'ara, 2010; Nyabuga, 2007), which is discussed in more detail in the literature review in chapter two, indicates that there is a dearth of detailed literature on media ethics and the political economy of the media in Kenya.

This study therefore addresses this literature gap and provides a basis for rethinking the media's normative role in the Kenyan society. It is argued in the study that the prevailing liberal democratic model, which is based on the libertarian tradition, part of the *Four Theories* of the press, which have since been regarded as obsolete (Christians et.al, 2009; Wasserman, 2006; Nyamnjuh, 2005; Nerone, 1995) does not adequately address the normative challenges that journalists face in the new commercialized media environment in Kenya. More details of this is given in chapter 3 on theoretical framework and in the research findings in chapter 5.

Theoretically, the study tests the validity of the propaganda model in a setting that is different socially, economically and politically from the original setting, the U.S.A and in this way the study contributes to the overall debate and counter- criticisms of the model; that it is applicable in different settings. The study also seeks to modify the conceptual and explanatory power of the propaganda model. Although the study uses the

five filter elements as the analytical tools; it incorporates the element of agency of journalists as discussed by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) in their Hierarchy of influences Model that should be understood in relation to the primary five filters in Herman and Chomsky's structural analysis. In this way, the study addresses the concerns and recommendations of various scholars (Pedro, 2011, Sparks, 2009; Boyd-Barrett, 2004) that there is a need to include other elements to modify the explanatory power of the model. The study also proposes the inclusion of a 'sixth filter' (ethnicity in newsrooms) aside from the five primary filters of the Propaganda Model. (More on this is discussed in chapter 3 on theoretical framework when we present the propaganda model in detail and in chapter 5 on data analysis).

Through the interviews, the study sought to establish if journalists' decisions are overly determined by the structural constraints as the classical version of the propaganda model puts it or if they view themselves as enjoying some form of agency to resist these constraints. This study therefore appreciates the strengths of the structural model of Herman and Chomsky (uses the five filter elements as analytical tools) while seeking to extend its explanatory power by drawing on sociological studies of newsroom processes such as that offered by Shoemaker & Reese (1996) in their Hierarchy of Influences Model.

The study also modifies the explanatory power of the model by using the filters and the interviews to establish the extent to which media conglomeration is likely to increase structural pressures on journalistic agency. Whereas Herman and Chomsky (1988; 2002) used the model to analyze the general performance of the mainstream media in the U.S.A, this

study specifically uses the five filter elements outlined by the authors in addition to the role of the individual journalist to examine how media conglomeration may intensify the political and economic constraints that are likely to compromise journalistic agency. As Pedro (2011) observes, there has been an increasing trend to media concentration since Herman and Chomsky first presented their propaganda model in 1988. There is therefore a need to test the validity of the model in the new concentrated media environment.

The notion of “flak” outlined as the fourth filter in the propaganda model is also re-defined in this study to include both internal and external forms of flak; ‘the role played by the media industry as a generator of flak’ (Pedro, 2011:1871). Herman & Chomsky define flak as ‘the negative responses to a media statement or program, which may take the form of letters, telegrams, lawsuits etc’ (Herman & Chomsky, 2002:26). In this study, the term flak is used from a broad perspective to include the negative responses from the management and establishment, which leads to the self-censorship by journalists in fear of upsetting the status quo. Flak in this study is also used to include the external commercial and political pressures from shareholders, owners and the political arena which lead to both individual self censorship and overall media censorship in fear of the negative responses from these powerful sources of flak.

The study also presents a detailed account of the political and economic factors that have contributed to the growth of one of the largest media conglomerates in East and Central Africa, the NMG. By examining the influence of commercialization and marketization of the media on

journalists' ethical decisions at the NMG, the study provides a basis on which further research can be conducted on the impact of commercialization and marketisation in other media conglomerates in Kenya and other emerging democracies in Africa. The study provides a rich reservoir of reference material on the media scene in Kenya.

1.3 Research Methods, Procedures and Techniques

The data collection methods, procedures and techniques are briefly outlined here. A more detailed account of the research methodology is given in chapter four on research methodology, methods and procedures.

To answer the stated research questions, the study uses the qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviews and the institutional analysis of relevant company documents and literature. A qualitative methodology is preferred over a quantitative methodology due to its ability to provide detailed data and to tell the story from the point of view of the actors, in this case journalists at the NMG (Silverman, 2005; Baxter, 2003). Because a qualitative approach allows for a framework of data collection methods that are more flexible for instance semi-structured interviews which are used in this study, than most quantitative methods, for instance questionnaires, it is more likely to allow the respondents to offer their own interpretations and explanations of events, as opposed to having responses categorized into an analytical framework preset by the researcher (Albarran, et al, 2006).

The primary objective of qualitative research is to generate rich detailed data about the issue under investigation and therefore the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe the respondents for details in search of a 'fuller picture' of events. Such an approach enables the researcher to understand, explain and interpret the phenomenon under investigation from the perspective of the people being studied (Bryman, 2004:279).

Semi- structured interviews of journalists are used in an attempt to answer the second research question, namely: How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions? This qualitative method is preferred over a quantitative one because it allows the researcher to understand the object under investigation through the eyes of the people that she interviews (Baxter, 2003). This is because qualitative research, being interpretive in nature focuses on

exploration and insight and uses forms of data collection methods and analysis which rely on understanding with an emphasis on the meanings that people bring to them. Quantitative research on the other hand which is generally associated with the positivist epistemology focuses on the collection and analysis of numerical data and it seeks explanations and predictions with a view to generalize research findings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:6).

The aim of this research is not to generalize the research findings, but rather to give a detailed account of how economic and political pressures are experienced by journalists as influencing their ethical decisions in a specific

context, namely, the NMG in Kenya. A qualitative methodology is therefore regarded as best suited to answer the research questions and achieve the overall research objective.

The semi-structured interviews were combined with an institutional analysis of relevant company documents of the NMG, which formed a basis for some of the questions that were probed in the interviews. The researcher did an institutional analysis of the Group's Annual reports, editorial policy, constitution of the management board, the major shareholders of the Group and the non media business activities of the Group and any other company documents that 'document' the history of the Group.

A purposive sample of 25 respondents was chosen comprising of journalists in the main divisions of the NMG (print, electronic and online divisions). Purposive sampling is preferred because it allows the researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which the researcher is interested (Baxter & Babbie, 2003; Silverman, 2005).

The researcher has therefore purposively sought journalists who have worked for the NMG since its inception or those who have worked for the Group for over 10 years to get some form of 'oral history' of the structural evolution of the Group in an attempt to establish any connection between the Group's expansion and commercial constraints on the professional ethics of the journalists. Senior journalists like the Group's former and current editorial director, managing editors and senior editors were also purposively sought to get their view on the prevalence (if any) of economic and political constraints and how they experience and/or resist them.

The views of junior journalists like sub editors, correspondents and reporters were also purposively sought in an attempt to find out if their sentiments are in tune or different from those of their seniors on the same. In all the interviews, the researcher assured the interviewees of anonymity and source confidentiality to guarantee honesty. The researcher selected the sample on the basis of her knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims and questions (Silverman, 2005; Baxter, 2003).

The first research question- “What contextual factors have shaped media conglomeration (cross- media ownership structure) at the Nation Media Group in Kenya?” was answered through the responses from the interviews on the same and the institutional analysis of relevant company documents and records that detail media ownership structure at the NMG and its historical development among them: *NMG Sustainability Report (2010)* retrieved from www.nationmedia.com on 20/10/2011; *The Journey of the Nation:1960-1969* (retrieved from www.nationmedia.com on 19/10/2011; *NMG: 50 Golden Years Report (Daily Nation, Thursday March 18, 2010)*; *NMG Annual Report 2008; 2010* (Retrieved from www.nationmedia.com on 10/08/2011); *The Journey of a Nation: 1970-1979 (Daily Nation, April 8, 2010)*.

Researchers generally use institutional analysis of company documents generated within the institution being studied as a form of triangulation with either participant observation or qualitative interviewing (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Baxter & Babbie 2003). In this study, the institutional analysis of company documents was used to give background information for the

questions to be probed in the qualitative interviews on the factors that have shaped the growth of the media in Kenya and how shareholders and owners' wealth in the form of non-media businesses affiliated to the Group influence the decisions of journalists. According to Bertrand & Hughes (2005:109), institutional analysis of company documents provides information about how institutions work internally- how they worked in the past (historical studies), how they work in the present (descriptive studies and reports), and how they might work in the future (policy and policy oriented studies).

This qualitative method is preferred because it typically emphasises the contextual understanding of social processes; we can not fully understand the behaviour of a particular institution (in this case the NMG) or members of a particular social group (individual journalists) other than in terms of a specific environment in which they operate (Bryman, 2004; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Documents produced within the institution being studied 'document' a particular moment in time, thus allowing the researcher to follow changes in policy and practice (Bertrand & Hughes 2005:133). In this study, the institutional analysis of company documents enabled the researcher to trace and follow how the NMG has evolved over time from a one medium outlet to the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa and the factors that have facilitated this growth. The researcher then sought to find out from the interview responses if the expansion of the Group has brought with it increased pressures on journalistic agency.

To address the third research question- "What potential policy interventions can journalists propose to check the impact of cross media ownership on media ethics in Kenya?"- the researcher analysed the responses from the

interviewed journalists on the possible policy interventions that can be put in place to check the influence of economic and political pressures on media ethics in Kenya. The researcher posed the following question to all the interviewees: Do you think these economic and political pressures should be checked? If Yes, How? in an attempt to get the journalists' insider view of how economic and political pressures as a result of media conglomeration can be checked.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Including this first chapter, the thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter two gives a general historical overview of the media scene in Kenya tracing media structure and performance from the colonial period up to date. The chapter outlines the major political and economic factors that have shaped media structure and performance in Kenya, with a special focus on the Nation Media Group (NMG). Chapter three discusses and applies the critical political economy of the media, discusses and tests the validity of Propaganda Model in the Kenyan context using the filters as the analytical tools of the study. The chapter raises the major criticisms and responses of critical political economy and the Propaganda Model in an attempt to show how this study obviates these criticisms to prove the suitability of the 'filter elements' as analytical tools in the study.

Chapter four outlines the qualitative data collection methods, procedures and research design used in the study. Chapter five presents, discusses and analyzes the research data using the five filters of the propaganda model.

Chapter six gives a summary of the research findings. Chapter seven gives the general conclusions that can be drawn on the basis of the research findings. The researcher then proposes possible policy formulations and/or regulations on the basis of the research findings to check the political and economic pressures that impact on journalism ethics in Kenya.

1.5 Definition of Key Concepts

This section gives the operational meaning of the key recurring concepts used in the study. The aim is not to give exhaustive definitions of the concepts, but rather to show the meaning attributed in the study.

Cross media ownership: It is a form of multiple media ownership that involves the common ownership of more than one mass communications medium in the same media market; any ownership combination involving radio or TV stations, cable systems or newspapers within the same market area (Howard, 2006:3). In this study, the concept describes the ownership structure at the NMG; the Group cross owns TV, radio, cable TV, Online media and Newspapers in the same market area.

Concentration: Media concentration happens when media power is owned and controlled by fewer and larger media conglomerates (Fourie, 2007). In this study it is used to describe the media market in Kenya, where, as much as there has been immense growth in the media industry since the 1990s, media power is only in the hands of a few media owners like the NMG, The Standard Group and the Royal media services. As the major media firms like NMG integrate and expand both nationally and regionally, media power

becomes more and more under control of a few wealthy individuals and corporations.

Horizontal Integration: This is the process by which one media company buys and owns different types of media for example print, broadcast, cable, online etc (Williams, 2003; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). In this study the term is used to describe how the Nation Media Group has bought and owns different types of media in Kenya and the rest of East Africa.

Marketization: This term is used to describe a market driven approach, which assumes that, the efficient production of cultural goods and services including media products can best be achieved in a free market dictated by the profit motive and the law of supply and demand. This perspective became popular in the 1980s and 1990s (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; McManus, 2009). In this study, this describes the approach adopted by private media owners in Kenya like the NMG after the deregulation of the media market in 1990; that of focusing more on business interest, commercialization and commodification of information.

Deregulation: The notion that freedom of the media means freedom from any form of government control. The deregulatory approach is based on the assumption that public interest can only be appropriately served by unregulated profit seeking media aiming to satisfy public desires (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006:71). After the re-introduction of multiparty politics in Kenya, in 1992, the media market was deregulated; a move to enable it to effectively play its watchdog role in the society.

Liberalization: The process by which a state intervenes to increase the number of media players in the market, mostly breaking prior private/public monopoly and creating room for competing media providers (Fourie, 2007:366). In this study, liberalization is used to indicate the government intervention in the early 1990s to repeal some sections of the constitution, especially section 2(A) that hindered the operation of private broadcast media players in Kenya. This led to the growth of private media and therefore the tremendous growth in the NMG between 1990 –2011 can be attributed to liberalization. We use the term pre- liberalization in the study to describe media performance and environment before 1990 and post-liberalization to describe media performance after the 1990s in Kenya.

Globalization: In this study, this term is used to describe or characterize ‘the process of increasing multidirectional economic, cultural, socio-political global connections’ (Slevin, 2000:199 cited in Ali, 2009). Globalization can also be defined as ‘the process by which economic activity, political values and culture have ceased to be constrained by geography and territory’ (Williams, 2003:223). The term is also used to describe the political, economic and cultural changes that took place in Kenya after the 1990s as a response to what was happening globally. Reference to the term globalization in the study indicates how global mass media dynamics shaped the media scene in Kenya after liberalization, which is an aspect of globalization.

Commercialization: This is the process through which commercial interests take primacy in the production and dissemination of media content in commercial private media organizations. Any action intended to boost

profits that interferes with a journalist' or the media's best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve (McManus, 2009:219). Commercialization is the process that takes place when 'the state replaces forms of regulation based on public interest and public service with market standards. In the media industry, this translates to more emphasis on market logic and profitability' (Fourie, 2007:368). In this study, the term is used to refer to the process through which commercial private media in Kenya like the NMG operate more as businesses enlisted in the stock market with shareholders' interests to protect rather than public cultural institutions to promote public interest.

Corporatization: The process by which corporate organizations and the corporate sector has a significant influence on media performance especially through advertising revenue (Ali, 2009). In this study, the term is used to describe the 'corporate take over' by multinational corporate organizations and the corporate sector through advertising revenue and sponsoring of programs in the mainstream media organizations in Kenya after the government liberalized the media market. The term is also used to describe corporate censorship on the part of big media conglomerates like NMG in order to protect corporate interests of companies that have close business links with the particular media.

Commodification: The process of taking goods and services, which are valued for their use, and transforming them into commodities, which are valued for what, they can earn in the market place (Mosco, 1996). In this study, the term is used to refer to aspect of private commercial media in

Kenya of treating media and media content (information and ideas), which are generally regarded as public cultural goods accessible to all as commodities of trade in the market place with the major aim of maximizing profits.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has given the general overview of the study by briefly discussing the contextual background of the study, the research questions and objectives, the assumptions, the problem that the study seeks to investigate, the theoretical framework and the methods and procedures used to answer the research questions. The key recurring concepts used in the study have also been defined. On the basis of this, the thesis now proceeds with a detailed literature review, theoretical and methodological approaches of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Contextualization of the Research

Introduction

This chapter outlines the major political and economic factors that have shaped media structure and performance in Kenya before and after liberalization with a special focus on the Nation Media Group (NMG) in an attempt to answer the first research question: What contextual factors have shaped media conglomeration (cross media ownership structure) at the NMG in Kenya? The chapter shows how historical foundations of the political terrain in Kenya have been closely tied to the normative frameworks within which the media in Kenya have been assessed. Before liberalization in the Kenyan media market (between 1963 and 1990), the media can be said to have been operating under the corporatist tradition⁵ (Christians, et. al 2009) what was ordinarily regarded as development theory then (Schramm, 1964; Rogers, 1976), where the media in Kenya were expected by the government to cooperate on matters of national welfare and be less critical of the economic enterprise and political establishment (Ogola, 2011). As discussed later in this chapter, the media reluctantly abided by the government's expectations 'to win the political goodwill to operate' under the authoritarian regime then.

⁵ The corporatist tradition expects the media to be cooperative in matters of national interest and in relation to other social institutions such as religion, education and the family. The media elites are likely to be closely aligned to social, political and cultural elites and dominated by a policy of national cultural unity (Christians et al, 2009:22).

The libertarian tradition premised on the free market of ideas doctrine and the lack of any government intervention in media operations can be said to be the prevailing normative framework in Kenya since political and economic liberalization in the 1990s up- to- date. Focus has been mainly on media-state relations with the government being considered as the major threat to media freedom and responsibility. By tracing the historical, political and economic developments in Kenya, the present media structure and performance of NMG is analysed and understood within the larger political and economic framework.

2.1 Historical Background

The study was carried out in Kenya, which is in East Africa. Kenya gained its independence from the British in 1963 and was a *de facto* and then a *de jure* one party state under the political party, KANU, until 1992 when the then president Daniel Arap Moi oversaw the repeal of section 2A of the constitution allowing for multi party politics. The former president's move to repeal that section of the constitution was partly due to the pressure from international organizations on African governments to democratise and liberalise the media to enhance accountability and partly because of internal pressure from civil society and the media to open up the media environment and break up state monopoly on broadcast media (Mwangi, 2010; Ogola, 2011).

The transition from one party state to multi party politics ushered in the liberalization of media and communication sectors hence allowing for

substantial freedom of the media (Oriare, 2010; King'ara, 2010; Makali, 2003). In 1993, the Attorney general, Amos Wako, set up a Task Force to review the major press laws in order to provide a legal framework that would guide the freedom of the press and responsible media practice.

The Press Law would among other things

...make recommendations on press law providing for a comprehensive legal framework for the exercise of the freedom of the press and the development of dynamic and responsible print and electronic media, making provision inter alia for free access to information and its dissemination, a code of professional and ethical standards; ownership, development and licensing of the media (Odhiambo, 2002:304).

However, to date, there is no clear media law in Kenya although various bills have been presented to parliament (Oriare, 2008; 2010; Ali, 2009; Makali, 2003; AMDI Report, 2006). At present, the media sector is regulated through various acts in the constitution such as the Public Order Act, the Defamation Act, the Preservation of Public Security Act and section 34 of the new constitution (Oriare, 2010; AMDI Report, 2006; Mutere, 2010). Previously in the old constitution, media freedom was implicitly protected under section 79 (1) on the freedom of expression. In the new constitution, which was promulgated on 27th August 2010, the freedom of the media is explicitly protected under section 34 of the Bill of Rights.

In Kenya, the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) is the state-controlled regulatory body with some jurisdiction over media matters and its

operations are overseen by the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC). The CCK was established in 1999 by the Kenya Communications Act (KCA) No. 2 of 1998, to deal with the licensing, regulating and coordination of telecommunication, TV and radio communication frequencies and equipment (Communications Commission of Kenya Report accessed on 12/02/2011 from www.cck.go.ke).

The state owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) also has some regulatory powers over the broadcast media. The KBC Act of 1989 stipulates that KBC is mandated to, among other things, control broadcast receiving sets and oversee licensing of dealers. There is no independent broadcasting authority other than KBC and the media fraternity has been clamoring for one since the private media feels that the state broadcaster has an unfair advantage especially when it comes to live broadcasts especially on national holidays and parliament proceedings (AMDI Report, 2006).

The Media Council of Kenya is the independent national institution established by the Media Act 2007 as the leading institution in the regulation of media and the conduct of journalists. Its functions under this Act include: promotion and the protection of freedom and independence of the media, promotion of high professional standards and the promotion of ethical standards (Media Council of Kenya, 2010). The Media Council of Kenya also registers journalists, monitors the conduct of journalists and handles complaints against media organizations and journalists.

The Media Act 2007 also contains the code of conduct for journalists in Kenya. MCK uses the code of conduct to arbitrate between complainants on

the one hand, and journalists and media houses on the other (Media Act, 2007; Oriare 2008). It has often however been alleged that ‘although the code of conduct for journalists is available, conformity and adherence is problematic across the board. Employers rarely promote it among entry level journalists and journalists’ poor working conditions often undermine gains already made in encouraging professional behavior’ (Oriare, 2008: 4). This study seeks to examine the validity of these allegations when the interview findings are analysed in chapter 5.

There are also two media owners’ lobby groups in Kenya that fight for the interests of media organizations: the Media Owners Association (MOA) and the Association of Free and Independent Media (AFIM). MOA represents the mainstream media such as the Nation Media Group whereas AFIM represents the proprietors of the alternative media. MOA has patronized MCK for a long time and it has three slots in the regulatory body; a fact that is perceived to give MOA undue influence over the affairs of MCK (Oriare, 2010:74). Before MCK was officially recognized through an Act of Parliament in 2007, MOA was the main financier of MCK and also produced the chair of the council. MOA has therefore often been accused of supporting MCK not because it is interested in building a strong independent media regulatory body that would bring fundamental changes in the way media institutions operate in Kenya, but merely to fend off government regulation (Oriare 2008). Through the interviews, the study sought to find out how effective MCK is as the official media regulatory body in Kenya.

The MOA also has easy access to the political elite, the business community and the government and it has succeeded in lobbying for among other things

the postponing of the government's decision to limit cross media ownership. The government had proposed to limit cross media ownership in the Information Communications and Telecommunications policy (ICT Policy, 2007). After intense lobbying from the MOA, the government did not make provisions for doing so directly in the revised Kenya Information and Communications Bill, 2008.

The media in Kenya have generally been regarded as principal indicators of democratic vitality in Kenya since 1992 (BBC World Trust policy Brief No. 1, 2008). The media were at the fore front of the fight for the re- introduction of multi- party politics and they have over the years gained a reputation for keeping the government in check and providing a forum for vigorous public debates. But certain recent occurrences in Kenya have challenged this reputation and cast the journalists' independence and integrity in doubt (BBC World Trust policy Brief No. 1, 2008; Oriare 2008; Makokha 2010).

Questions have been raised (Ali, 2009; Oriare, 2008; BBC World Trust policy Brief No. 1 2008; Makokha, 2010) about the media's and journalists' role in the reporting and framing of political issues in the 2005 referendum on the proposed constitution, the run-up to the 2007 general elections and the ensuing post-election violence. Ethnicity has particularly been singled out as a key factor that compromises the impartiality and accuracy of political reporting especially during general elections. This study therefore sought to find out from the interview responses the extent to which ethnic tendencies in the media in Kenya have affected the media's liberal democratic responsibility to act as honest, fair and neutral mediators accessible to all.

Journalists and the media have also been accused (Ogong'a & White, 2008; Mutere, 2005; Oriare, 2008; Ali, 2010) of biased reporting on human interest issues that touch on the interests of big advertisers such as Safaricom, Coca-Cola, Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), Kenya Airways and East African Breweries. It can therefore be observed that although the private media in Kenya are independent of government control, they may still face immense commercial and political pressures that could arguably erode editorial independence. In some cases, media owners have been accused of directly interfering with editorial decisions to preserve and protect the interests of big-time advertisers and sponsors (Makokha, 2010; Ogong'a & White, 2008).

There have also been concerns that in cases where owners do not directly interfere with editorial decisions, they

often delegate authority to senior editors to transact business and make industry decisions on their behalf, and therefore it is difficult to know the interests the editors serve when making critical decisions that could affect the independence of the media (Oriare, 2008: 32).

As Herman & Chomsky (2002; 2008) observe, although media owners may not directly interfere with journalists independence, objectivity and impartiality, they implicitly do this through the choice of 'right thinking personnel, and by the editors' and working journalists' internalization of priorities and definitions of news worthiness that conform to the institution's policy' (Herman & Chomsky, 2002: xi). This study therefore sought to find

out from the interview responses the extent to which this may be the case at the NMG.

Before the highly contested general elections in 2007 and the ensuing post election violence which put the media credibility in Kenya on the spotlight, the editorial boards of the leading mainstream media were packed with individuals who either because of their ethnicity or suspected political leaning would perpetuate the dominant ideology dictated by the media owners. There were continuous leadership changes in the three leading mainstream commercial media: NMG, the Standard Group and the Royal Media Services in search of the 'right' personnel (Makokha, 2010:288).

There have also been cases where journalists who exhibit editorial independence are considered by the owners as inappropriate towards the well being of that particular media organization especially when the owners' political and economic interests are at stake. For instance David Makali, a leading journalist in Kenya who has worked in virtually all the mainstream media houses was sacked as the managing editor of the *East African Standard* for going contrary to the management's view by insisting that reporting be objective even though it meant writing negative news about the shareholders of the paper (Ali, 2010:195). In most commercial media like the NMG, there is much at stake in terms of advertising revenue and therefore the journalists and the media as a whole choose to be cautious about how they cover big advertisers (Ogong'a & White, 2008). For instance, Deo Omondi, a journalist, was sacked from the East African Standard after he wrote a negative story on alleged abuse of office of the

then CEO of Kenya Airways; a valued advertiser for the particular media outlet (Examples as cited in Ali, 2009:195-198).

It is such instances that put to question the extent to which journalists who work for the free and independent media in Kenya, like the NMG are able to withstand political and economic constraints as they execute their professional duties. This study therefore, through the analysis of the interview responses examines how journalists at the NMG experience these pressures and the extent to which they think they are able to withstand them.

2.2 Structural factors that shaped media performance in the Pre- Liberalization era (1963-1990)

The history of the media in Kenya and Africa in general is closely tied to political events of the continent (Mwangi, 2010; Odhiambo, 2002; Ogola, 2010). To properly understand African media, one must therefore examine them within the continent's historical context, where obstacles and solutions lie (Mwangi, 2010:2). Between 1898 and 1960, when most African countries were colonized, the media were used to integrate African economies and peoples into the international market for the benefit of the colonial rulers (Mwangi, 2010). Between 1960 and 1990, most media in Africa including the media in Kenya were under tight government control in the newly independent states as the new African leaders used them as vessels to promote nationalism and nation building (Ogola, 2011; Ansah, 1991; Heath, 1997). During the clamour for multi- party politics in the 1990s, independent media emerged and were in the forefront of the campaign for the

democratization of African governments (Ogola, 2011). The private mass media in Africa played their role in ‘the process of political liberalization as the UNESCO conference in 1991 on “promoting an independent and pluralistic African press” in Windhoek envisaged they should’ (Odhiambo, 2002:295). The private media can therefore be said to be among the forces that have shaped, and continue to define the establishment of democracy in Africa (Tettey, 2001:5).

In Kenya, there has been a close relationship between the mass media and the political process. Several scholars (BBC World Trust policy Brief No. 1 2008; Odhiambo, 2002; Ogola, 2011; Mwangi, 2010; King’ara, 2010; Ali, 2010; Oriare, 2010) have regarded the media in Kenya to have in a big way influenced the pace of political change in Kenya, and this political change has in turn facilitated media growth, pluralism and relative independence. To understand the development of the Kenyan media, one therefore has to examine it within the context of Kenya’s political history (Ogola, 2011). This study will therefore briefly examine the major historical factors that have shaped media structure in Kenya to answer the first research question: What contextual factors have shaped media conglomeration (cross media ownership structure) at the NMG in Kenya?

The current mainstream media in Kenya like the NMG were started out of a political necessity either to serve colonial (white settler interests), to champion the local people’s political interests or as state Gazettes to spread the colonial government propaganda (Makali, 2003). Asian trader Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee established the first Kenyan newspaper (*The East African Standard*) in 1901. At first it was pro- white settler’s interests and when it

became critical of the colonial regime, he was forced to sell it to individuals keen on serving settler interests. The colonial government later established the Kenya Broadcasting Service in 1928 and a TV station in 1958 still to serve settler interests (Makali, 2003; Ali, 2009: 29).

Since these first media in Kenya exclusively served the colonial government's interests, Africans felt the need to start their own indigenous press through which they could express their grievances against colonial oppression. This led to the first African Nationalist newspaper in Kenya *Muiguithania* (a Kikuyu word meaning arbitrator) founded in 1928 by the Kikuyu Central Association (a political association), to agitate for the socio-political interests of Kenyans. This first press was born out of political rather than economic necessity. 'Put differently, the pioneers of the press in Kenya were politicians rather than businessmen or media barons (Makali, 2003:53) as is the case today.

Like in other countries in Africa, the nationalist press in Kenya played a crucial role in the struggle against colonialism in Kenya. The *Nation* newspaper, the first media to be owned by the NMG started in 1960 was for instance started 'to champion the interests of the Black African majority and the paper proclaimed to stay true to the people in the run up to independence from colonial rule in 1963' (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988:28). At independence most of the major indigenous print media such as (*Muigwithania*- arbitrator, *Tangazo*- announcement and *Ramogi*- unity) founded by individuals mainly from the major ethnic communities in Kenya (Kikuyus, Luos and Kambas) had collapsed leaving only two mainstream newspapers: *The Nation* and the *East African Standard* (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988:29). The *East African*

Standard was largely a pro-white settler newspaper and therefore the *Nation*, which was formed in 1959 ‘was hailed to be the first major newspaper company to identify editorially with the aspirations and interests of the Kenyan people’ (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988:28).

The *Nation* grew rapidly to overtake the *Standard* (up to date) because it was largely riding on the spirit of ‘nationalism’ unlike the *Standard*, which was largely regarded as advancing foreign interests (Makali, 2003). The collapse of the ethnic based dailies can therefore be attributed to the rise of the ‘nationalist’ newspaper- the *Nation*, which was regarded as the ‘unifying vehicle’ in readiness for independence. Up to date, the *Nation’s* ethnic affiliation is different from that of the *Standard*. The *Nation* is largely regarded as being ethnically/politically affiliated to the ethnic communities from which most present government sympathizers come from led by the Kikuyu ethnic community whereas the *Standard* is largely regarded as being ethnically/politically affiliated to the members of the ethnic communities that are opposed to the government of the day led by the Luo ethnic community.

From a historical perspective, ethnicised politics can be traced from Kenya’s colonial past. Ethnicity significantly informed the formation of the first national political parties in Kenya which led to the country’s independence in 1963. Leaders from the dominant ethnic groups, the Kikuyus and the Luos (these still are the biggest and ‘worst’ political adversaries) formed the first national political party, Kenya African National Union (KANU) in 1960 (Oloo, 2010). The culture of ethnicised politics has therefore been present in Kenya right from independence through to multipartyism in the 1990s up until now.

In the 2007 general elections and the consequent post election violence, journalists and the media in general were partly blamed for fuelling ethnic animosity through taking explicit political stands influenced by the highly ethnicized political environment in Kenya. This study therefore sought to find out from the interview responses the extent to which this ‘ethnic affiliation’ of the NMG influences journalists as they make their ethical decisions. The researcher was also interested in finding out if journalists are influenced by their own ‘ethnic bias’ which may be different from the overall ‘NMG ethnic bias’ especially during general elections.

When Kenya gained its independence in 1963, both mainstream print and electronic media were under foreign ownership. The two main daily newspapers (*The Daily Nation* owned by the NMG and the *East African Standard* by Baraza limited) both published in English were foreign owned. The NMG also owned *Taifa Leo* (Kiswahili word meaning ‘The Nation Today’), which was published in Kiswahili. There were also four weeklies: *Sunday Nation*, the *Sunday Standard*, *Taifa Jumapili* and the *Weekly Review*. There was one TV and radio station under the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) which was owned by a consortium of British and American companies (Makali, 2003). The Aga Khan and Lonrho Ltd owned the *Nation* and *Standard* newspapers respectively (Ali, 2009). Aga Khan is still the main shareholder of the Nation Media Group, which still publishes the *Daily Nation* and *Taifa Leo* newspapers.

The new government saw this foreign ownership of the media as a threat to the nation’s integrity and unity. The ruling class believed that the foreign owned media propagated foreign ideologies incompatible with the country’s

development agenda (Ogola, 2011; Makali, 2003). The new government defined and hinged the role of the media in the newly independent Kenya more on the ideals of unity and national development than on freedom. Although the *Nation* was not particularly against cooperating with the government in promoting this ‘nation building project’, its support was more an attempt by the newspaper’s owner, the Aga Khan, to protect his business interests as well as those of the Ismail community in Kenya (Winsbury, 2000:252).

The *Standard*, which was largely regarded as the voice of the white settler community was at first hostile to the government’s ideology of promoting national development, to which the media were to play a key role, but it later started to support the government’s agenda in order to win the government’s goodwill (Ogola, 2011:81). As part of the ‘nationalization’ process, new broadcast programmes were introduced to promote African identity and cultural unity premised on Kenya’s music, folklore and tales, which were transmitted in Kiswahili (the national language). There was to be more focus on development journalism and the media were expected to help the new government in fighting core challenges mainly: poverty, ignorance and disease (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988; Makali, 2003; Ali 2009).

The *Nation* and the *Standard* directly and indirectly participated in this ‘nationalization’ process especially through being deliberately mild in their criticism of the government thereby becoming almost by default, an informal publicity arm of the state (Ogola, 2011:82). This emphasis on nation building was based on the dominant development communication paradigm prevalent in most African states in the 1960s through the 1970s; that media

influence could be a magic multiplier for development through the dissemination of new development knowledge as advanced by development communication theorists such as Schramm (1964), Lerner (1958), and Rogers (1967). According to this approach, the media's enormous reach would be used to spread information that could be adopted to achieve development and the state would play an altruistic role of controlling the media for use in national priorities (Mwangi, 2010).

To achieve the development agenda, the government therefore moved to take control and ownership of the electronic media (KBC), but left the print media (*Daily Nation* and *East African Standard*) in private hands. The political elite manipulated the private press especially through the denial of import licenses for raw materials like news print and printing materials as well as sending signals to advertisers who advertised in newspapers critical of the government, that they risked losing their businesses (Ali, 2010; Ogola, 2011). This led to self-censorship where journalists kept off some stories if they sensed that they would attract government wrath (Oriare 2008). The performance of private media in Kenya before liberalization in the 1990s was therefore characterized by self-censorship and constrained by the ideology of development journalism (Mwangi, 2010; Odhiambo, 2002; Tettey, 2001).

2.3 Structural Factors Shaping Media Performance in the Post Liberalization era (1990- 2010)

The pattern of media self censorship in fear of government wrath was not unique to Kenya, but was common in most newly independent countries in Africa as different regimes moved to silence any dissenting voices and criticism (Hachten, 1993; Mwangi, 2010). As Hachten (1993) observes, under such a climate of government control, African media failed to grow and prosper because African governments failed to provide and promote the political and economic climate which would lead to independent, critical and economically viable media. In Kenya, during the pre liberalization era, the government tightly controlled the media and this led to a stunted growth in the media sector despite relative growth in other economic and political sectors (Ali, 2009:50).

The situation was the same in most African states. In Ghana, for instance, in 1989, the government revoked the registration of all newspapers and magazines and required them to apply afresh for licenses, complete with the details of publishers' and editors' names, addresses and sources of funding, all in an attempt to consolidate power by controlling the press (Mwangi, 2010:3). In Zambia, President Kaunda in his *Watershed Speech* in 1975 outlined what became the unwritten self-censorship policy in Zambia until the rise of multi- party politics in the 1990s (Phiri, 2010:190).

In his speech, Kaunda was categorical that,

Any pressman or woman who does not see the role of the mass media worker as being what I have just defined (promoting 'national unity',

which meant serving the interests of Kaunda's ruling party) should be honorable enough to resign, for if he or she does not, then the United National Independent Party (UNIP) will help ease him or her out of the job (Phiri, 2010:186).

In Uganda, when journalists asked visiting President of Zambia Kenneth Kaunda questions that the ruling government of President Museveni considered embarrassing, the Ugandan President hit back by having the journalists arrested and charged with defaming a foreign dignitary (Mwangi, 2010:7). In Cameroon, when president Paul Biya came under severe criticism from the press he drew up a 'hit list' in 1992 which included Pius Njawe, one of Cameroon's top journalist (Mwangi, 2010:6-7). All this intimidation was meant to keep the journalists at check- they had to self censor themselves or face the wrath of the authoritarian African governments at the time.

At the beginning of 1990s, many African states, Kenya included started a process of democratisation as the winds of political change began to blow across the African continent (Ansah, 1991; Duplat, 2003; Odhiambo, 2002; Mwangi, 2010; Tettey, 2001). In 1991, media practitioners from across Africa met in Windhoek, Namibia, to discuss the changes toward democracy. They adopted what became known as the Windhoek Declaration (Duplat, 2003), which supported an independent and pluralistic press in African countries. It stated that consistent with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the fostering of an independent, pluralistic press in Africa was essential to the development of democracy and economic development on the continent (Duplat, 2003; Mwangi, 2010).

The democratization process proceeded alongside the liberalization of media. In most African states, there was a transition from a system of media owned by the government to the flourishing of private media (Duplat, 2003). Kenya was not an exception. In 1991, the clamor for multiparty politics by the private media and the civil society in Kenya finally bore fruit and Kenya officially became a multiparty democracy. With this came the liberalization of airwaves, and the media sector freed from the authoritarian control by the government, pluralized, diversified and became extremely dynamic as compared to the previous era (Ali, 2009). Between 1990 and 2011, there has been immense growth in both the print and electronic media in Kenya (AMDI Report, 2006; Oriare, 2008; 2010; Ali 2009). There are over 17 TV stations, over 63 radio stations, 13 dailies and many weeklies (CCK, 2008; Oriare, 2010; Ali, 2010) all of which are privately owned except the public broadcaster (KBC).

Although direct government intervention through the liberalization of the sector led to this development, media globalization contributed to a large extent, to the micro and macro changes that took place in the Kenyan media sector during that time (Ali, 2010:17). Globally, the media scene had started to experience rapid changes from the early 1980s thereby influencing the media in Africa generally and Kenya in particular (Ali, 2009; 2010; Tettey, 2001; Mwangi, 2010). The new era of political pluralism, free market economics and media liberalization meant that authoritarian control of the media for political means gave way to the twin processes of democratization and marketization (Sparks, 2009) which largely influenced the nature and transformation of the media in emerging democracies like Kenya.

There have however been questions in the ‘transitology’⁶ debates as to whether the change from authoritarian political structures to democratic structures coupled with the marketization of the media has translated to truly democratic media especially in emerging democracies. In Kenya, these twin processes of political democratization and increased marketization of the media within a globalized context had mixed gains. On the one hand, it led to the liberalization, deregulation, privatization and diversification of the mass media, which previously had been under tight government control (Ali, 2009; 2010). This translated to great gains in the democratization process in Kenya in regard to media freedom and enhanced citizen participation in the governance process. The government could no longer directly interfere in the running of the media and unlike in the pre- liberalization era, it could not be said to be a threat to the proper functioning of the media. This has facilitated the immense growth witnessed in the media sector in Kenya since the 1990s.

On the other hand, the coupling of political democratization with increased marketization of media within a globalized context also created tensions between the drive to commercialize media and the need to include previously marginalized groups into the new democratic sphere (Sparks, 2009; Thussu, 2005). The liberalization and privatization of the media in Kenya led to corporatisation of the mass media (Ali, 2010). Corporate interests influenced editorial decisions taken in newsrooms often in a negative manner leading to often biased, impartial, distorted and less

⁶ Transitology is a paradigm in political science that studies and explains political change from dictatorial societies to democratic societies. It is derived from the word ‘transition’ - the interval between one political regime and another (Sparks, 2009; 2008).

objective news (Nyabuga, 2007). This corporate control is exercised either through the corporate sponsorship of news and programmes or advertising revenue. For instance, Kenya Commercial Bank has been the official sponsor of a weekly Programme, *Business Weekly* on Kenya Television Network (KTN), since its inception in 1996. The programme analyzes national, regional and international business and economic news. This gives the sponsor a leeway to influence the content of the business news presented and the end result is highly censored news by the various corporate interests (Ali, 2009: 190).

When Nation Television (NTV), a media of the NMG was established in 1999, it started a similar weekly business programme (NTV Business Journal), which is now called ‘Money Matters’ sponsored by an international corporate bank, CFC Stanbic bank, (Ali, 2009:190). This in a way gives the corporate sponsor an upper hand to promote their and other related corporate interests.

Questions have therefore been raised in the Kenyan context (Nyabuga, 2007; Ali, 2010; Oriare, 2010) if the market led transition that took place in Kenya in the early 1990s after political and economic liberalization has translated into truly democratic media in Kenya today. This study sought to answer some of those questions through the interview responses on whether journalists and the media in Kenya today enjoy freedom from market pressures in an attempt to establish the extent to which commercialization and marketization has hindered the prosperity of truly democratic media in Kenya.

Some scholars (Sparks, 2008; 2009; Thussu, 2005) are more critical of market- led political transitions, which have led to the commercialization and marketization of the media. For instance, Sparks (2009) argues that these market- led political transitions have led to ‘elite continuity’ rather than genuine political and media transformation. The former bureaucratic ruling class attempts to restructure itself as the owners of private capital (Sparks, 2008; 2009). For Sparks, political and economic power as well as the ownership of the press in most transitional societies has therefore been transferred from authoritarian control to a new governing elite and this has circumscribed the nature and extent of media transformation in these societies. This study sought to establish from the interview responses the extent to which Sparks’ observations apply to the Kenyan case.

Corporate sponsors are large business conglomerates, they have numerous interests to protect and promote. Their influence may not therefore be confined to the sponsored programmes, but they may take advantage of their privileged position in the particular media, through their Public Relations office to push for advertorial news to boost their image in the public eye (Nyabuga, 2007). Multinational corporations who are big advertisers have also been accused (Ali, 2010; Ogong’a & White, 2008; Makokha, 2010) of holding media at ransom, by threatening to withdraw advertising revenue incase of unfavorable coverage and journalists who insisted on writing negative stories about these big advertisers were sacked.

A leading mobile phone provider (Safaricom) and a major advertiser in Kenya threatened to withdraw its adverts from the NMG after it published stories about its mobile network congestion, which was causing

inconveniences to mobile subscribers (Ogonga & White, 2008). The NMG obliged not to cover the negative story to save the advertising revenue. Commercial media like the NMG seem to have moved towards market driven journalism (Nyabuga, 2007). Therefore, while government censorship drastically reduced in the post liberalized media environment in Kenya, market censorship through corporate influence has been observed (Ogola, 2011; Ali, 2010; Makokha, 2010) to be on a sharp increase. This study therefore examines how in the new liberalized, privatized and de-regulated media environment, journalists at the NMG have had to respond to the new realities of the corporate newsroom.

Liberalization and privatization of the mass media in Kenya also led to the corporate ownership and control of the mass media in Kenya. Corporate ownership influenced the direction the editorial department took and ultimately the editorial policy that the media houses embraced. In most cases, media owners directly interfered with editorial policies and practices in a bid to protect their interests (Ali, 2009; 2010; Nyabuga, 2007). Like any other corporate entity, the NMG can arguably be said to focus on the pursuit of profits to protect owners' interests. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with the pursuit of profits *per se*, it is not a value neutral exercise. The pursuit of profits especially in the media industry, 'can have the effect-intended or not, of constraining the range of ideas and voices routinely found in the media...As a result, the views that dominate in the corporate media tend to be those that are compatible with a corporate worldview' (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006: 177-178).

Being exclusively in the hands of private entrepreneurs, the NMG fully depends on advertising revenue, which it fiercely competes for from the corporate sector. Although the official company policy of the NMG, in regard to editorial content vs. advertising content should be in the ratio of 60:40, there have been concerns (Nyabuga, 2007; Oriare, 2008; Makokha, 2010; Ali, 2009) that big advertisers wield immense power over journalists' agency to abide by this official position. As Otuoma (2000) observes,

more threatening to the journalists' exercise of press freedom are the major advertisers who virtually held some newspapers to ransom, given that most of them owe their survival to advertisers. There are some companies and parastatals whose negative stories cannot appear in particular newspapers regardless of the seriousness of the expose' (Otuoma, 2000: xiv).

Several major advertisers have been accused of threatening journalists' freedom and responsibility in Kenya. One such case of advertiser influence as presented by Ali (2009) is where the *Daily Nation* newspapers team found out that Dasani mineral water, packed by a leading multinational company Coca Cola in supermarkets in Nairobi and other major cities in Kenya contained some harmful traces of Lead that posed significant health risks to people's lives (Ali, 2009:183). Though the media house had both a moral and professional obligation to publish such a story, it did not do so because the multinational company prevailed upon the advertising department by threatening to withdraw advertising not just from the newspaper, but from all Nation Media outlets (Ali, 2009:183). The advertising department of the *Daily Nation* in turn impressed upon the editorial department about the

potential loss in advertising revenue; a view that the top management shared and the editorial department had no choice but to make sure that the story is not passed on to the public.

In the agricultural industry, chemical poisoning was discovered after some employees of a flower exporting firm fell ill and millions of aquatic life was lost in one of the leading fresh water lakes in Kenya, Lake Naivasha. Even after intense lobbying from human rights groups and government intervention, mainstream media houses, including the NMG, did not publish the story because of pressure from the multinational company concerned (Examples as cited in Ali, 2009:183- 184).

Safaricom, the leading mobile telephone provider and one of the biggest advertisers across all media in Kenya also threatened to withdraw its 7 million shillings weekly advertising revenue from the Royal Media Services (the media company with the most radio stations in Kenya) after it published a ‘negative’ story about the firm in public interest. Not ready to loose such a large amount of advertising revenue, the top management led by the owner S.K. Macharia forced the editor, Mwenda Njoka to ‘apologize’ to the firm in the same paper he had published the allegedly ‘negative’ story (Expression Today, 1999: 32-34).

Such interference from advertisers has in effect meant a shift in editorial policy due to the fierce competition in the market. Advertising is now the main driving force with most media owners aiming at delivering audiences to advertisers (Makokha, 2010; Nyabuga, 2007; Mutere, 2005). The increased media channels have provided advertisers with options and they

can easily withdraw or threaten to withdraw advertising revenue from one media and invest it in a friendlier media. Advertisers are able to target specific audiences who have the buying power, age groups and other segments of the population with the increased audience segmentation.

Advertisers therefore can arguably be said to be one of the main beneficiaries of the liberalized media market in Kenya because,

it allows them more choice to spread their shillings worth, depending on their target audience...today it has become more important for advertisers to target their communication more cost effectively to their specific market segment dictated by age, reach, and social income than has ever been the case before (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Information and Communication, 2004:90).

Advertisers can therefore be said to have substantial influence over what is and is not emphasized in the commercial media in Kenya although mostly this pressure is fairly subtle and indirect (Ali, 2010). This study therefore sought to find out the extent to which journalists experience threats posed by advertisers to their freedom and responsibility at the NMG in Kenya.

It has also been observed that when these

big corporations perceive political competition as likely to result in loss of business advantage, reduction in profit or policy change that does not favor them; they can exercise their influence to whip media into supporting or undermining political candidates especially during general elections (Makokha, 2010: 286).

Private business owners in Kenya have often been accused of colluding with the media either directly or indirectly to ensure that their preferred political candidate sails through (Makokha, 2010; Mutere, 2005; Oriare, 2008). This direct or indirect influence from corporations seems to be increasingly changing the way journalists make their professional decisions. According to the code of conduct for journalists in Kenya and the editorial policy guidelines of the NMG, good journalistic practice should be guided by the principles of truth, objectivity and impartiality. But with the advent of market- driven journalism, journalistic judgement is slowly being replaced by market judgement (McManus, 1994).

The forces of corporatisation can therefore be said to have profoundly affected and influenced the Kenyan media and the NMG in particular in the post liberalization era both positively and negatively. On the one hand, the media have pluralized though this has not necessary translated to diversity of viewpoints mainly due to cross media ownership. On the other, private media owners are increasingly pursuing profits and increasingly focusing on selling audiences to advertisers. It is only the stories that bring in or are likely to bring in the money that are fronted and those that are not 'client friendly' do not see the light of the day (Nyabuga, 2007).

Liberalization has also led to the growth of numerous media organizations in Kenya. This has translated to more avenues for the citizens to air out their ideas. But the liberalized media environment has also facilitated the growth of media conglomerates like the NMG, whose growth steadily rose from one newspaper in 1990 to the largest media house in East and Central Africa in just over two decades (Ali, 2010). This study attempted to establish from the

interview responses, if media conglomeration at the NMG has resulted to more economic and political pressures on the individual journalists to compromise their ethics to promote the myriad business interests affiliated to the Group.

Kenya has experienced a rapid development of the media since the 1990s, which has resulted in structural changes in media organizations (Ogola, 2011; Odhiambo, 2002; Mwangi, 2010). These changes have in turn influenced the ways in which journalists make their professional decisions.

As Odhiambo (2002) notes,

there has been a recursive relationship between the mass media and the political process, with the media influencing the pace of political change and political liberalization, in turn, facilitating media growth, pluralism and media freedom. Kenya has made great efforts to liberalise the mass media sector in tandem with the prevailing spirit of pluralistic politics since the 1990s (Odhiambo, 2002:295).

The ‘independent’ media in Kenya were at the fore front of transforming Kenya from a one party state to multiparty democracy (Ogola, 2011). Over the last two decades, these increasingly assertive and dynamic media have played a key role in mediating the relationships between the citizens and the state hence shaping the democratic dispensation in the country (BBC World Trust Service, 2008:3). It has however been observed (Makokha, 2010; Mwangi, 2010; Oriare, 2010) that although these ‘independent’ media did (and still do) play a pivotal role in shaping Kenya’s democracy, commercial and political constraints have in a way undermined journalistic independence

and integrity (BBC World Trust Service, 2008:2). This study therefore sought to find out from the interview responses, how journalists experience commercial pressures on their ethical decisions due to the rapid marketization of the NMG since the 1990s.

2.4 Liberalization, Media ownership and Control at the Nation Media Group (NMG)

2.4.0 History of the Nation Media Group

The Nation Media Group (NMG) was founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, the leader of Ismail Muslim community, in 1959 with a single newspaper, *Taifa* (Kiswahili word for 'Nation') under East African Newspapers, which was later, changed to Nation Newspapers Limited and now NMG. The Group has since grown to be the largest 'Independent' media house in East and Central Africa. The NMG was listed in the Nairobi Stock Exchange in the 1970s and it has over 7,500 shareholders (2010 NMG Sustainability Report; Loughran, 2010).

According to the 2011 ranking of African companies by the business magazine *Africa Business* (*Daily Nation*, Tuesday April ,19, 2011), NMG was ranked as the biggest media firm in Africa outside South Africa with a market value of \$324 million and a 52.54 per cent dollar returns. The Group recently announced a pretax profit of Ksh. 2.1billion an equivalent of about \$2.5 million. The Group operates a number of media and non- media businesses spread over the East African region with its core business being publication of newspapers and magazines, broadcasting as well as courier and third party printing. The main shareholder the Aga Khan also has

business interests in the education, health, hospitality, insurance and banking industry across the East African region (*NMG Sustainability Report, 2010*).

The Aga Khan started *Taifa* the first Kiswahili daily in 1959, to champion the interests of the Black African majority and the paper proclaimed ‘to stay true to the people’ in the run- up to independence from colonial rule in 1963. But being under foreign ownership, the paper lacked a well-defined concept of what was African about it (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988). ‘The establishment of *Taifa* was part of the process of co-opting nationalist fervor and facilitating independence without any change in the economic and social structure. In essence, foreign interests maintained their control of the press including that of *Taifa* (Makali, 2003:71).

The establishment of *Taifa* did however mark the start of a new era for the Press in Kenya. The only competitor to the newly launched *Taifa* was *The Standard* newspaper, which was also foreign owned. The name *Taifa* was later changed to *Daily Nation*, which was later to become the flagship product of the group and had its first publication about one year later in 1960 (Lougharn, 2010). Since its establishment, the *Nation* grew steadily and overtook its main competitor, *The Standard*, the oldest newspaper in Kenya established in 1902. The *Nation* started with a circulation of 15,000 in 1960 and rose up to 18,000 in 1968. From 1968, the paper overtook *The Standard’s* circulation of an estimated 34,000 and by 1970 its circulation stood at 47,000 (Odero, 2000; *The Journey of the Nation: 1960- 1969*). Today the paper has the highest circulation of approximately 200,000 daily claiming 75% share of total daily newspaper sales in Kenya (AMDI report, 2006; *NMG Sustainability Report 2010*).

When Kenya gained independence in 1963, freedom of expression and by implication freedom of the media was guaranteed in the constitution. The only setback was that the new government adopted in entirety the repressive media laws that had been used by the colonial government to limit freedom of the press in pre- independent Kenya (Makali, 2003). Kenya became a *de facto* one party state in 1964 and the political leadership was strictly against criticism and dissent either from the opposition or the press. This forced the mainstream Press (*Nation* and *Standard*) in the newly independent Kenya to toe the line and become a ‘medium of government communication to, rather than with the people’ (Ogola, 2011:81).

For instance, when Kenya was officially declared a one party state under the ruling party KANU in 1964, the then editor- in- chief of the *Nation* referred the merger of the ruling party KANU and the opposition party Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) as ‘a positive step towards creating an even bigger umbrella under which greater diversity of views thrived’ (Makali, 2003:73). This was a curious remark coming from an editor of an ‘independent’ newspaper, but it was a pointer to the fact that the operation of the two leading dailies in Kenya after independence owed their survival to supporting the government rather than criticizing its conduct and policies (Ali, 2009). Media performance at the time was therefore influenced by the authoritarian regime of the day.

The period between 1963 and 1989 (Pre- liberalization era) was marked by a harsh political environment that did not encourage growth and investment for the press in Kenya. Media houses critical of the regime were often

threatened with closure and journalists who were deemed to be anti-establishment were detained without trial or threatened with harsh consequences (Loughran, 2010; Makali, 2003). For instance, an editor of the Nation- owned *Taifa* series was laid off in 1969 when he allowed the publication of a story that reported the wanton shooting of innocent people during President Kenyatta's visit to Kisumu, the home of the main opposition leader then, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988:28).

The Nation Media Group's attempts to venture into broadcasting and to expand its national reach beyond the capital city, Nairobi, were consistently thwarted by the government, which viewed it with suspicion because of its critical analysis of the political situation at the time (*The Journey of the Nation: 1970-1979*). Such was the case for the NMG until 1990 when Kenya like the rest of African countries experienced the democratic wind of change, which brought with it pressure on African governments to liberalize media markets as a measure to expand freedom of expression and government accountability to the people.

As the founding father of the Group, the Aga Khan observed in his opening speech of the Pan- Africa media conference organized by NMG in commemoration of the Group's 50 year anniversary in 2010, in Nairobi, 'the NMG's path has been closely entwined with the history of Kenya, East Africa, and the entire continent during a period filled with momentous developments' (2010 NMG Sustainability Report).

2.5 Liberalization and Media Concentration at the Nation Media Group

Private commercial media like the NMG are not only cultural and political entities but also for-profit businesses. From a critical perspective, it can therefore be arguably observed that like all other businesses operating in a capitalist market, the operations of such media as cultural and public institutions is largely influenced by market issues such as profitability, operating cost, risk control and evolving ownership patterns (Golding & Murdock, 1995; Schiller, 1995, Mosco, 1996). 'Media products are merchandise, and as such, their value and capacity to yield a profit depends on the laws of the market- not on public interest, democratic value, or the satisfaction of needs' (Pedro, 2011:1875). This in effect means that although media industries are ideally regarded as cultural and political entities that play a critical role in the promotion of democracy, they are also economic entities.

From a political economy perspective, the private ownership of the media is therefore a critical factor in explaining media production. Unlike the liberal-pluralist approach, which regards private ownership of the media as translating to media independence, critical political economy holds that private ownership largely integrates the private media into the structures and logic of market power (Pedro, 2011; Mosco, 1996). To understand media production and performance, one therefore has to take into account 'the economic constraints and incentives under which they operate, and of the basic economic characteristics of the products in which they deal' (Napoli,

2009:135). This study therefore critically examines how the private ownership of the NMG media conglomerate integrates the NMG into the structures and logic of market power and how this integration influences the ethical decisions of journalists.

Since the advent of multi party politics and the liberalization of airwaves in Kenya in 1990, there have been tremendous changes in media systems in Kenya. The most obvious change in the media industry's structure has been the growth of major media companies. The changes in government policy to pave the way for liberalization created a new business environment for media industries and media workers (King'ara, 2010; Oriare, 2010; Ogola, 2011). The government through repealing authoritarian clauses in the constitution and replacing them with more neo-liberal ones opened up the media sector for local and international investors.

These changes that were taking place in the media sector in Kenya in the early 1990s were in response to 'the emerging local, regional and global realities brought about by both internal and external factors; internal being socio-political and economic undercurrents and external being the globalizing media' (Ali, 2009:124). Some scholars (Rantanen, 2005; Castells, 1996; Sparks, 2007) have argued that media and communications have been at the center of the changes that drive globalization. Media are generally seen to play a major role in accelerating the processes of social change and therefore developments in communications media have an important role in all of the processes of globalization.

Before the 1990s, media systems had been primarily national, but a global commercial media market emerged at the dawn of the twenty- first century. The rise of this global commercial media system was in turn closely linked to the rise of a significantly more integrated ‘neoliberal⁵’ global capitalist economic system (McChesney, 1999:78). The deregulation and liberalization of the broadcasting and telecommunications sector and its rapid privatization in the 1990s partly as a result of the free market regimes set up under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), contributed to the growth of a global market for media products (Thussu, 2005:52). The policies of deregulation, liberalization and privatization transformed media landscape world wide. These policies have facilitated a corresponding corporatization of most media platforms. Today, most media operate, by and large, according to business logic (Arsenault & Castells, 2008:708).

As deregulation took root in the U.S and Europe in the 1980s, other countries followed the lead, moving away from public and government control of media towards commercialization and marketization as the neoliberal ideology of free market took over (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:108). In Western Europe for instance, significant changes affecting broadcasting policies took place in the mid- 1980s, whereas in Central and Eastern Europe significant changes took place after the collapse of the Communist system (Jakubowicz & Sukosd, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2002).

⁵ When applied to the market, neoliberalism denotes the policies that maximize the role of the market and profit- maximization and advocates for a minimum role of non-market institutions to regulate the market. The rapid growth of media corporations and conglomerates can therefore be attributed to the deregulation of the media market under neoliberalism (McChesney, 1999).

In West Germany, a new commercial sector was established after a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1986 and in Australia, the 1980s and 1990s can be regarded as the period in which commercialization in the media sector intensified with calls for a ban on cross media ownership rules and the weakening of the public service broadcaster (Papandrea, 2006; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). This marketization and commercialization in the media industry generally helped create a situation in which the media industries became an increasingly important sector for business investment, what Castells (1996:77-78) calls 'information capitalism in a 'networked globe'. In most cases, especially in Africa, these changes were democratizing and pluralizing, ensuring an increasingly vibrant and dynamic private media sector compared to the previous authoritarian era. The public service media in most of these countries, for example Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) in Kenya, were however negatively impacted by liberalization. KBC, which had for a long time been regarded as the 'Voice of Kenya' has slowly been overshadowed by the commercial media like the NMG.

The media systems in Kenya before 1990 were characterized by a wide-ranging system of self-censorship in the private press overseen by KANU's one party rule and a monopoly of state broadcasting (Makali, 2003; Ali, 2009; Oriare, 2010). Therefore the clamor for the liberalization of the mass media in Kenya from the media fraternity and civil society organizations (Ogola, 2011; Odhiambo, 2002; Makali, 2003) in the 1990s was hinged on breaking this monopoly of the state owned broadcaster, KBC and to expand media freedom. However, the opening up of the media market led to the commercialization and marketization of the media, seemingly transferring

the monopoly from the government to a few corporate entities in the market (Ali, 2010:22).

A few corporate organizations and wealthy individuals own most of the robust media houses in Kenya and there is extensive cross media ownership in the market (Oriare, 2010:64). While government censorship of the media reduced in the post- 1990- era, market censorship through corporate influence seems to be on the rise, with most mainstream media like the NMG focusing on vertical and horizontal integration, where corporate interests seem to have taken control. There has been an increasing tendency to corporate monopolies through horizontal integration mainly through cross media ownership. Cross media ownership is the common ownership of more than one mass medium within the same media market for instance the common ownership of newspapers, radio, TV and cable systems (Howard, 2006). The NMG has cross media ownership in the three East African countries: Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It can arguably be observed that the bigger the media, the higher the tendency to media concentration (Oriare, 2010).

As the leading media companies in Kenya (The NMG, The Standard Group and the Royal Media Services) continue to grow, integrate and pursue global strategies, media ownership continues to be concentrated in the hands of a few media conglomerates. Although these three leading media houses in Kenya have cross media ownership, the NMG is the perfect example of a media conglomerate that has extensive cross media ownership in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

Between 1990 and 2011, the NMG has grown from two dailies (*The Daily Nation*, published in English plus the weekend editions, *Saturday Nation* and *Sunday Nation* and *Taifa Leo* published in Kiswahili) to be the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa controlling a significant share in print, broadcast and online media as well as other non media business interests like *N-Soko* which specializes on selling advertising space and Nation courier services. The Group owns the leading newspapers in the three East African countries (*The Daily Nation* in Kenya, *The Daily Monitor* in Uganda and *The Citizen* in Tanzania) as well as leading TV and radio stations and magazines in East Africa. The main divisions of the group include: Nation marketing and Publications Ltd, Nation Broadcasting division, Mwananchi Communications in Tanzania, Nation TV Uganda, Uganda Monitor publications, Africa Broadcasting Uganda limited, Nation holding Tanzania Ltd, N-Soko, Nation Carriers division among others (NMG Sustainability Report, 2010). The Group also publishes some of the most popular magazines in Kenya among them *True Love*, *Drum*, *Adam*, and *Twende* under the banner East African Magazines.

There have been concerns from both government and non-government quarters about the possible negative impact of this horizontal concentration of the media in Kenya especially in regard to diversity of content, corporate censorship to protect corporate interests and the risk of more focus on sensationalism and entertainment to create a 'buying mood' in the audience at the expense of serious debate on critical issues in the society (Nyabuga, 2007; Oriare, 2010; AMDI report, 2006; Ali, 2010; Makokha, 2010).

But there have also been concerted efforts from the media fraternity, especially through the Media Owners Association (MOA) to block any attempt to upset the status quo. MOA is a powerful networking group that brings together key media houses in Kenya such as the NMG, the Standard Group, Royal media Services and Radio Africa Group among others. MOA also has a great influence over the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), the official media regulatory body in Kenya. There have been concerns that due to its composition, the MCK does not 'have the teeth to bite'.

According to Williams (2003:78), generally, the trend to the concentration of media ownership dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. However, cross media ownership, the integration of media companies and the internationalization of ownership have widened and deepened media concentration globally in the twenty first century (Williams, 2003: 80). Concentration of media ownership either vertically or horizontally means that fewer corporations own the media in a particular market.

The economic factors behind media concentration are clear: owners perceive such arrangements as both efficient and profitable (McManus, 1994; Golding & Murdock, 1991;1995; Mosco, 1996). Media concentration leads to synergy⁶ of the different media units under the same owner, which is an effective strategy to cut cost and reduce risk. In the world of big media business, the term 'synergy' is often used to refer to a cooperation strategy between different parts of the same organization in order to maximize profits

⁶ Synergy can be defined as the situation where different components of a company work together to produce benefits that would otherwise be impossible for a single, separately owned unit of the company (Crotaeu & Hoynes, 2003; 2006). It is cooperation between and among divisions, creating opportunities by working together that would have been impossible working apart (Dmitri, 2002:456).

and/ or reduce costs to gain competitive advantage (Botma & Wasserman, 2008:6).

From a political economy of the media approach, the term has been used mainly to criticize the commercialization and commodification of the media (Mosco, 1996; Golding & Murdock, 1991; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). The adoption of ‘synergy’ as a form of ‘strategic partnership’ between big media and large corporations has also been largely blamed for the crumbling of the traditional “church- state” wall between the editorial division and business department (Dmitri, 2002; Golding & Murdock, 1991; 2004; Jackson, 2009).

This study therefore adopts the meaning of ‘synergy’ suggested by Botma & Wasserman (2008) which encompasses the strategic partnerships between different organizations and powerful groups for instance large media companies and advertisers, promoters and readers. Botma & Wasserman (2008), observe that such a broad definition makes synergy an appropriate analytical tool for approaching wider media tendencies such as commodification and diversification (Botma & Wasserman, 2008:7), which are part of the key aspects to be investigated in this study.

The NMG’s venture into new markets in the greater East African region can be regarded as a diversification strategy to reduce economic risk exposure in the Kenyan market. In seeking to ensure continued profits, the Group has tried to control the environment in which it operates through continued horizontal integration to reduce uncertainty and minimize expensive competition. Synergy can be said to generate revenue consistencies for the Group while reducing economic risk exposure and it can take the form of

developing and packaging a single concept for various media for instance a news item or cross promotion in the case of advertising of a single concept through the various media (Dmitri, 2002). Cultural production in such cases is strongly influenced by such commercial strategies that exploit the overlaps between the company's different media interests (Golding & Murdock, 2000:79).

Such a business strategy makes economic sense for the particular media because one news item can be replicated across the various media. This also gives the particular media an edge in regard to potential advertisers because they will be able to reach a large number of audiences in the various media under the same owner. NMG can therefore be said to have maximized synergy by taking advantage of multiple media holdings to lure advertisers and cut news production cost. This study therefore also seeks to establish how synergy as a business strategy to cut production cost at the NMG has influenced the ways in which journalists experience pressure on their day-to-day professional decisions.

The logic of market accumulation and synergy is not unique to media industries; all capitalist enterprises exhibit innately dynamic and expansionist tendencies (Curtin, 2009:112). But in the context of media, implicit in this logic of accumulation is the tendency of a particular media which is initially founded with the aim of serving and 'staying true to the people' like NMG, to repackage itself and reshape its terrain of operations in an attempt to survive competition and increase profitability like it has done through vertical and horizontal integration. Since synergy brings a new and seemingly stronger focus on commercial considerations and self-interest into

the newsroom, it raises professional, ethical and ideological questions about the role of the media in a changing society (Botma & Wasserman, 2008:6) some of which will be addressed in this study.

There are various studies that have explored the normative implications of market driven journalism. Singer (2006) in her study of journalists' perception of normative pressures in the new converged newsroom environment found that the biggest challenge of convergence to the norm of editorial independence came from the excessive use of one partnered medium's news content especially using TV news stories to urge viewers to buy next day's newspaper 'for more details' (Singer, 2006:50). Such cross promotion is also common at the NMG where during prime time news, the presenters at NTV give a 'sneak preview' of what to expect in their 'sister publication'. Botma & Wasserman (2008) in their study of how synergy can be used to balance market and political interests in *Die Burger*, a South African daily, also observed that the promotion and coverage of synergy projects in the form of advertisements, promotions and editorial content blurred the lines between commercial interests and journalism (Botma & Wasserman, 2008:17).

In his study, *Synergy Bias: Conglomerates and Promotion in the News*, Dmitri (2002) established that there was evidence of systematic synergy bias in large media conglomerates such as Disney, News Corp and Time-Warner, which were some of his focus of study (Dmitri, 2002:458). Corporate media ownership has long been criticized on public interest grounds (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003; 2006; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002; Bagdikian, 2000; McChesney, 1999; 2002; McManus, 1992). McManus

(1992; 1997) argued that in market driven journalism, there is an inherent conflict between the logics of ‘maximizing returns’ for the shareholders and ‘maximizing public understanding’.

In the new commercialized news environment, McManus (1997) observes that journalistic ethics relies less on codes and more on mechanisms for dealing with ‘the growing influences of forces outside the newsroom such as the executives of corporations that own news media, the interests of corporate ‘siblings’ and the markets for investors, advertisers, sources and consumers’ (McManus 1997:6). This study investigates whether evidence exists at the NMG to support McManus’ observation that journalists are always under pressure to promote the interests of ‘corporate siblings’, advertisers and shareholders interests at the expense of public interest. By looking at the structural constraints that are likely to influence journalists’ ethical decisions, this study calls for the re-definition of ‘conflict of interest’ to include institutional as well as individual conflicts as possible threats to journalists’ professional ethics.

This study seeks to establish how the expansionist and commercially driven accumulation tendencies at the NMG influence journalists’ decisions. According to the editorial policy guidelines of NMG, ‘the Group supports a free enterprise, market driven approach to economic development, but its editors will encourage discussion and debate on alternative ideas’ (*Nation Media Group Editorial policy guidelines and objectives: 3*). According to the Nation Media Group Annual report (2008), one of the core roles of the Board of directors of the Group is: ‘to determine the company policy and strategy, to monitor the attainment of business objectives and ensure that the

company meets its obligations to the shareholders. The directors are responsible for overseeing the Group's internal control systems. These controls are designed both to safeguard the group's assets and to ensure the reliability of financial information'. This study therefore sought to find out how this business orientation of the NMG influences the ethical decisions of journalists.

2.6 Management Structure of the Nation Media Group

This section analyzes the constitution of the management board of the NMG (the Board of directors and the executive team profiles). The aim was to get background information on the professional qualifications of the management team (if they are trained journalists), the interlocking business and political interests of the board of directors and the executive team as well as their ethnic background. The researcher then probed from the interviews to find out if the professional orientation of the management board as well as their ethnic affiliation influences their expectations of individual journalists (focusing on the bottom line- profits as well as reporting in a particular ethnically biased way). The researcher also sought to find out the extent to which the affiliate interlocking business interests of the management team influence the professional decisions of journalists.

The researcher also sought to find out from the interviews how and who appoints the management board members and if this in any way influences the decisions of the journalists. This section also analyses the role of the executive team and the board of directors in an attempt to establish from the

interviews if there is a conflict of interest between the management board's roles and those of the professional journalist.

2.6.1 The Board of Directors at the NMG

According to the *NMG Annual Report and Financial Statements 2010*, the board of directors comprises of 15 members. The role of the Board is to determine the Company's policies and strategies, to monitor the attainment of the business objectives and to ensure that the Company meets its obligations to the shareholders. The directors are also responsible for overseeing the Group's internal control systems. These controls are designed both to safeguard the Group's assets and to ensure the reliability of the financial information used within the business (*NMG Annual Report and Financial Statements 2010:10*). It is evident that the role of the board is purely business oriented.

We will therefore briefly examine the profile of three key board members (the chairman, the Chief Executive Officer and the chairman of the editorial committee) as outlined in the 2010 Annual Report in an attempt to establish their professional qualifications and their interlocking board of directorships in other companies. We will then seek to establish from the interviews if and how the business orientation of the role of the board in the operations of the Group as well as their interlocking directorships of the board member influence the decisions of individual journalists.

Mr. Wilfred Kiboro, who is the chairman of the board, holds a Bachelor of Science (Civil Engineering) from the University of Nairobi. He retired as the

Group Chief Executive Officer of the Group on 31st October 2006 after working for the Company for thirteen years. He was appointed a non-executive director of the Group in December 2006 and was elected the Chairman of the Board on 24th September 2009. Mr. Kiboro is also a director of East African Breweries Limited and the Chairman of Standard Chartered Bank Kenya Limited and also Wilfay Investments Limited. Mr. Kiboro belongs to the Kikuyu ethnic community.

The researcher sought to establish from the interviews if journalists experience pressure to protect any of these companies that the chairman of the NMG is also a director and chairman and if they think that the ethnic background of the chair in any way influence the angle that political reporting takes especially during general elections.

Mr. Linus Gitahi, who is the Group Chief Executive Officer, holds an MBA from the United States International University and a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting) from the University of Nairobi. He previously worked as the Managing Director of GlaxoSmithKline, a drug manufacturing company, based in Nigeria. He is a director of the Group's subsidiary companies and Property Development and Management Limited, an associate Company. Mr. Gitahi is a member of the Nominations, the Editorial and the Strategic Planning Committees and belongs to the Kikuyu ethnic community.

The researcher sought to find out from the interviews if journalists feel that the business orientation of the CEO (a trained accountant and not a trained journalist) in any way enhances the operation of the NMG more as a business with the shareholders' interests taking priority over public interest.

Mr. Francis Okomo Okello, who is the Chairman of the Editorial Committee holds a Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, and a Fellow of the Kenya Institute of Bankers (FKIB). He is currently the Executive Director in charge of Legal and Corporate Affairs at Industrial Promotion Services Group of Companies. Mr. Okello is the Chairman of Barclays Bank of Kenya Limited and also TPS Eastern Africa Limited (Serena Group of hotels and lodges) owned by the main shareholder of NMG, the Aga Khan. Mr. Okello belongs to the Luo ethnic community.

The researcher was interested in finding out from the interviews how the journalists feel about the fact that the chairman of the Editorial committee is not a trained journalist. The researcher also sought to find out if the interlocking chairmanships of the Editorial chairman as well as his ethnicity in any way pressures journalists to protect these other companies and politicians from his ethnic community.

It is evident that all the members of the board of directors are also directors or chairmen in other non media companies. The researcher therefore used this background information to find out how these interlocking directorships may influence journalists as they make their daily decisions. As part of the institutional analysis, the researcher also sought to find out from the interview responses the other non media business interests of the shareholders especially the main shareholder and founder of the NMG, the Aga Khan who is a well known business investor in the health, education, hospitality and insurance sectors in the three East African countries where

the NMG operates (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). The researcher then attempted to establish the form of economic pressures that journalists experience from these ‘sister companies’ of the Group.

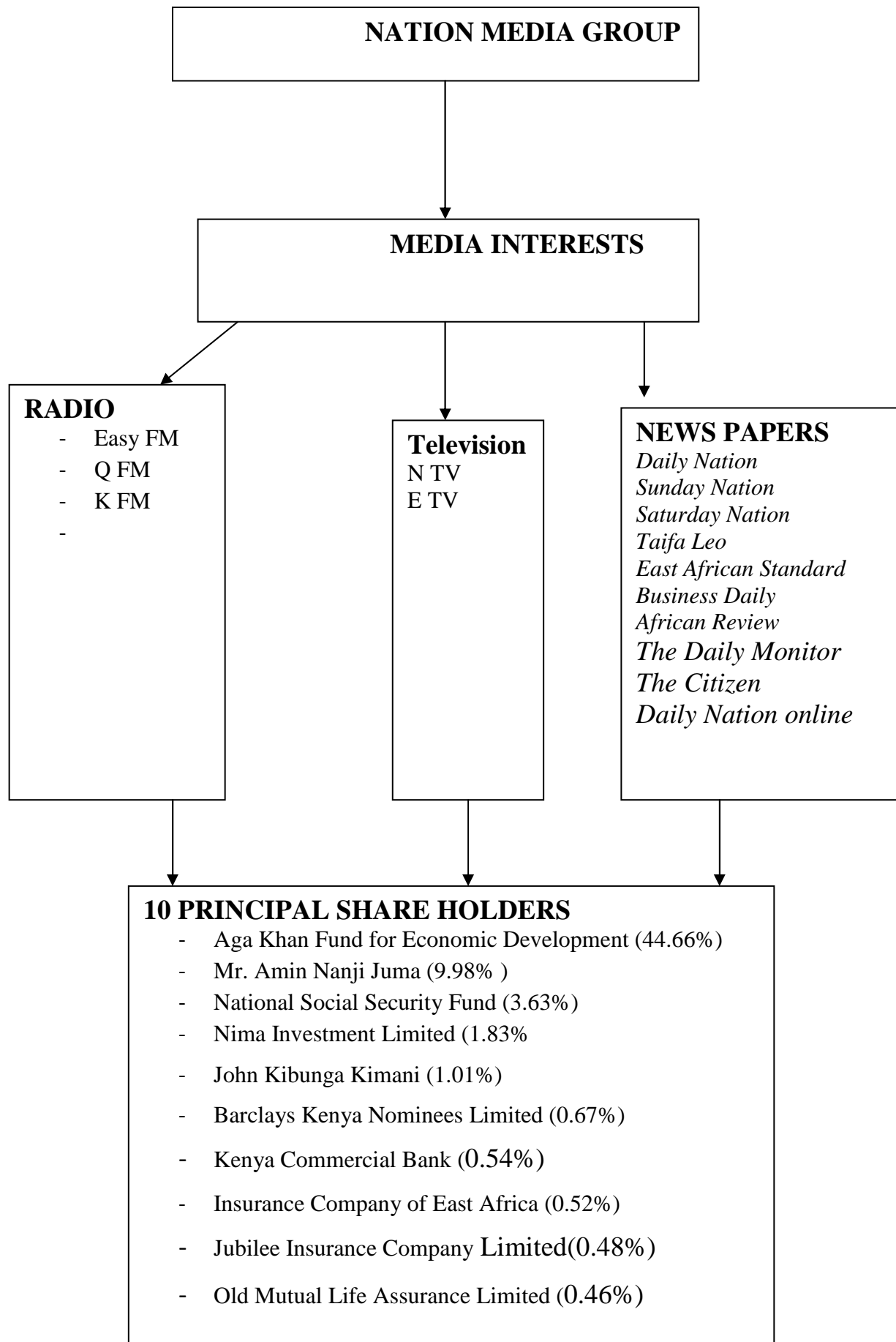
2.6. 2 Principal Shareholders of the Company and their Respective Shareholding

The researcher examines the main shareholders of the NMG according to the 2010 NMG Annual report in an attempt to get background information for the interview questions on owners and shareholders influence on journalists’ ethical decisions in line with the first filter of the propaganda model: the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and the profit orientation of the dominant mass- media firms.

The Group has 10 main shareholders:

1. Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) with a total of 70,165,286 shares translating to 44.66% ownership
2. Mr. Amin Nanji Juma with a total of 12,811,400 shares translating to 9.98% ownership
3. National Social Security Fund with a total of 5,701,916 shares translating to 3.63%
4. Nima Investment Limited with a total of 2,874,775 shares translating to 1.83%
5. John Kibunga Kimani with a total of 1,581,611 shares translating to 1.01%
6. Barclays Kenya Nominees Limited A/c 9230 with a total of 1,045,075 shares translating to 0.67%

7. Kenya Commercial Bank – Nominees A/c 769G with a total of 849,053 shares translating 0.54%
8. Insurance Company of East Africa with a total of 819,876 shares translating to 0.52%
9. Jubilee Insurance Company Limited with a total of 752,699 shares translating to 0.48%
10. Old Mutual Life Assurance Limited with a total of 724,217 translating to 0.46%.



The researcher sought to find out if journalists at the NMG feel pressured to protect the interests of the major shareholders such as Barclays Bank, Kenya Commercial Bank, Jubilee Insurance and the Old Mutual Limited which are major corporate organizations in Kenya. The researcher was also interested in establishing the form that these pressures take and how journalists respond to them.

2.7 The Political Economy of the Media in Kenya

To understand any media system today in the global commercial media market, one must take into account the changes in the global system and then factor in differences at the national and local levels (McChesney, 2003; Thussu, 2005; 1999). As was discussed earlier in this chapter, global mass media dynamics in the 1980s and early 1990s greatly influenced the present day mass media structure in Kenya.

Before the early 1990s, media systems especially in Africa were primarily national and government controlled focusing on national development (Ansah, 1991; Tettey, 2001). After liberalization, media ownership in Kenya partly⁴ changed hands from government control to private entrepreneurs. The private media in the newly liberalized, privatized and de-regulated media environment rapidly diversified and pluralized giving the citizens alternative voices other than the government voice that was disseminated through

⁷ The government did not fully relinquish its control over media operation; there were still subtle and indirect interference up to 2002 (AMDI, 2006). The media in Kenya can be classified into four categories: Private, public, community and Quasi- community media. This is especially for the broadcast media. The private media attracts the largest following and they have also highly diversified since 1990 (Ali, 2010).

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), which had been the norm since independence in 1963.

With the private ownership and control of the media came self censorship to protect corporate interests, concentrated ownership, vertical and horizontal integration and synergy all of which have slowly worked against a truly plural and diverse media environment in Kenya (Ogola, 2011; Ali, 2009;2010; Makokha, 2010). Empirical studies by Ogola (2011), Ali (2009), Ogong'a & White (2008), Oriare (2010), King'ara (2010) and Makokha (2010), Mak' Ochieng (2000) point to some of the negative influences of the commercialization of the media in Kenya. One common finding in these studies is that liberalization and privatization of the media in Kenya has translated to the private media focusing more on the business aspect of the media (profit) at the expense of the public interest aspect (Ali, 2010;Ogola, 2011; Makokha, 2010). The studies point out economic and political factors as being key determinant factors in shaping content in the private media in Kenya. Ogola (2011: 77) argues that Kenya's news media are entangled in a complex power structure, which has enabled but also constrained its development.

But none of these studies directly investigates how journalists who are the main producers of media content experience these economic and political structural factors as they make their daily decisions. This is the gap that this study fills. Ogong'a & White's (2008) study, though normative only focuses on where journalists get their values from. Using the five filters outlined by Herman and Chomsky in their Propaganda model, as the analytical tools, this study investigates how these economic and political factors are

experienced by journalists ethically as they make decisions at the NMG in Kenya. The study also seeks to establish if any other ‘filters’ arising from the specifics of the Kenyan situation, should be added to Herman and Chomsky’s five primary filters.

The study uses the ‘filters’ as outlined by Herman and Chomsky in the Propaganda Model (the filters are discussed in detail in the next chapter when the model is analysed in detail). Using the filters as analytical tools, the study seeks to find out in chapter 5 on data analysis how concentration, conglomeration and diversification, advertising, media sources of news, flak and the dominant ideology may influence the news decision making process at the level of the individual journalist and the ways in which these ‘filters’ are manifested in an ordinary newsroom environment. Aside from adopting a structural⁷ approach, this study interviews individual journalists to allow for agency, which is often omitted in political economic analysis of media performance. In this way, the study avoids the ‘deterministic’ and ‘conspiracy’ criticism generally waged against the propaganda model and the political economy approach in general.

Through the use of the filters as analytical tools to evaluate media structure and performance at the NMG, the study aims to illustrate that although the individual journalist is an essential unit of ethical agency, journalists are increasingly employees of large corporations whose primary aim is to maximize returns to shareholders. Due to the structured, deeply naturalized

⁷ Structural approach locates discussion of ownership and control on the constrains and limitations placed on owners, managers and workers by nature of capitalist economy. This approach maintains that media personnel, whatever their position within the organizational hierarchies, are compelled by economic, technological and ideological factors among others to reproduce media forms and content unconsciously and routinely in predetermined ways (Cottle, 2003; Williams, 2003; Murdock, 1980).

rules, norms and procedures, individual journalists do not have complete freedom to act on their beliefs and attitudes, but must operate within a multitude of limits imposed by the organizational structures and practices of the media system (Reese, 2001: 180). This in effect means that most of the ethical dilemmas facing journalists most of the times begin with the inherent conflict between the individual's role as a journalist and his/her employer's quest for profits (Richards 2004:119). This study seeks to establish the extent to which this is the case from interviews with journalists at the NMG.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the major historical, political and economic factors that have shaped media structure and performance in Kenya from the pre liberalization period up- to- date. In this chapter, it has been illustrated that in the pre- liberalization era, the growth of the media in Kenya was low as compared to the growth that occurred between 1990 and 2011 after political and economic liberalization. This has been attributed to tight government control in the pre liberalization era and privatization and commercialization in the post liberalization era.

It has also been argued in this chapter that liberalization brought with it the commercialization and marketization of the private mass media like the NMG and this can partly explain the tendency to integrate horizontally hence cross media ownership. The chapter has also examined the major shareholders of the NMG, the management structure of the Group, the roles of the executive team and the ethnicity of the three main members of the board of directors. It has been argued that since large corporate media

organizations like the NMG are also by definition involved in many different types of businesses, this creates a higher possibility of conflict of interests, which is more likely to impact on journalistic autonomy. The inherent commercial and economic pressures in a media conglomerate are likely to be more compelling in horizontally integrated media because their business interests are so broad and far reaching. The study therefore establishes the extent to which journalists experience these pressures at the NMG when the interview findings are analyzed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines and explains the main theoretical approaches that the study uses to investigate how political and economic pressures may influence the ethical decisions of individual journalists in their day- to – day practice at the NMG. The section discusses critical political economy from three broad perspectives (European perspective, American perspective and a developing world perspective) as outlined by Mosco (1996) and Hesmondhalgh (2002) before adopting the filters of the Propaganda Model proposed by Herman and Chomsky as the critical political economy analytical tool in this study.

Although the study adopts the five filters of the propaganda model as the analytical tools to analyse the forms which economic and political pressures to journalists may take, the study modifies the Propaganda Model through the use of qualitative interviews of individual journalists to allow for journalistic agency. Some scholars (Boyd- Barrett, 2004; Sparks, 2007; Pedro, 2011) have argued that the propaganda model can be expanded and modified by incorporating other factors. Pedro (2011) proposes the incorporation of ‘sub- filters’ or ‘secondary filters’ such as the professionalism of the journalists and the role of journalists (Pedro, 2011:1871) in the “filtering” process. Boyd- Barrett (2004:436) proposes the

incorporation of a ‘sixth filter’, which he identifies as the ‘direct purchase of media influence by powerful sources, or the “buying out” of journalists or their media by government agencies and authorities’.

This study therefore partly addresses these scholars concerns by incorporating the element of journalistic professionalism and the role of journalistic agency in evaluating media performance of the NMG conglomerate as proposed by Pedro (2011) in his analysis of the validity of the propaganda model in the 21st century to obviate the criticism of the propaganda model overemphasizing structural determinism. According to the liberal- pluralist approaches to media performance, journalistic professionalism allows for autonomy and contestation in the media (Pedro, 2011:1914). This study will therefore seek to find out the extent to which journalists think they enjoy journalistic agency to resist the macro-structural constraints as they make their daily decisions at the NMG. The study also seeks to establish if there are other ‘filters’ that can be incorporated as a modification of the model in the Kenyan scene when the interview findings are analysed in chapter five.

The propaganda model has been criticized (Lang & Lang 2004; Hallin, 1994) for underestimating the role of journalists in resisting the deterministic influence of the filters. Pedro (2011:1917) observes that the propaganda model may be enriched by focusing more specifically on the role and attitudes of journalists and other media employees in regard to how they respond to the influence of the filters. This study addresses Pedro’s concern by interviewing individual journalists to establish to what extent the filters compromise their professional autonomy as they make their daily ethical

decisions. The study therefore specifically examines how individual journalists make decisions ‘within a web of organizational and ideological constraints’ (Reese, 2001:174) at the NMG in Kenya.

This study therefore recognizes the strength of the Propaganda Model; its emphasis on the centrality of political economy in understanding how media work. The study thus tests the validity of the filters in the Kenyan context by examining if the filters are manifested exactly the same way as Herman and Chomsky envision in their model or they take different forms. The study also seeks to find out from the interviews if there are any unique political and economic constraints in the Kenyan context that influence the ethical decisions of journalists besides the primary filters.

The study uses the critical political economy perspective to argue that since the structure of private commercial media like the NMG in Kenya is shaped and influenced by the capitalism system and the larger socio- political and economic context, such media is likely to focus more on commercial interests at the expense of the ideal roles of the media in the society. Due to the constraints of the of the ‘free market system’, private media are bound to operate under the same economic and political constraints of the overall capitalist market system as any other business and this has implications for journalistic agency. The agency of the journalists should therefore be understood within the larger political- economic structures; within a consistent and relatively fixed framework that limits, punishes, rewards and encourages particular types of behavior (McKercher & Mosco, 2008).

Therefore although this study acknowledges that journalists do have a certain amount of agency, which is omitted in the classical version of the propaganda model, ‘the reality is that the predominant corporate organizational structure forces journalists to work under very severe restrictions that do not allow media to be structurally free or operate outside the interests of the elite (Pedro, 2011:1917). Journalists do not operate in a vacuum, but within the limits of routines that are ‘deeply naturalized and embedded in the media work’ (Reese, 2001: 180). The study therefore seeks to establish from the interview responses if these restrictions are more intense in a concentrated media structure where journalists are more likely to result to self- censorship to protect the varied interests of the ‘big’ media in which they work. The study also seeks to establish if the personal and political beliefs and values of individual journalists can enable them to respond to the constraints in a manner contrary to the established organizational dictates.

The chapter also discusses the major criticisms waged against these theoretical approaches (critical political economy in general and the propaganda model in particular) and the responses advanced by various scholars in an attempt to illustrate the approaches’ validity and applicability in this study. Through the critical political economy approach, coupled with relevant theoretical insights from media ethics, this chapter develops a theoretical framework within which to investigate the extent to which horizontal integration may lead media conglomerates like NMG to pressure journalists to compromise their ethics as they strive to balance the protection of corporate interests and their professional ethics.

3.2 Historical/Theoretical foundations of the Political Economy of the Media

A French writer Monchretien de Watteville was the first to use the term 'political economy' in 1615 to describe 'the science of wealth acquisition common to the state as well as the family' (see Hoogvelt, 1973). The general study of political economy and how it can be used to understand society can however be traced from the enlightenment thinking of the 18th century and to the views of classical political economists such as Adam Smith (1776) and David Ricardo (1821) among others (Wasko, 2005; 2004; Williams, 2003; Mosco, 1996). Adam Smith (1776) defined political economy as the study of wealth or the allocation of resources; how mankind arranges and allocates scarce resources with a view to satisfy certain needs and not others.

Ricardo (1821) and Smith (1776), used the classical political economy approach to understand and explain the social changes in the wake of the industrial revolution, which led to the transformation of agricultural societies into commercial and industrial societies. Classical Political economy evolved as capitalism evolved, emphasizing a radical critique of the evolving capitalism system through a moral stance in opposition to the unjust characteristics of that system (Wasko, 2004:310). These classical scholars laid emphasis on the importance of the economic organization of society, and the ways in which it shaped and determined social, cultural and political relations (Mosco, 1996).

Classical political economy saw private ownership including the ownership of the press as central to the functioning of capitalism. Classical political economists and their contemporaries start from the assumption that public intervention ought to be minimized and market forces given the widest possible freedom of operation (Golding & Murdock 2000:76). The concept of the free market enabled each individual to maximize his or her own wealth while at the same time maximizing the value of the output to the public since to promote personal greed is to promote the common good (Pettman, 1996; Williams, 2003).

Smith (1776:423) on his part referred market competition as the ‘invisible hand’, which was more efficient and morally superior to government intervention as it allowed consumers free choice between competing commodities and only those goods that satisfied the consumers would survive. Classical political economy can therefore be said to have ‘originated in the eighteenth century partly to explain, justify and support the acceleration of capitalism’ (Mosco, 1996: 11). Classical Political economy argues that media markets are part of the capitalist economic system with close links to the political system in a country (Fourie, 2007:136). Critical political economy on the other hand point to the distortions and inequalities of market systems and argue that these deficiencies can only be rectified by public intervention, though they disagree on the forms that this should take (Golding & Murdock, 2000: 76).

Golding & Murdock (2000) make a distinction between mainstream classical economics and critical political economy. Whereas mainstream economics sees the economy as a separate and specialized domain, critical political

economy is interested in the interplay between economic organization and political, social and cultural life. Critical political economy of the media therefore traces the impact of economic dynamics on the range and diversity of public cultural expression and its availability to different cultural groups (Golding & Murdock 2000:73).

The political economy of communication approach is Marxist in orientation (Wasko, 2005; Fourie, 2007; Williams, 2003; Mosco, 1996). According to Marx (1974), the key characteristic of the growth of capitalism was the ownership and control of the means of production by a small number of people (the capitalist/ ruling class) whose main interest is to amass more and more profits at the expense of the subordinate classes.

Marx identified ownership of the media and other forms of communication and culture as one of the primary mechanisms by which the ruling class maintains its position of power and privilege (Fourie, 2007). Although considered too radical and deterministic, Marx's ideas enable critical political economists of the media to analyze private commercial media in capitalist societies from the point of view of their inherent nature to pursue and maximize profits sometimes at the expense of promoting public good.

In 1973, Peter Golding and Graham Murdock introduced their formulation of the political economy of communication in the UK, stating that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organizations, which produce and distribute commodities. Accordingly, a political economy of communication approach is fundamentally interested in studying communication and media as commodities produced by capitalist industries

(Golding & Murdock, 1973: 205-206). A later version of the political economy approach to communication by Golding & Murdock (1979) placed political economy within the broader framework of critical and Marxian theory (Wasko, 2004:312).

Nicholas Garnham (1979) also drawing on critical theory argued that the political economy of communication involves analyzing the modes of cultural production and consumption developed within capitalist societies (Garnham, 1979: 123). Garnham argued that media must be seen first as economic entities with both a direct economic role as creators of surplus value through commodity production and exchange and an indirect role, through advertising, in the creation of surplus value within other sectors of commodity production (Garnham, 1979: 132).

Smythe (1977) who is regarded as one of the fathers of the American political economy tradition on his part argued that the main product of the media was audiences that were sold by media to advertisers. With the increasing spread of privatized, advertiser-supported media, Smythe's 'audience commodity' concept has been accepted by many political economists as well as other communication theorists (Wasko, 2004:313). His thesis has the merit of highlighting the triangular relationship between media, audiences and advertisers (Boyd- Barrett, 1995:190).

Vincent Mosco (1996), building on Marx's idea defines the political economy of communication as the 'study of the social relations, particularly power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources including communication resources' (Mosco,

1996: 25). Such a formulation of political economy, he argues, calls attention to fundamental forces and processes at work in the market place. Mosco (1996) argues that there are three key concepts related to the application of political economy to communication: '*commodification* (the process of taking goods and services which are valued for their use, and transforming them into commodities which are valued for what they can earn in the market place); *spatialization* (the process of overcoming the constraints of space and time in social life); *structuration* (which incorporates the ideas of agency, social process and social practice into the analysis of structures' (Mosco, 1996:139-142; Boyd-Barrett, 1996:187). These concepts, especially the concept of commodification is relevant to this study in the analysis of how commercial media have commodified information, culture and ideas, the core commodities that media produce and which are generally regarded 'as a collective property of all' (McQuail, 2005).

3.3 Approaches to Political Economy of Communication

As the political economy of media tradition has grown and developed over the years, different approaches have emerged (Wasko, 2004). Mosco (1996: 19) distinguishes between North American, European and Third world approaches, whereas Hesmondhalgh (2002: 33), presents what he regards as the 'Schiller- McChesney tradition' and the 'cultural industries approach'.

Mosco (1996) notes that the North American political economy tradition, which is largely influenced by the contributions of Dallas Smythe (1977) and Herbert Schiller (1971) draws on both the institutional and Marxian

traditions. This approach which includes the works of Herman and Chomsky (1988; 2002), which is used in this study, McChesney (1999; 2004), Bagdikian (2000), Compaine & Gomery (2000) according to Mosco has been driven more explicitly by a sense of injustice that the communications industry has become an integral part of a wider corporate order which is both exploitative and undemocratic (Mosco, 1996:19).

The European approach on the other hand which is associated with the works of Golding & Murdock, Nicholas Garnham, James Curran and Colin Sparks focus on class power building on the Frankfurt school⁸ and an attempt to integrate communication research within various neo- Marxian theoretical traditions (Mosco, 1996:19). Golding & Murdock particularly criticize the American tradition for being instrumentalist and reductionist in its approach by focusing on the activities of individual media owners and the power elite and ignoring the contradictions in the system (Boyd- Barrett & Murdock, 1995:190). Golding & Murdock (1991:15) adopt a ‘structural approach’ in their explanation of critical political economy, which focuses on the interplay between symbolic and economic dimensions of public communication and which sets out to show how different ways of financing and organizing cultural production have traceable consequences for the range of discourses and representations in the public domain for audiences access to them.

⁸ The Frankfurt school associated with Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno inaugurated critical communications studies in the 1930s and combined political economy of the media, cultural analysis of texts and audience reception studies. Frankfurt School theorists argued that the media were controlled by groups who employed them to further their own interests and power (Kellner, 2009; Williams 2003).

Golding and Murdock (1991) therefore define the political economy of communication as ‘holistic, historical and centrally concerned with the balance between capitalist enterprise and the public intervention and it goes beyond the technical issues of efficiency to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good’ (Golding and Murdock, 1991: 19-20). This study builds on this to question how the balancing between capitalist enterprises and promoting public good may compromise the ethical decisions of journalists at the NMG.

Mosco (1996) also describes another tradition that he refers to as the ‘Third World’ political economy tradition, which relies on dependency and world systems theory, as well as other neo- Marxist traditions. Research in this tradition has mainly focused on challenging the modernization paradigm and analyzing various aspects of globalization process (Mosco, 1996: 20). Recent works on the political economy of the media in Third world countries especially in Africa (Heuva & Tomaseli, 2004; Nyamnjoh, 2004; Chibita, 2006; Chuma, 2005; Ogola, 2011; Botma & Wasserman, 2008; Steenveld, 2004; Tomaselli, 2002; Berger, 2004) focus on the commercialization, commodification and privatization of media industries and the impact of these on emerging democracies in Africa.

These studies generally analyze the structure and performance of media industries within the rapidly changing socio- political and economic environment characterized by the adoption of free market reforms and liberalization that swept through Africa in the early 1990s (Chuma, 2005; Steenveld 2004). In the Post Cold- War free market economy driven by a neo-liberal ideology, there has been an emergency of multiparty political

systems and the consolidation of free markets in many parts of the developing world, Africa included (Heuva & Tomaseli, 2004:97). The current debates on media ownership and control are therefore informed by, and largely focused on, the effects of globalization and neo-liberalism on media scenarios the world over (Nyamnjoh, 2004:119). This study contributes to these ongoing debates on the political economy of the media in the newly commercialized media environment in Africa and Kenya in particular.

Hesmondhalgh (2002), in his discussion of what he calls ‘the Schiller-McChesney tradition’ to refer to the American political economy works of Herman & Chomsky, Robert McChesney and Herbert Schiller among others argues that these works have been extremely important in cataloguing and documenting the growth in wealth and power of the cultural industries and their links with political and business allies (Hesmondhalgh 2002:32). Hesmondhalgh however feels that this approach has some weaknesses: that it ‘underestimates’ the contradictions in the system, fails to explain specific conditions of cultural industries and pays less attention to consumption than production (Wasko, 2004:313). (More on the criticisms on this tradition and particularly on Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model will be discussed and responded to later in this chapter).

According to Hesmondhalgh (2002), the European tradition which he identifies with the ‘cultural industries approach’ initiated by Nicholas Garnham (1990) and Bernard Miese (1989) has more to offer in terms of assessing and explaining change/continuity in the cultural industries than the Schiller- McChesney tradition (Hesmondhalgh 2002:33). Hesmondhalgh

(2002) argues that although the processes of concentration, conglomeration and integration catalogued by the Schiller- McChesney tradition are extremely important, Schiller, McChesney and other scholars who use such an approach do not focus on how such issues of the market structure affect the organization of cultural production and making of texts on an ordinary, everyday level (Hesmondhalgh 2002:34). This study partly addresses Hesmondhalgh's concern by looking at how these issues (concentration, conglomeration and integration) impact on the experiences of individual journalists at the 'ordinary, everyday decision making level' at the NMG in Kenya.

Drawing on the ideas of Golding and Murdock (1991), Mosco (1996) argues that despite the variations of the different approaches in the political economy tradition, there are central characteristics of political economy of communication: social change and history, social totality, moral philosophy and praxis. We are going to briefly discuss each of these characteristics and show their relevance in this study.

Social change and history: Political economy has always been concerned with social transformation, uncovering the dynamic forces of capitalism and to locate social change in the historical interaction of the economic, political, cultural and ideological moments of social life. Using this characteristic, we have uncovered the historical, political and economic forces that have shaped the media scene in Kenya in Chapter 2.

Social totality: Both the founders and contemporaries of political economy hold that political economy is deeply rooted in an analysis of the wider

social totality; understanding the connections between the economic and the political. It is a holistic approach that explores the relationships among commodities, institutions and social relations and it is inspired by Marxian, socialist and institutionalist approaches. This characteristic has enabled the researcher to show the intricate connections between media structure, performance and the wider social totality; the interconnections between the political and economic systems of the country and the growth and performance of the media in Kenya.

Moral philosophy: Contemporary political economy is deeply rooted in the ideas of classical political economists such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill who emphasized the centrality of moral philosophy in economic analysis. Contemporary political economists of communication such as Golding and Murdock (1991) and Schiller (1993) also emphasize the importance of moral philosophy in their application of political economy to communication. Golding and Murdock have particularly insisted that the political economy approach has to be concerned with the critical, moral understanding of the wider social totality in addition to the standard interest with social class, commodity circuit and corporate structure. This characteristic is particularly important in this study; political economy approach to media studies is normative in orientation and this forms our basis for investigating the ethical issues arising from the economic and commercial orientation of the NMG.

The distinguishing feature between political economy and mainstream economics 'is that it places a greater emphasis on ethical and normative questions' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:30). Lastly there is *praxis*, which refers to

the free and creative human activity by which people produce and change the world and themselves. This term originates in ancient Greek, where it typically referred to the political and business activities of free men. The term entered debates in communication through the work of the Frankfurt School and particularly that of Marcuse and Habermas, who defined it as a form of action (Mosco, 1996:37).

The analysis of these characteristics is relevant to this study since using the political economy approach we were able to examine the social change and history of the media in Kenya; to determine the political and economic factors that have shaped the present media structure and to address the moral issues that arise. As Wasko (2005; 2004) notes, most political economy of communication researches incorporate historical analysis to trace the development of specific media, and to document change as well as continuity. In this study, the historical analysis has been used to trace the development of the Kenyan media at large and specifically the Nation Media Group.

Political economy of communication scholars (Sparks, 2009; Thussu, 1999; 2005; Tomaseli, 2002; Nyamnjoh, 2004; Berger, 2004; Steenveld, 2004; Botma & Wasserman, 2008; Bagdikian, 1992; 1997; 2000; McChesney, 1995; 1999; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; 2002; Murdock, 1990 and Doyle, 2002) among others have documented the effects of commercialization and concentration of the media using the political economy approach to challenge the myth of the effectiveness of the free market under a capitalist structure. Most of these works focus on ‘the evolution of mass

communications as commodities that are produced and distributed by profit-seeking organizations in capitalist societies' (Wasko, 2005:32).

As McChesney (2003) notes,

Political economy of communication specifically examines the structure of media industries- questions of ownership, market structure and commercial support and how these affect media content, performance and impact. The crucial role of the profit motive in shaping media performance must therefore be at the center of any study of media that attempts to answer the fundamental questions that begin with 'why'.... Political economy is concerned with the relationship of media systems to the broader social and power relations of society (McChesney, 2003:27).

A common theme that runs through these various interpretations of the political economy of communications seem to link media structure, production and operation to the larger political and economic structures, which the media is a part. Media organisations are political and economic entities. They have the power to influence public opinion and government policy. As economic entities, media organizations also tend to be motivated primarily by profit maximizing goals. The Media organisation's existence in the capitalist system generally depends on their ability to maximize revenues and minimize costs (Napoli, 1997).

Such economic imperatives have been found to impact media performance at a number of levels (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Reese, 2001; Hackett &

Uzelman, 2003; Hackett, 2006; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002; Lovaas, 2009). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) propose what they call a ‘Hierarchy of Influences Model’ to explain the micro and macro factors that shape media and news content. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) identify five levels of influence that shape media content: Individual journalist, news routines, organizational, extra- media and ideological levels (Reese, 2001; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The five levels of influence identified by Shoemaker and Reese’s model are similar to the ‘five filters’ identified by Herman and Chomsky in the Propaganda model although the Hierarchy of Influences model ‘calls attention to a broader range of factors/ pressures on news content, and to their often contradictory nature’ (Hackett, 2006:6), but both models take into account the larger political- economic structure within which journalists function.

Unlike the propaganda model, Shoemaker and Reese’s model explain the role of the individual journalist in influencing the news production process. At the individual level of influence, the model regards the attitudes, training and background of the journalist as influential in the news production process (Reese, 2001:179). The professionally related roles of the journalists, their ethics and their political and personal beliefs can have an indirect influence on news content especially when they are in a position to override institutional pressures or organizational routines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This study therefore incorporates this element of the role of the journalist as a ‘sub-filter’ (Pedro, 2011) in relation to the five primary filters to examine from the interview responses if the personal and political beliefs and professional values of journalists at the NMG indirectly influence news content despite the institutional pressures.

Political economic approaches to media performance point to the fact that to comprehensively analyse and understand media operation and performance, you have to take into account the broad political and economic context, what Mosco calls *decentering* the media; ‘viewing systems of communication as integral to fundamental economic, political, social and cultural processes in society’ (Mosco, 1996: 71). Critical political economy approach to media performance therefore stresses the ‘primacy of the economic organization of media industries especially private ownership as a determinant of the content and structure of the media’ (Williams, 2003: 94).

The political economy of communication approach to the analysis of the relationship between media ownership and control has been categorized as either *instrumental* or *structural* (Cottle, 2003; Wasko, 2005; Williams, 2003; Golding and Murdock, 2000). The *instrumental* analysis holds that ‘the operations and performance of the media can adequately be explained in terms of proprietorial intervention and the instrumental pursuit of ruling interests and / or political allegiances’ (Cottle, 2003:5). Instrumentalists regard the relationship between ownership and control as direct and straightforward. ‘Owners and managers are seen to ‘conspire’ to determine which person, which facts, which version of the facts and which ideas reach the public hence often seen to be aligned to some forms of conspiracy theory’ (Williams, 2003:83).

This is one of the main criticisms against political economic approaches, especially Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model; that they are too sweeping, instrumentalist. The Propaganda model has particularly been

criticized for bordering on conspiracy theory because it ignores the agency of the individual journalist. This study obviates this criticism by interviewing journalists to examine how they respond to the pressures from the filters. The study will seek to find out from the interview responses if journalists think they enjoy the autonomy to resist the pressures from the outlined filters in the propaganda model. We will respond more to this criticism later in this chapter when we apply and test the validity of the propaganda model to our study.

The *structural* analysis focuses on agency and maintains that ‘media personnel, whatever their position within organizational hierarchies are compelled by impinging determinants- economic, technological, ideological among others to reproduce media forms and content unconsciously and routinely in predetermined ways’ (Cottle, 2003:5). As such,

Analysis is not centered on the activities and interests of individual owners, but on the constraints and limitations placed on owners, managers and workers by nature of the capitalism economy. This is because economic pressures shape the activities of media owners, controllers and workers and the pressures under which they work. These pressures emanate from the emphasis to maximize profit and the demand of competition (Williams, 2003: 84).

This study adopts a structural critique of media performance in that it analyses the ethical decisions of journalists within a web of organizational and economic constraints.

As the name suggests, structural analysis looks at the structural factors that influence media production and media content. It considers the instrumental analysis as ‘too simplistic; that it ignores the capacity of journalists and media workers to resist the direct intervention of owners’ (Williams, 2003:83). But although the intervention of owners may not be direct and explicit, we cannot altogether ignore the indirect interference through advertisers, corporate censorship and editorial policies as evident from the findings of this study. Both in theory and practice, we cannot draw a clear-cut distinction between the instrumental and structural analyses. As Murdock (1980), observes, there is no need for owners to intervene directly because the logic of the prevailing market structures ensures that by and large the output endorses rather than opposes their general interests (Murdock 1980: 57).

The critical political economy approach is a direct critic of the traditional liberal- pluralist or market model which regards the media in a ‘free market’ as being free and independent of government, political and economic control (Curran, 2000; Williams, 2003). According to the liberal- pluralist approach, only by ‘anchoring the media to the free market is it possible to ensure media’s complete independence to discharge its watchdog role in the society’ (Curran, 2000: 121). Freedom of the media in the traditional liberal-pluralist interpretation is negative freedom from government control. This interpretation of media freedom emphasizes the individual consumer and his needs and defines the public interest as what interests the public (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). The public sphere will therefore be best served in a ‘free market of ideas’ regulated by the media market and some minimum

self-regulation (McQuail, 2005; 1992; Underwood, 1993; 2001; Golding & Murdock, 2000; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

The liberal -pluralist model treats the media like all other goods and services in the market and calls for private unregulated ownership of the media (Curran, 2000). Critical political economy criticizes the liberal pluralist approach for treating audiences as ‘target consumers’ rather than citizens who need to be informed. Such a market system has generally been criticized for being undemocratic (Sparks, 2007; Herman, 1999; McManus, 1994; 2009) especially where there is no competition due to concentration leading to a perfect monopoly.

Herman (1999) observes that,

the force of competition and stress on the rate of return on capital, which comes to prevail in a free market, compels firms to focus with increasing intensity on enlarging audience size and improving its ‘quality’ as these will determine advertising rates...managements that fail to respond to market opportunities of this magnitude will be under pressure from owners and may be ousted by internal processes of takeovers (Herman, 1999:33-34).

The fact that commercial media are primarily capitalist corporations means that in the long run their content must be tailored carefully to fit within the business model of the particular company (Sparks, 2007:74). Market forces and democratic goals may also diverge as they may coincide; what makes business sense may not necessarily make democratic sense (McManus, 1994; Bagdikian, 1992). Therefore whereas the standard liberal- pluralist

view of media performance holds that the social system is a healthy “market place of ideas” and considers the media as the “fourth estate”, the critical political economy perspective views the media in opposite terms, as an instrument of domination (Pedro, 2011:1873).

Over and above these criticisms of the market model, the main critique of the critical political economy approach is premised on the tendency of the market model to peg media success on profitability; treating media business like any other business regulated by the laws of demand and supply (Underwood, 2001; McManus, 2009; Bagdikian, 1992; Curran, 2000; Williams, 2003). Although in some respect the media companies are commercial corporations like any other with the primary aim of pursuing profits, the media are not any other business. That is why the media are the only businesses explicitly protected in the constitutions of most democracies (McQuail, 2005; 1992; Nordenstreng, 2000).

As McQuail (1992) observes, we evaluate media performance against major social values of freedom, equality and order. We assume that journalists must have a high degree of professional freedom and autonomy to carry out their function and we gauge their work against some standards of fairness, or equal representation of relevant social features. Ethically, we trust that journalists will observe standards that do not violate the expectations of social order. Ultimately, media practices must be viewed against normative standards, which consider how media power functions within a larger social context (Reese, 2001:173). Treating the media like any other business in the market place regulated by the laws of supply and demand therefore does raise key ethical issues some of which have been investigated in this study.

3.4 The Propaganda Model

Herman and Chomsky first introduced the propaganda model in 1988 in their co-authored book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. The propaganda model was conceived from the perspective of the political economy of communications to explain the behavioral and performance patterns of the U.S. mass media in relation to news production (Pedro, 2011:1865). Herman and Chomsky put forth the model as an institutional critique of the operation of mainstream media in the United States of America (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Klaehn & Mullen, 2010; Klaehn, 2009; 2002; Jackson and Stanfield, 2004). The propaganda model is therefore ‘analytically and conceptually concerned with the question of how ideological and communicative power connect with economic, political and social power, and to explore the consequent effects upon media output’ (Klaehn, 2009:43). The authors used the notion of propaganda to imply ‘that news content is oriented toward social reproduction; the continuation of the capitalist system, especially in its liberal form’ (Pedro, 2011:1866).

By exploring the interlocks that exist between the media, dominant social institutions, powerful elites and the market, the model illustrates the interplay between economic and communicative power. The main argument that the Propaganda model puts forth is that structural political- economic elements influence the overall patterns of media performance (Klaehn & Mullen, 2010:217). The Propaganda model, which is firmly rooted in the political economy of the media tradition generally, challenges the commonly

held notion that media in liberal capitalist societies are dedicated to the public interest (Klaehn & Mullen, 2010; Klaehn, 2009).

Herman (1999) notes that the Propaganda Model starts from the premise that ‘a critical political economy will put front and center the analysis of the locus of media control and the mechanisms by which the powerful are able to dominate the flow of messages and limit dissenting voices’ (Herman, 1999: 267). Herman and Chomsky use the concept of ‘manufacturing consent’, which they borrowed from Walter Lipmann to illustrate how through the five filters ‘the news media help to keep the populace in line with capitalist democracy in much the same way military force or violence might in totalitarian state’ (Jackson and Stanfield, 2004:477).

The five filter elements draw attention to the main structural constraints that impact overall patterns of media performance. As mentioned in chapter one, Herman and Chomsky list the five filters as: (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and the profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms (2) Advertising as the primary source of the mass media (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power (4) “flak” as a means of disciplining the media and (5) “Anti-communism” as a national religion and control mechanism, which has since been re-defined to mean ‘the various ideological forces, which may be deployed and adapted to correspond to elite interests when required’ (Klaehn & Mullen, 2010:218).

This study will use the fifth filter in the new context of the promotion of the dominant ideology in Kenya through the mass media. Ideology is seen as a powerful mechanism of social control whereby members of the ruling class can impose their worldview, which represents their interests on members of the subordinate classes (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:164). The concept of hegemony (dominant ideology) as advanced by Antonio Gramsci (1971) and Louis Althusser (1971) connects questions of culture, power and the promotion of dominant ideology. This study analyses how the interaction of the four successive primary filters may lead to the promotion of the dominant ideology of the minority political and economic class in the Kenyan society through the mass media.

According to the Propaganda Model, the raw materials of news must pass through these successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit for print (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 2). In this study, the filters serve as relevant analytical tools because they act as pointers to the various ways in which journalists experience economic and political pressures as they make their daily decisions.

3.4.1 Analysis of the Filters

3.4.2 Filter 1& 2: Ownership and Advertising

The first and second filters describe the macro- level structural factors that heavily influence the news production process. The media's concentration in size/ownership and the profit orientation integrates the media into the corporate market system (Klaehn, 2009; 2002; Zollmann, 2009). This macro

analysis of media performance calls to attention the main goals of the media organization as a business enterprise (economic goals in relation to journalistic goals), how the media organization is structured to pursue these goals and how policy is enhanced. Such analysis highlights the fact

that news is an organizational product produced by increasingly complex economic entities, which seek ever more far-reaching relationships in their ownership patterns and connections to non-media industries. While journalists have long needed to be concerned with business considerations influencing their work, now these concerns may stretch far beyond their immediate organization (Reese, 2001:181).

It is also worth noting that since Herman and Chomsky presented the propaganda model in 1988, there has been an increasing trend towards media concentration and conglomeration. 'Because of the logic of the capitalist market itself, and because of the need for these corporations to expand, grow and diversify their risks, there has been increased horizontal and vertical concentration in the media market' (Pedro, 2011:1877). This in effect means that most media in both the developed and developing world belong to large horizontally and vertically integrated multi-media conglomerates like the NMG characterized by cross ownership.

As news companies such as the NMG become part of large global conglomerates, it is often difficult to anticipate the many conflicts of interest that may arise and journalists find it difficult to avoid reporting that has relationship to one or more of their parent company's interests (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In most cases, power and influence from interlocking

business interests is implicitly enforced so that the media do not seem to violate the objectivity notion 'of news being out there' (Reese, 2007; 2001; Botma & Wasserman, 2008). This study therefore seeks to find out from the journalists how the interlocking economic interests of the NMG as a conglomerate influence their journalistic decisions, how they respond to these influences and the implicit forms which these pressures and influences take.

Advertising is the main source of revenue for most mainstream commercial media such as the NMG and thus media discourses tend to reflect the interests of advertisers and the market (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; 2002). According to Hackett & Uzelman (2003),

advertiser influence can be considered corporate influence in two ways: the internal profit imperative of commercial news outlets to attract revenues and the external expectations of advertisers and advertising firms, which tend to be large corporations themselves. The influence of advertisers may take the form of direct pressure, but more often takes subtle forms such as self censorship. In terms of content, advertising influence may manifest in several ways: the avoidance or minimization of negative coverage of particular advertisers or advertorials to promote particular business companies or commodities (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003:333).

Advertisers in Kenya, especially 'big' advertisers wield their power over journalists' agency through discriminating against unfriendly media institutions, threatening to withhold advertising revenue, withholding advertising revenue and also selectively choosing what programs to sponsor

especially in broadcast media (Nyabuga, 2007; Ali, 2009). Advertisers generally tend to avoid programs with serious complexities and disturbing controversies that interfere with the buying mood. This dependence on advertising revenue promotes the commercialization of content; the media financing model promotes types of content produced with a view to business, rather than to the democratization of society (Pedro, 2011:1881).

As Smythe (1981) notes, commercial media's most important commodity is audience itself- specialized audiences which correspond to a particular market niche for advertisers, or affluent audiences whose disposable income is especially attractive to advertisers. Advertisers therefore seek a conducive editorial environment to put audiences in a buying frame of mind and most broadly and crucially, content which is intended to attract commercially profitable audiences (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003:333). Advertisers sponsor programs that will lightly entertain and help in the dissemination of a selling message (Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

Advertising can also be said to play a major role in increasing media concentration. From a market perspective, industry mergers, buy outs and horizontal integration in the form of cross media ownership 'can be understood as the rational actions of media corporations attempting to maximize sales, create efficiencies in production and position themselves strategically to face competitors' (Croteau and Hoynes, 2006: 76). The concentration of media industries has therefore occurred in parallel with an increased concentration of capital invested in advertising in fewer media outlets (Pedro, 2011:1881). Advertisers see this as an opportunity to reach more consumers in the form of audiences. This study therefore sought to

investigate the extent to which advertisers influence the ethical decisions of journalists at the NMG in Kenya and the forms of economic pressures that journalists experience from these advertisers.

Herman (1999) observes that these crucial structural factors derive from the fact that dominant media are firmly embedded in the market system. The dominant media are profit-seeking businesses, owned by very wealthy people who have business interests in other companies. They are largely funded by advertisers who are also profit seeking entities, and who want their adverts to appear in a supportive selling environment (Klaehn, 2009; Zollmann, 2009).

As Boyd- Barrett (2004), observes,

most media form component parts of a small number of giant corporations; their corporate interests, the interests of the chief executives and shareholders, generally coincide with the interests of the political and business Establishment. Media are unlikely to undermine the interests of the Establishment. Mainstream media have become increasingly profit- oriented: their goal is to maximize audience numbers, especially of those audiences in which advertisers are most interested, namely those who have the money to spend (Boyd- Barrett, 2004:435).

Most media conglomerates like the NMG are themselves typically large corporations controlled by wealthy people (the Aga Khan who has many non- media business interests in Africa, Europe and Asian countries) or by

managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit- oriented forces.

This in effect means that mainstream commercial media conglomerates are owned and controlled by the same dominant giant corporations they are expected to cover (Herman &Chomsky, 2002). Through these first two filters, Herman and Chomsky clearly illustrate that media out put is largely determined by market forces which in turn influence the decisions of the producers of media content (journalists). Therefore as much as journalists may have control over the output of the media, ‘they have to operate within an economic environment, which shapes their decisions. The nature of this environment is such that their decisions and actions are conditioned to produce views that are by and large pro- capitalist, pro-business and hostile to alternative or minority opinion’ (Williams, 2003:86). While journalists may relentlessly try to avoid conflicts of interest that may bias their reporting; maintaining a professional distance from their subject, their employers may be intimately linked to larger corporate interests through interlocking boards of directors and other elite connections (Reese, 2007; 2001; Shoemaker &Reese, 1996).

Independent journalism is therefore affected by the fact that

news is a business and is widely influenced by economic considerations. Corporate elites are also the key shareholders and/ or directors of boards for media organisations and businesses are the prime funders of news through the purchase of advertising. They can therefore apply financial pressures when necessary- to censor texts, to

gain favourable coverage or simply to appeal to particular audiences (Goldsmiths Media Group, 2000:23).

Journalists' are allowed to be independent only as long as their independence is exercised in a form that conforms to the requirements of their employer's organizations (Curran, 1990). This leads to market censorship; the practices that routinely filter or restrict the production and distribution of selected ideas and perspectives from mainstream media based upon their anticipated profits and/ or support for corporate values and consumerism (Jansen, 2010).

Such practices are naturalized and integrated into the organizational structures; with time such practices become objectified, understood as 'how things work' rather than calculated managerial responses to profit imperatives (Jansen, 2010:13). Indeed, a journalist anticipates organizational boundaries, the power of which is manifested in self censorship by its members. Journalists therefore often state that there was no direct intervention compelling them to suppress a story (Reese, 2001: 182). Although such self censorship may imply rational choice within an open system free of external constraints (Jansen, 2010:13), such self policing is more effective than direct censorship, especially because outsiders are often not even aware that anything has taken place (Reese, 2001:182).

The macro analysis of media performance using the first and second filters draws our attention to the fact that media are subordinated to elite interests in the larger system (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Reese, 2007; 2001; Hackett & Uzelman, 2003). The media and other corporations share direct interests,

for example through interconnected board of directors, strategic alliances, joint ventures or merchandising agreements (Mosco, 1996). From the institutional analysis of the board of directors at the NMG, it was established that these directors are also directors in other non media companies some of which double up as major advertisers. Through the interview responses, this study examines how these interlocking directorships influence the ethical decisions of journalists at the individual and institutional level.

Structural political economic analysis of media performance is however accused of attributing complex cultural processes and events to a single political economic cause such as the interests of the social class, which controls the means of production; or to the requirement within capitalism for owners and executives to make profits (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:46). This study uses interviews of individual journalists at the NMG to find out the extent to which these market pressures affect their journalistic autonomy and agency in an attempt to obviate this ‘deterministic’ and ‘reductionist’ criticism. The study seeks to find out from the interview responses the role that individual journalists play in responding to these pressures; if they do have the agency to resist or their decisions are totally determined by these institutional pressures.

3.4.3 Filter 3: Sourcing of news in the Media

The third filter highlights the economic and ideological constraints that force journalists to have a ‘symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information out of economic necessity and reciprocity of interest’ (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 18). Since the media needs a steady flow of reliable

and fresh information everyday, economics dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs and where regular press conferences are held. The media find it economical to focus their attention on the people and locations most likely to yield 'news' (Boyd- Barrett, 2004:435). This third filter can be used to partly explain why 80% of prime news in the mainstream media in Kenya is on politics, politicians and government releases (Oriare, 2010; AMDI report, 2006). This filter illustrates the fact that the power to shape media content is not the media's alone, but is shared with a variety of institutions in the society, especially the government, political and business elite who are arguably tied to the corporate elite through financing as well as interpersonal connections (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003; Reese, 2001).

According to this filter, government and corporate sources are therefore attractive to the media for purely economic reasons because they facilitate the newsgathering process through 'press releases, advance copies of speeches and ready- for- news analysis' (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 19). Information from the government and corporate circles is also generally regarded as prima-facie credible both within the media circles and the public at large. Such 'prima facie credible' conception is to the advantage of the media because to protect 'themselves from criticisms of bias and maintain an image of objectivity, they need material that can be portrayed as presumptively accurate. Taking materials from sources perceived as prima facie credible also reduces investigative cost (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002). This can partly explain the low number of investigative stories in the media especially in the Kenyan case and the near obsession with reporting on politics. Due to this, the interests of the majority members of the

subordinate class are likely to be sidelined because investigating and fact proofing might take much more time, cost and effort than relying on the ‘free and ready’ corporate and government sources.

These ‘official’ sources of information in turn aggressively promote their dominant ideologies, the favorable images of their corporate activities and provide ‘experts’ who endorse the ‘official ideology’ through commentaries and talk shows. The media accept the opinions of these ‘authorized knowers’ without scrutiny hence largely excluding dissenting views from public forums. Due to the media’s over dependence on these official sources and the ‘continuous contact on the beat, the powerful can use personal relationships, threats and rewards to further influence and coerce the media. The media may also feel obligated to carry extremely dubious stories and mute criticism in order not to offend their ready sources and disturb a close relationship’ (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 22).

This has implications on the individual journalists who can due to such influences sacrifice professional values of integrity, truth and impartiality so as not to ‘offend a source or disturb a close relationship’. In this study, this filter is used to analyse how this close symbiotic relationship between the media and the political elite may influence the ethical decisions of journalists especially during elections and referendums when public opinion is critically important. There have been claims (Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service, 2008; Oriare, 2008) that journalists are assigned on ‘tribal beats’ in mainstream media houses in Kenya so that they can source information from ‘their person’- a politician from the journalist’s ethnic community. This study seeks to establish the extent to which this assignment

of journalists on tribal beats is present at the NMG and how it influences the decisions of the journalists.

3.4.4 Filter 4: Flak as a means of disciplining the Media

The fourth filter ‘flak’ focuses on the concept of power of external and internal forces that are likely to influence media performance. Flak is ‘the negative criticism/ feedback or punishment that powerful news sources and advertisers inflict on media and journalists who do not report according to the script these agents prefer. It may take the form of withdrawal of adverts or inaccessibility to ‘authoritative prized’ news sources or the ridicule and humiliation of reporters’ (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 436). The ability to produce flak and especially flak that is costly and threatening is related to power. Due to their economic might, corporate organizations, political heavy weights and government are classified as the dominant providers of flak (Zollmann, 2009; Herman and Chomsky, 2002).

In this study, we also introduce the concept of internal sources of flak that Herman and Chomsky do not cover in their model. We use the term internal flak to refer to the silent policies, pressure from management to individual journalists to toe the line either to promote the shareholders interests, advertisers’ interests or to promote the interests of affiliate sister companies of the NMG. As Pedro (2011:1887) observes, the media industry itself plays an important role as a generator of flak. The study therefore seeks to establish how external and internal forms of flak are manifested at the NMG

and how they pressure journalists to act in a way that may compromise their ethical decisions.

3.4.5 Filter 5: Anti –communism- modern usage: convergence in the promotion of Dominant Ideology

The last filter of ‘anticommunism’ has since been modified and broadened after the fall of communism to ‘refer to dominant ideological elements; the ideological convergence between the establishment and the media with respect to the supposed benefits of neo-liberal global capitalism’ (Klaehn, 2009: 45; Boyd- Barrett, 2004: 436). Herman and Chomsky (2002) note that although the end of the Cold War effectively undermined the initial anti-communist ideology, the filter can still be used to explain the greater ideological force of the belief in the ‘miracle of the market’. Herman and Chomsky observe that,

...the triumph of capitalism and the increasing power of those with an interest in privatization and market rule have strengthened the grip of market ideology, at least among the elite, so that regardless of evidence, markets are assumed to be benevolent and even democratic...and non- market mechanisms are suspect...journalism has internalized this ideology. (Herman & Chomsky, 2002: xvii-xviii).

From a critical perspective, the media are regarded as ideological institutions (Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1970). Ideological analysis of media institutions therefore involves assumptions about power and how it is distributed in

society (Reese, 2001). A critical analysis of media as ideological institutions is concerned with how power is exerted by the natural workings of the media system, creating a process of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), which may be regarded as systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order (Reese, 2001:182). The dominant ideology plays an important role in each of the previous filters naturalizing and promoting a type of information consistent with elite interests (Pedro, 2011:1889). This filter is used in this study to find out from the journalists what the dominant ideology in Kenya is and the ways in which the media system promotes, supports and legitimises this dominant ideology.

The propaganda model therefore provides the researcher with a structural framework within which to analyse the performance of the NMG. By outlining the principal structural conditions under which the commercial media operate, the researcher uses the model to demonstrate in chapter 5 that due to the interlocking relationships with capital and other dominant institutional sectors, journalists at the NMG result to self-censorship and corporate censorship through the silent editorial policy guidelines in order to protect owners' commercial interests.

3.5 Criticisms against the Propaganda Model

Like any other model/ theory, the propaganda model has received several criticisms from different scholars. Several critics of the model (Corner, 2003; Lang and Lang, 2004; Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Sparks, 2007; Schlesinger,

1989; Golding & Murdock, 1991; Hallin, 1994) have drawn attention to issues for which they believe the model cannot account, or to theoretical dimensions in which it appears deficient, but so far ‘there have been no falsifications of its main hypotheses’ (Sparks, 2007:69).

We are going to analyze some of the most common criticisms against the model and offer counter arguments on the basis of available literature and our knowledge of the Kenyan media scene in an attempt to show why the filters outlined in the model are appropriate analytical tools for our study.

1. That it is reductionist, deterministic and pure conspiracy

One of the most common criticisms against the Propaganda Model and political economy approaches in general is that they are reductionist and deterministic because they ‘attribute complex cultural processes and events such as media production to a single political-economic cause such as the interest of the social class that controls the means of production; or to the requirements within capitalism for owners and executives to make profits’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:45). Such structural approaches are accused of ignoring journalistic agency and professionalism (Hallin, 1994). The propaganda model is criticized for presenting a ‘conspiratorial’ view of media performance (Entman, 1990). The model is also criticized for overemphasizing the structural factors that determine news selection and thus it eschews or marginalizes intentionality (Boyd- Barrett, 2004:435).

Lang and Lang (2004) have for instance dismissed the propaganda model as a pure conspiratorial and reductionist view of media performance because ‘it assigns the media system just one major function- ‘to manufacture consent’ (Lang &Lang, 2004:94). Lang and Lang (2004) challenged the theoretical

adequacy of the model and questioned whether it approximated how the media function. They further argued that Herman and Chomsky failed to provide information about their sampling and coding procedure. They doubted ‘the viability of the model about ‘the media’ in general based on anecdotal evidence’ (Lang & Lang, 2004:95).

Herman and Chomsky (2004:103) respond to these criticisms by stressing that their sampling and coding procedures were clear and the empirical data could be checked; it was not anecdotal. Herman and Chomsky maintain that the propaganda model constitutes a ‘structural analysis’ of media performance with the results largely an outcome of the working of market forces. They also respond to the ‘deterministic’ claim by asserting that any model involves deterministic elements and that their model does not account for every detail of such a complex matter as the working of a national mass media (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Herman, 2000).

Further, Herman (2000) observes

that the critics fail to show that the system is not logically consistent, operates on false premises, or that the predictive power of the determining variables is poor. The critics acknowledge that the cases we present are powerful, but they don’t show where the alleged determinism leads to error nor do they offer or point to alternative models that would do a better job. The model only deals with extraordinarily complex sets of events, and only claims to offer a broad framework of analysis (Herman, 2000:103).

Herman and Chomsky therefore deny that the model is ‘conspiratorial’ or ‘deterministic’ , but only suggest that the structural contexts in which news discourses are produced are such that media themselves are predisposed to serve propaganda functions within capitalist, liberal democratic societies (Klaehn & Mullen, 2010:218). Rai (1995) and Klaehn (2002) also support Herman and Chomsky’s position by pointing out that the term ‘conspiracy theory’ implies secret controls that operate outside normal institutional channels but the propaganda model explains media behaviour in terms of institutional imperatives. ‘The model assumes that patterns of media behaviour should be explained in structural terms and does not assume conspiracy’ (Klaehn, 2002:149).

Boyd- Barrett (2004) and Sparks, (2007) who present a ‘sympathetic criticism’ of the model support the viability of the model by observing that the model has a strong deductive appeal and for some of the filters that Herman and Chomsky identify, it is relatively easy to find convincing evidence of the filters at work (Boyd- Barrett, 2004:448). Boyd- Barrett (2004) successfully uses the five filter elements plus his proposed ‘sixth filter’- the direct purchase of media influence by powerful sources, or the “buying out” of individual journalists or their media by government agencies and authorities (Boyd- Barrett, 2004:436) to analyse the mainstream media’s coverage of the war in Iraq and this is evidence that the filters can objectively be applied to analyse media performance.

Several political economists in Africa (Lovaas, 2009; Musa & Mohammed, 2004; Nyamnjuh, 2004; Tomaselli, 2002; Botma & Wasserman, 2008; Steenveld, 2004) have also used the structural approach to convincingly

analyse media performance in different African contexts. Lovaas (2009) directly applies Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model in the South African context to analyse media performance of market-driven English newspapers. The study revealed that capitalism and the resulting interlocking capital of board members, newspaper owners, advertisers and the government cause newspapers to engage in self censorship and exclusion of threatening voices to advance the interests of the elite (Lovaas, 2009:7).

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) also advance a 'Hierarchy of Influences Model' where they identify five main levels of influence, which shape media performance: the individual journalist, news routines, organizational, extra-media and ideological levels. Like the propaganda model, the Hierarchy of Influences model takes into account the larger structure within which journalists function (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Reese, 2001). Shoemakers and Reese's model however introduces other 'levels of influence' like the role of the individual journalists at the micro level to obviate the criticism waged against Herman and Chomsky's model; that it overemphasizes 'structural determinism'.

By introducing the individual journalist as a level of influence, Shoemaker and Reese's model can be regarded as recognizing journalistic agency. However, the five levels of influence and how they affect media performance are very similar to the five filter elements outlined by Herman and Chomsky. Through the five levels of influence, Shoemaker and Reese show that commercial, corporate and extra media factors affect media performance at every level. This reinforces the fact that the Propaganda Model, as a structural critique of media performance is not purely

conspiratorial and deterministic. The Hierarchy of Influences Model is however regarded (Hackett, 2006) as taking into account a broader range of factors that influence news content.

This study therefore obviates the critique of the propaganda model being overly deterministic and reductionist by incorporating Shoemaker and Reese's element of the role of the individual journalist and social dynamics in the newsroom as levels of influence that work in relation to the five primary filters outlined in the propaganda model in the news production process. The study uses the qualitative interviews to establish from individual journalists if the constrictions of the filters are 'omnipotent'. As Pedro (2011:1892) observes, there are spaces for the professional autonomy of media employees, making it possible to publish information that does not always coincide with the economic, social and ideological interests of the owners.

Sometimes journalists indirectly and directly influence the content of news because of their personal beliefs and attitudes as well as their professional values. Journalists participate in micro-processes of negotiation which depending on the persistence and relative power of the parties involved, produce different results, which are sometimes those desired by honest journalists (Pedro, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Through the interview responses, the researcher therefore seeks to find out the extent to which journalists at the NMG exercise their personal and professional autonomy to influence news content despite the structural constraints as outlined in the filters.

Hackett & Uzelman (2003), building on Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) Hierarchy of Influences Model also use a structural approach to analyse the influence of journalists' biases, owners, commercial and political interests in the performance of Canadian commercial newspapers. Their study revealed that commercial and corporate interests have potential influence of media performance at every level identified by Shoemaker and Reese (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003:333). Zollmann (2009) also applied the propaganda model to analyse the UK press coverage of the Iraq War and the build-up to it. Zollmann argues that although the model was developed and applied in the US context, evidence suggests that it is also relevant for analysis of the British Press (Zollmann, 2009:103).

Therefore in our view, as Herman and Chomsky and other sympathizers of the model maintain (Lovaas, 2009; Klaehn, 2002; 2009; Klaehn & Mullen, 2010, Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Sparks, 2007), the propaganda model presents an institutional/ structural critique of media structure and performance by outlining the ways in which news materials are 'filtered' by the constraints built into the system. The propaganda model provides an overview of the media system at work, making sense out of a confusing picture by extracting the main principles that influence the running of the system (Rai, 1995; Klaehn, 2002).

Through the five filters, the propaganda model outlines the structural constraints that influence the actions of media owners and media workers in a capitalist system. News production processes are shaped by a range of factors as illustrated by the 'filter elements' as presented in the model (Zollmann, 2009; Klaehn, 2002; 2009; Klaehn & Mullen, 2010) and as

presented by Shoemaker and Reese in their model. As Sparks (2007:69) observes, the propaganda model is one of the best available attempts to provide a robust analytic framework for understanding the performance of the news media. The critics should therefore recognize both the limits and strengths of the model, while seeking to extend and modify its explanatory power (Boyd- Barrett, 2004; Sparks, 2007) instead of dismissing it as purely conspiratorial or deterministic. This study seeks to partly address Boyd-Barrett (2004) and Sparks (2007) concerns about modifying the model to extend its explanatory power through the use of qualitative interviews to establish if journalists think they enjoy agency amidst the structural constraints as outlined in the filters and proposing a ‘sixth filter’ of ethnicity in newsrooms when applying in the Kenyan case (see chapter five on analysis of research findings).

2. That it ignores agency of media workers and audience

The propaganda model has been criticized (Golding & Murdock 1991; Hallin, 1994; Schlesinger, 1989; Goodwin, 1994) for suggesting a lack of agency on the part of audience and media workers. The above critics generally accuse the model of presenting media workers as passive puppets of media owners and the elite class where as audiences are portrayed as helpless victims of the highly biased mainstream media. Herman and Chomsky respond to the criticism of ‘portraying audiences as helpless victims’ by stating that their model is ‘about media structure and performance, not the effects of the media on the public’ (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: xii). This in effect means that the issue of treating

audiences as passive helpless victims does not arise since this would only make sense if the model was about media effects.

Golding and Murdock (1991) criticise the model for being instrumentalist; for asserting that owners and advertisers intervene directly into the operation of the media to ensure their interests are preserved or promoted. In their critique, Golding and Murdock argue that the propaganda model ignores the ability of journalists and media workers to resist the intervention of owners. Herman and Chomsky respond to this criticism by maintaining that media workers do not have complete autonomy to make choices and decisions. This is because their choices and decisions are largely influenced by the

pre-selection of right thinking personnel, internalized preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organization, market and political power. Censorship is largely self-censorship, by reporters who adjust to the realities of source and organizational media requirements, and by people at higher levels within the media organizations who are chosen to implement the owners' policies and have usually internalized the constraints imposed by proprietary and other market and government centers of power (Herman and Chomsky, 1988:xii).

As Chomsky (1989) states, 'the propaganda model does not assert that the media parrot the line of the current state managers in the manner of a totalitarian regime, rather that media reflect the consensus of powerful elites of the state- corporate nexus generally' (Chomsky, 1989:149). Herman (2000) adds to Chomsky's defense of the model by observing that the model does not assume that news workers and editors are typically coerced or

directly instructed to omit certain voices and accentuate others, but rather the model outlines circumstances under which media will be relatively open or closed on particular issues. The model simply points out that the autonomy of the media and media workers is limited due to increasing concentrated ownership, dependence on advertising as the chief source of revenue and routine reliance upon corporate and state sources and this makes the media to be prone to manipulation and to serve a propaganda function (to manufacture consent) on behalf of the powerful elite in the society.

Although self censorship is an aspect of journalistic agency (Jansen, 2010), journalists do not have complete freedom to act on their beliefs and attitudes, but must operate within a multitude of limits imposed by several structural constraints (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Reese, 2007; 2001; Hackett & Uzelman, 2003). Newsroom routines and media organizational interests ultimately influence journalistic agency because media owners or their appointed top executives have the final say in what the organization does (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:163). Ownership allocates resources, hires senior personnel, determines target markets and sets broad policy guidelines (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003:332).

Therefore although journalists retain their agency to make independent decisions, this autonomy can be said to be influenced by the factors that Herman and Chomsky outline above hence resulting to self censorship, which compromises the journalists' capacity to fulfil their normative public interest role in the society. As (Richards, 2004:119), observes, as much as the individual journalist is an essential unit of agency, he or she does not act in a vacuum. Organizational interests are therefore often executed through

owners and the management. McNair (2003:57) notes that the mechanism by which proprietors can exert control is through their power to appoint key personnel...who become the proprietor's 'voice' within the newsroom, ensuring that journalistic independence conforms to the preferred editorial line'. This study therefore examines the extent to which 'key personnel'- the board of directors and the executive team at the NMG act as the 'proprietor's voice' and how this compromises journalistic autonomy and agency in their daily practice.

Several other studies seem to support Herman and Chomsky's claim that corporate interests influence journalists, despite their agency for instance (Richards, 2004; Hackett & Uzelman, 2003; Ogong'a & White, 2008; Bagdikian, 2004; Klaehn 2005; McChesney, 1997; Parenti, 2003; Curran and Seaton, 2003). Therefore, as much as media workers may have the autonomy to determine what is newsworthy and what is not, this autonomy is limited in that their choices are dictated by the prevailing market, media structure forces and market pressures.

These pressures and constraints often strongly influence journalists to internalize the values of the news organization that employs them and to become conditioned into particular institutional conventions (Richards, 2004:121). It can therefore be observed that although the media and media professionals control their own activities to some extent, they are constrained and directed at many points by more remote, sometimes powerful forces (Christians et al, 2009:120).

This study addresses this gap of the propaganda model ignoring the agency of the individual journalist by incorporating the element of the role of the individual journalist and journalistic professionalism, which should be analysed in relation to the five filters. As Klaehn (2009) and Klaehn and Mullen (2010) have noted, the propaganda model may be complemented with other approaches concerned with dimensions which impact media performance and contribute to elite control. This study therefore addresses the criticism that the propaganda model ignores the role of the individual journalist by complementing it with Shoemaker and Reese (1996) second level of influence: the individual journalist in their Hierarchy of Influences Model.

In this way the study partly addresses the concerns of several scholars (Pedro, 2011; Sparks, 2007; Boyd Barrett, 2004) who have called for the expansion of the model to broaden its explanatory power through the inclusion of other elements other than the original five filters. Unlike the original version of the model, by incorporating the element of journalistic agency, this study acknowledges that the decisions of journalists may not be overly determined by the ‘official’ five filters. Journalists do enjoy some form of agency no matter how limited. It is through the interviews that the researcher establishes how much agency journalists enjoy to resist the pressures from the filters.

3. Assuming unified ideas and interests of the ruling class

The model has been criticised for assuming ‘class cohesion and that elite institutional sectors share common interests; that a ruling class and

institutional nexus exists with common political, economic and social interests and that media will reflect these interests' (Klaehn, 2002: 154). Golding & Murdock (1991) argue that the model assumes that media owners and managers directly 'conspire' to determine media content. They criticise such an interpretation of media performance for presenting the role of the media as an instrument of the ruling class interests strategically deployed to protect and promote class interests.

Sparks (2007), who like Boyd- Barrett (2004) was largely in agreement with the main tenets of the model challenged Herman and Chomsky's claims about elite consensus and dissents, questioning the strategic- tactical dichotomy they posited. Sparks (2007) observes that not only is the capitalist class frequently divided on account of their particularistic interests, but economic and political systems of other countries are quite different from that of the US. Sparks therefore calls for a revision of the model to allow for the systematic representation of diverse opinions within the spectrum of legitimate politics, rather than positing the unified propaganda function of the media (Sparks, 2007:73, 82).

The model does assume class cohesion, and it argues that mass media interlock with other institutional sectors (Klaehn, 2009). The propaganda model assumes that elite institutional sectors share common interests and subscribes to the view that a unified ruling political and economic class and institutional nexus exists, with common political, economic and social interests (Klaehn, 2002; 2003; 2009; Klaehn & Mullen, 2010; Zollmann, 2009). Herman and Chomsky state that the media serve to foster and enforce an intellectual and moral culture geared towards protecting wealth and

privilege from the threat of public understanding and participation hence the media are largely ideological apparatus for the elite (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002).

As Klaehn (2002) notes in response to this criticism, although there may be contradictions and divergent interests that exist within and between the political and economic ruling elite class, they are eclipsed by the common goals and overlapping institutional interests/objectives that are shared among what arguably constitutes a unified ruling class. In the Kenyan case, the media have been accused (Mutere, 2005; Makokha, 2010; Ogola, 2011) of colluding with political and economic elite to protect elite interests during critical times like general elections and referendum when public opinion is critically important. So there is a way in which the media can be said to promote some form of ‘unified’ elite interests at the expense of the majority interest.

Herman (1982) further observes that,

the mass media of the United States are a part of the national power structure and they therefore reflect its biases and mobilize popular opinion to serve its interests. This is not accomplished by any conspiratorial plotting or explicit censorship – it is built into the structure of the system, and flows naturally and easily from the assorted ownership, sponsor, governmental and other interest group pressures that set limits within which media personnel can operate, and from the nature of the sources on which the media depend for their steady flow of news. (Herman, 1982:139)

Therefore, although there are clearly differences between the political elite, the business elite, the journalistic elite, and so on, they are tied together by common class interests and will tend to share a range of basic assumptions about the world that will inform their actions, and their media, and that therefore there will be a tendency towards uniformity in the coverage of important stories (Sparks, 2007:71).

The authors of the model do not rule out divergent ideas at the level of the ruling class, but they predict that they are likely to unite when their interests are at stake and in such cases ‘media are unlikely to undermine the interests of the Establishment’ (Boyd- Barrett, 2004:435). As Pedro (2011:1891) observes, the propaganda model posits that there is room for intense and vigorous debates, although these are generally restricted to the spectrum of elite opinion (the media tends to cover all elite positions, including their mutual criticisms and disputes).

This study however takes note of Sparks (2007) argument

that like any other group of workers, the objective interests of journalists do not always coincide with those of their managers and employers. This shortcoming means that the Propaganda Model is blind to some of the important ways in which the dictates of the model are contested by journalists themselves (Sparks, 2007: 79-80).

More often, journalists attempt to resist the dictates of the structural constraints as outlined in the filters by insisting upon professional standards and autonomy from the owners’ interests (Sparks, 2007). Through the interviews, this study seeks to find out if journalists are tied together with

the political and economic elite by common class interests and the extent to which they exercise their autonomy to contest dominant elite control in the newsrooms.

This study therefore seeks to theoretically modify the propaganda model in an attempt to show that journalists position themselves between conflicting elite and source pressures as they make their daily decisions on how best to provide an account of the world that is at least comprehensible to the public.

4. New media renders the model irrelevant

With the rise of new media, especially the Internet, it is reasonable to question the relevance of the propaganda model. Some scholars (Williams, 2003; Rheingold, 1994) have argued that new communications technologies have revolutionised the operation of the media. New media have broken the 'shackles of the problem of ownership' (Williams, 2003:91) and the agenda setting power of elite media. With citizen journalists and social media, the mainstream media can no longer 'manufacture public consent' as it were with the model. Rheingold (1994) argues that new media especially the Internet is one means by which the domination of information flow by large corporations and the state can be repelled, and the management of public information resisted. The Internet and other technologies have therefore been regarded as spelling the end of the large, monopolistic media corporations by widening choice and empowering individuals (Williams, 2003). The model has therefore been dismissed as having been taken over by events.

Herman and Chomsky (2002) reflect upon the arguments that the 'Internet and the new communications technologies are breaking the corporate stranglehold on journalism and opening an unprecedented era of interactive democratic media' (Herman & Chomsky, 2002: xv). While acknowledging the fact that new media have increased citizen participation resulting in some important victories for protest movements (Klaehn & Mullen, 2010), the authors suggest that,

the Internet has limitations as a critical tool. For one thing, those whose information needs are most acute are not well served by the Internet – many lack access, its databases are not designed to meet their needs, and the use of databases (and effective use of the Internet in general) presupposes knowledge and organization. Furthermore, the privatization of the Internet's hardware, the rapid commercialization and concentration of Internet portals and servers and their integration into non-Internet conglomerates – the AOL-Time Warner merger was a giant step in that direction – and the private and concentrated control of the new broadband technology, together threaten to limit any future prospects of the Internet as a democratic media vehicle (Herman & Chomsky, 2002:.xvi).

These developments, the authors further observe, are compounded by the 'rapid penetration of the Internet by leading newspapers and media conglomerates, all fearful of being outflanked by small pioneer users of the new technology and are willing (and able) to accept losses for years while testing out these new waters' (Ibid). In short, the traditional media, dominated by corporations, are now colonizing the new media. The net result, Herman and Chomsky reasoned, is that the five filters, and thus the

explanatory powers of the propaganda model, had been strengthened, rather than diminished, by such developments (Klaehn & Mullen, 2010:224).

Herman (2000) in defence of the model in the era of new media argues that one can indeed observe the reverse to be true; that new communications technologies exacerbate the problem of media concentration. New communications technologies make possible global distribution systems that reduce the number of media entities and in most cases the same conglomerates dominate new media. Golding and Murdock (2000) also voice out their scepticism about the power of new communications technology by pointing out the differential access to communication and cultural goods; it is the affluent who have the greatest access to the new communications technologies and this has been exacerbated by the process of de-regulation and privatization of media industries. Herman and McChesney (1997) on their part argue that the convergence of the media and the de-regulation and privatization of the media industries around the world are indeed encouraging the further concentration of ownership. It is therefore a case of new media, old owners.

In the Kenyan context, although new media in the form of cellular phones, emails and social media have infiltrated into the citizen exchange forum on critical issues (new media through Short Message Services (SMS), emails and blogs played significant roles; both positive and negative in fuelling the post election violence in 2007 as well as acting as the alternative informative media on the crisis after the government banned live broadcasts), the majority of the population in Kenya still regard information from the mainstream media as 'gospel truth' (Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust

Report, 2008; Steadman report, 2008). We can therefore use Herman & Chomsky (2002) and Golding and Murdock (2000) observations to argue that those whose information needs are most acute in Kenya (the majority poor in the rural areas) are not well served by the Internet – they lack access. The leading newspapers and media conglomerates, in Kenya, the NMG included have also rapidly penetrated the Internet in fear of being outflanked by small pioneer users of the new technology (the bloggers).

The advent of new media in Kenya has done little to change the type of information presented by corporate mass media like the NMG and the propaganda model can still be perfectly valid for the analysis of online mainstream news production. For instance the online edition of the *Daily Nation* is a replica of the print edition and it has to be published within the corporation's acceptable standards. What we are witnessing in the media scene in Kenya is actually convergence and not 'new media revolution' because while new media especially the Internet can be used to empower the grassroots, it is also increasingly being shaped and controlled by big corporations.

5. Offers nothing new, only applicable in U.S contexts

Corner (2003) doubted whether the propaganda model devised to explain the performance of the media in the U.S 'could be applied in countries with very different media systems and political structures' (Corner, 2003:367). Lang and Lang (2004) also claim that the Chomsky methodology sounds scientific except that Chomsky selected his cases (and his data) to make a political point and therefore it offers nothing new. As Sparks (2007) observes, although the propaganda model in its classical expositions is primarily

concerned with the US media, the model makes a broader claim: ‘In this book, we sketch out a ‘propaganda model’ and apply it to the performance of the mass media in the United States’ (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: xi). On this account, the propaganda model itself is distinct from its application to the particular social and economic circumstances of the USA (Sparks, 2007:70).

By applying the model to investigate and explain how the outlined structural constraints (filters) influence individual journalists at the NMG, we believe that we will have addressed the critics concern that the model ‘lacks objectivity, uses anecdotal evidence and offers nothing new since it focuses on how the United States (US) media covers American foreign policy’ (Lang and Lang, 2004:94). Applying the model to the Kenyan case illustrates its applicability in other contexts outside the U.S; that the filters can be used to objectively analyse and understand media performance in any democratic society (in developing and developed countries).

This criticism can be countered further by noting that several other scholars have applied the model to media analysis elsewhere: Lovaas, (2009) in South Africa and Zollmann (2009) in UK media. Jackson and Stanfield (2004) and Boyd- Barrett (2004) have also used the model to analyse different issues in the U.S context. It can therefore be observed that the model can be used to analyse media performance in any democratic society since private-corporate media in other developed countries like the UK and developing and transitional democracies like South Africa and Kenya operate under the same structural and organizational constraints that correspond to the filters of the model.

The filters of the propaganda model correspond to the institutional and organizational constraints under which media operate in liberal democracies and they can be empirically tested in different contexts. As Herman and Chomsky (1988) observe, there are differences between the U.S. media and media of other countries. Nevertheless, at a basic structural and organizational level, the private-corporate media in other economically developed (and developing countries) countries operate under the restrictions imposed by the propaganda model (Pedro, 2011:1909). This study by empirically testing the validity of the filters in the Kenyan context through the interviews of individual journalists seeks to reinforce the idea that the filters of the propaganda model can be objectively used to explain media performance in economically developing countries as well.

In conclusion, it can be observed that by presenting a structural analysis of media performance, Herman and Chomsky critique

the logic of the market place as it applies to culture and ideas. Corporate media like any other entity in the market pursue profits for their shareholders because that is what the market logically expects of them. Although there is nothing necessarily conspiratorial in this, the pursuit of profits is not a value- neutral exercise. As they pursue profits, corporate media do not want to promote information or views that contradict their goals. As a result, the views that dominate in corporate media tend to be those that are compatible with the corporate world view (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006: 177-178).

A media conglomerate's best interests may directly conflict with the news media's normative role as protector of the public interest. It follows therefore that the corporatization of the newsroom and the corresponding extension of influence of corporate pressures on journalists does raise ethical issues (Richards, 2004:122). This study addresses some of those ethical issues by testing the applicability of the propaganda model in the Kenyan context, while at the same time seeking to extend the explanatory power of the model by drawing on the sociological insights encapsulated in Shoemaker and Reese's model, which acknowledges social dynamics and individual agency. Through the interviews of journalists, the study examines the extent to which journalists are able to exercise their autonomy to resist the structural pressures as outlined in the filters.

3.6 Normative Approaches to Media Performance in Kenya

3.6.1 Introduction

This section examines the normative framework within which journalists operate as they make their daily ethical decisions in Kenya. The section briefly examines the ethical principles in the Code of conduct for journalists in Kenya provided by the Media Council of Kenya and those stipulated in the editorial policy guidelines of the NMG. The researcher then seeks to establish from the interviews the extent to which journalists experience structural constraints as outlined in the propaganda model in ways that may compromise their capacity to adhere to the outlined ethical principles as well

as the extent to which the NMG promotes the adherence of these principles among practicing journalists.

The section will also examine the structure of the Media Council of Kenya, which is the official regulatory body for media practice in Kenya. The researcher also examines the nature of complaints lodged against the NMG at the Media Council so as to contextualize the responses from journalists within the broader ethical discourse in the country.

3.6.2 Normative Framework in Kenya

Normative theories of the media generally describe the ideal values, roles and desired criteria against which media systems may be structured and evaluated; they describe what the media should or should not do in the society (McQuail, 2005; Fourie, 2007; Christians et al, 2009). Normative media theories are concerned with the ‘freedom of or restrictions on the media in various situations and how this impacts on the functions of the media in the society’ (Fourie, 2007: 269). Normative media theories outline both the internally chosen purposes of the media and the claims from outside about how the media should conduct themselves. They state certain norms and standards and apply these to the actions of the media; they define the various expectations concerning the structure, conduct and performance of the media (McQuail, 2005). Nordenstreng (2000: 69) observes that normative media theories describe the media- society link in two ways: One, the media are contracted by society to carry out certain tasks and two; the media are accountable to society for their performance.

Since the advent of political and economic liberalization and democratization in Kenya in the early 1990s, commercial media in Kenya have undergone a shift from an environment in which their freedom was highly controlled by an authoritarian system of government to one of self-regulation through codes of conduct and an independent media council. Media freedom in Kenya is explicitly protected under section 34 on the Bill of Rights in the new constitution.

This shift towards professional self-regulation has meant that media institutions have to develop a code of conduct to govern and guide media and journalistic practice in line with the new political and constitutional dispensation. Before liberalization in the early 1990s, the commercial media were expected under the authoritarian government to play a pivotal role in promoting the development agenda under the normative framework of development journalism, and the government could always intervene if it felt that the media was not discharging this role effectively (Ogola, 2011; Ali, 2010). The media half-heartedly played this role in order to secure the political 'goodwill' they needed to survive then (Ogola, 2011; Abuoga & Mutere 1988).

Most debates about media freedom and responsibility since liberalization have therefore centered on the relationship between the media and the government. In the new liberal environment, the private media enjoyed relative freedom from direct government control although the authoritarian KANU regime once in a while threatened to 'discipline errant' media institutions that did not support the developmental goal. Media freedom and

responsibility in the liberalized media environment has largely been conceived in terms of the traditional liberal- democratic model where media freedom is seen as a prerequisite for the truth to emerge in a free market of ideas. Such interpretation of media freedom regards the government as the sole object of media vigilance derived from a period when the government was commonly thought to be the ‘seat’ of power and the main source of media oppression (Curran, 2000:122).

The liberal-democratic framework suggests that freedom of the media in any given society is a function of the relevant country’s political ecology and is strongly influenced by the traditional Western conceptions of the media’s ‘watchdog’ role in the society (Himmelboim & Limor, 2008). The underlying assumption is that the effectiveness of the media is dependent on a democratic legal and political environment (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

The political and media environment in Kenya has changed since the 1990s after political and economic liberalization. The government can no longer be regarded as the sole threat to media freedom. Several studies in other post liberalized transitional democracies (Wasserman, 2010; Botma & Wasserman, 2008; Lovaas, 2009) in the South African context show that market pressures pose equal threats to media freedom and responsibility to direct government intervention. This study therefore seeks to establish from the interview responses the extent to which market pressures pose threats to media freedom and responsibility at the NMG in Kenya.

The study also aims to establish from the journalists the normative framework within which they operate. The liberal- democratic model, which

is the prevailing normative framework in liberal democracies like Kenya has its roots in one of the ‘near obsolete’ *Four Theories* of the Press- the libertarian tradition, and has often been criticized for overlooking the threats posed by the ‘free market’ in new commercialized media environment (Vltmer, 2006). The Code of conduct for journalists and the regulatory body, the Media Council of Kenya seem to be enshrined in the tenets of the libertarian approaches of the Four Theories of the Press. The surveillance and watchdog function of the media in Kenya continues to be largely conceived of only in terms of government (Oriare, 2008). Other economic and symbolic centers of power in relation to media performance such as ownership structure, advertisers and shareholders’ interests seem to have been overlooked in such a liberal conception of media performance. The study aims to find out from the journalists the extent to which the liberal-democratic conception of the government being the main threat to media and journalistic freedom is still applicable in Kenya.

3.6.3 Code of Conduct for the Practice of journalism in Kenya

The Code of conduct for journalism Practice in Kenya as entrenched in the Second Schedule of the Media Act 2007 governs the conduct and practice of all media practitioners in the country. The Code of conduct which is developed by the Media Council of Kenya is meant to promote ethical standards among journalists and the media and it outlines 25 key ethical principles (Code of conduct, 2007:2) as follows:

- 1. Accuracy and Fairness:** Journalists should present news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance.

Journalists should write fair, accurate and unbiased stories on matters of public interest. All sides of the story shall be reported wherever possible.

2. Independence

Journalists should defend the independence of all journalists from those seeking influence or control over news content. They should vigorously resist undue influence from any outside forces including advertisers, sources, powerful individuals or special interest groups.

They should determine news content solely through editorial judgement and not the result of outside influence.

3. Integrity: Journalists should present news with integrity and decency, avoiding any real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well all subjects of news. They should not accept gifts, favours or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.

4. Accountability: Journalists and media practitioners should recognize that they are accountable for their actions to the public, the profession and themselves. They should recognize that they are duty bound to conduct themselves ethically.

5. Opportunity to reply: A fair opportunity to inaccuracies should be given to individuals or organizations when reasonably called for.

6. Unnamed Sources: Unnamed sources should not be used unless the pursuit of the truth will best be served by not naming who should be known by the editor or reporter.

- 7. Confidentiality:** In general journalists have an obligation to protect confidential sources of information.
- 8. Misrepresentation:** Journalists should generally identify themselves and not obtain or seek information or pictures through misrepresentation or subterfuge.
- 9. Obscenity, Taste and Tone in Reporting:** In general, journalists should avoid publishing obscene, vulgar or offensive material.
- 10. Paying for news or articles:** In principle, journalists should not receive any money as an incentive to publish any information.
- 11. Covering ethnic religious or sectarian conflict:** Provocative and alarming headlines should be avoided
- 12. Recording Interviews and telephone conversations:** Journalists should not tape or record anyone without the person's knowledge.
- 13. Privacy:** The public's right to know should be weighed against the privacy rights of individuals.
- 14. Intrusion into grief and shock:** In cases involving personal grief and shock, inquiries should be made with sensitivity and discretion.
- 15. Sex Discrimination:** Women and men should be treated equally as news subjects and news sources.
- 16. Financial Journalism:** Journalists should not write or broadcast about shares, securities and other market instruments in whose performance

they or their close families have interest without disclosing to the editor.

17. Letters to the editor: The editor is obliged not to publish all the letters received on a subject.

18. Protection of children: Children should not be identified in cases concerning sexual offences whether as victims, witnesses or defendants.

19. Victims of sexual offences: The Media should not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification.

20. Use of Pictures and names: The media should apply caution in the use of pictures and names and pictures of grief, disaster or any other embarrassment should be discouraged.

21. Innocent Relatives and Friends: The media should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.

22. Acts of violence: The media should avoid presenting acts of violence or terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such anti- social acts. Newspapers should not allow their columns to be used for writings which tend to encourage or glorify social evils, warlike activities, ethnic, racial or religious hostilities.

23.Editor's responsibilities: The editor shall assume the responsibility for all content including advertisements, published in a newspaper.

24.Advertisements: The editor should not allow any advertisement which is contrary to any aspect of this code of conduct.

25.Hate speech: Quoting persons making derogatory remarks based on ethnicity, race, creed and sex shall be avoided.

This study therefore sought to find out from the interview responses the extent to which journalists say they adhere to these ethical principles as they make their daily decisions and what impediments they perceive to stand in the way of ethical journalism.

3.6.3 Media Self Regulation through the Media Council of Kenya

The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) is an independent national institution established by the Media Act 2007 as the leading institution in the regulation of media and the conduct and discipline of journalists (*The Media Observer*, 2011). Some of the major functions of the Council include:

- Mediate or arbitrate between the government and the public, between the public and the media and intra-media.
- Promote and protect freedom and independence of journalists
- To promote high professional standards among journalists
- Promote ethical standards among journalists and the media
- Ensure the protection of rights and privileges of journalists in the performance of their duties

- Promote high professional standards amongst journalists.

The researcher aimed to find out from the interviewees the extent to which they think the council fulfils the above roles as the official media self regulatory body in Kenya.

3.6.4 Council Structure

The council comprises of 13 members drawn from the Media Owners Association, the Kenya Union of Journalists and the media training institutions (Media Council of Kenya Report, 2011). The 13 council members have formed three committees:

The Accreditation and Training Committee: which oversees the registration and accreditation of journalists in the country as well as the training functions of the Council.

The Ethics and Public Information Committee: which oversees the adherence to the Code of Conduct for the Practice of journalism by media practitioners as well as the publicity of the Council.

The Finance and Administration Committee: which oversees the financial and administrative operations of the Council.

It is important to note that the Media Owners Association has three representatives at the Council including the CEO of the NMG, Mr. Linus Gitahi. The Editorial Director of the NMG, Mr. Joseph Odindo is also the

only representative of the Kenya Editors Guild at the Council. The researcher sought to find out from the journalists' responses if the presence of the NMG CEO and the editorial director in the Council may explain the number of few complaints cases filed at the complaint commission of the Council against the NMG. An examination of the number of cases filed against the NMG showed that NMG had the least number of complaints (8 complaints for the last three years) compared to the other media houses.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and explained the main theoretical approaches that the study uses to achieve the research objectives and to answer the research questions. The chapter has discussed the critical political economy of the media from a general perspective and the main approaches of the political economy of the media tradition. The chapter has also discussed the propaganda model, which is the critical political economy approach used as an analytical tool for the structure and performance of the NMG in Kenya. The main criticisms raised against critical political economy in general and the propaganda model in particular have also been discussed and responded to in an attempt to prove the suitability of critical political economy approach in the study.

It has been argued that the increasing conglomeration, commercialization and marketization of the NMG can be attributed to the operation of the media as a business in the free market. Since this transforms the operations of the media to suit market conditions, it does raise ethical issues, part of

which this study addresses through the interview of individual journalists at the NMG.

The section has also examined the normative framework within which journalists operate in Kenya. An examination of the ethical principles in the Code of conduct for journalists in Kenya issued by the Media Council of Kenya has been given.

The structure and functions of the official media regulatory institution (the Media Council of Kenya) has also been examined. The researcher also analyzed the nature of complaints that have been lodged against the NMG for the last three years. Interestingly, there were only 8 complaints lodged against the Group most of which were in the form of complaint letters. The researcher therefore sought to find out from the interviews what the opinions of the journalists were in regard to such few cases- whether it was because journalists at the NMG do not violate the code of conduct, the public do not have trust in the council hence do not report their complaints or it was because of the presence of the NMG CEO and editorial director as council members.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology, Methods and Procedures

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and justifies the choice of research methodology, methods and procedures used to answer the research questions in the study. As stated in the introduction section, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What contextual factors have shaped media conglomeration (cross-media ownership structure) at the Nation Media Group in Kenya?
2. How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions?
3. What potential policy interventions can journalists propose to check the impact of media conglomeration (cross media ownership) on media ethics in Kenya?

The main aim of the study was to examine how journalists experience economic and political pressures inherent in a cross media ownership structure and the extent to which these pressures impact on their capacity to adhere to the ethical values of fairness, accuracy, independence, integrity, truth and impartiality as outlined in the Code of conduct for journalists in Kenya and the Editorial policy of the Nation Media Group (NMG). To

achieve this, the study used the qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviews and the institutional analysis of relevant company documents and literature.

The semi-structured interviews were combined with an institutional analysis of relevant company documents of the NMG. The latter analysis formed a basis for some of the questions that were probed in the interviews. The researcher conducted an institutional analysis of the Group's Annual reports, editorial policy, constitution of the management board, the economic status of the major shareholders and the non media business activities of the Group and any other company documents that 'document' the history of the Group. The researcher then sought to find out from the interviews how these economic factors are perceived by journalists to influence their ethical decisions.

The semi- structured interviews were therefore preceded by an institutional analysis and review of relevant company documents to form a background for the interview questions on the major political and economic factors that have shaped media structure and performance at the NMG in an attempt to answer the first research question namely: What contextual factors have shaped media conglomeration (cross media ownership structure) at the NMG in Kenya? Among the documents that were analysed included: *Nation Media Group: 50 Golden Years* in the *Daily Nation*, Thursday, March 18, 2010; *The Journey of the Nation* in the *Daily Nation*, April, 8, 2010; *2010 Nation Media Group Sustainability Report*; *2010 NMG Annual Report*; *The Journey of the Nation 1960-1969*; *The Journey of the Nation 1970-1979*; *2010 Nation Media Group Annual Report*.

According to Bertrand & Hughes (2005:109), institutional analysis of company documents provides information about how institutions work internally- how they worked in the past (historical studies), how they work in the present (descriptive studies and reports), and how they might work in the future (policy and policy oriented studies). The institutional analysis and review of these documents as well as the interview questions on the contextual factors were guided by one the key assumptions of the study: that the present media structure and performance in Kenya has its roots in the political and economic history of the country, and therefore media performance in Kenya has to be analysed within the broader political and economic framework of the country.

Since the study used a qualitative methodological approach, this chapter starts with a discussion of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to justify the researcher's choice of the qualitative methodology. This is followed by a discussion of the data collection methods and the sampling procedures. Some concluding remarks sum up the chapter.

4.2 Research Methodology

The term methodology is used here to refer to the philosophical assumptions and theories that inform and support the way in which a particular research method is used (Van Djik, 1997). Research methodology is the 'research

design, the strategy that shapes the choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes' (Crotty, 2005:7).

A qualitative methodological approach of semi-structured interviews and the institutional analysis of relevant company documents and literature (each of these methods are discussed in detail later in this chapter) was preferred over the quantitative methodology due to its ability to provide detailed data; to tell the story from the point of view of the actors; the people being studied, in our case journalists at the NMG (Silverman, 2005; Baxter & Babbie, 2003).

A qualitative approach allows for a framework of data collection methods that are more flexible for instance semi-structured interviews, which are used in this study, than most quantitative methods, for instance questionnaires or structured interviews. A qualitative approach is therefore more likely to allow the respondents to offer their own interpretations and explanations of events, as opposed to having responses categorized into an analytical framework preset by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewees to discuss processes, events and issues in their own words (Albarran, et al, 2006).

The primary objective of qualitative research is to generate rich detailed data about the issue under investigation, in this case the political and economic pressures that may compromise journalistic ethics at the NMG in Kenya. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews therefore allowed the researcher to probe the respondents for details in search of a 'fuller picture' of the issue. Such an approach enabled the researcher to explore, understand

and interpret the underlying often-implicit factors that influence journalists' ethical decisions from the perspective of the journalists (Bryman, 2004).

Qualitative methodology also emphasizes that we can only understand social actions by grasping the meaning that the actors attach to their actions (Baxter & Babbie, 2003). In this study, the researcher was able to understand why a journalist would make a particular ethical decision in a particular situation depending on the prevailing economic or political constraints at play. Qualitative research tends to view social life in terms of processes; there is often a concern to show how events and patterns unfold over time (Bryman, 2004:281).

In our case, to understand how NMG has evolved from one newspaper at its inception in 1959 to the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa, the researcher sought to gather some 'oral history' through the interviews from journalists who have worked with the Nation media since it was a one medium enterprise up to when it became a multi-media conglomerate to validate the data from the policy documents. In institutional research, personal testimonies as a form of oral history has the advantage of adding a human dimension to the written records and it allows people to speak for themselves; to reflect at leisure and with hindsight on their actions and decisions (Bertrand & Hughes 2005:141).

This could best be achieved through the use of data collection methods that allow the respondent to give an insider's view of how events and patterns have evolved over time like the semi structured interviews used in this study. Through the oral histories, the researcher was able to establish how

economic and political pressures have evolved over time in relation to conglomeration from the perspective of the respondents' oral histories.

Based on the interpretive epistemology⁹, a qualitative methodology focuses more on understanding the interpretations of the meanings people give to their actions as the basis of social knowledge; a qualitative methodology emphasizes on making sense of the world by focusing on the ways that people make meanings of the world (Bryman, 1984). A qualitative approach moves beyond description of a particular phenomenon to strive for a comprehensive understanding of mean making in a particular setting (Baxter & Babbie, 2003:61). This approach stresses understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants; in order to understand social actions we must grasp the meaning that the actors attach to their actions (Bryman, 2004:280).

By emphasizing on 'seeing the world through the eyes of those being studied', a qualitative approach seeks 'to probe beneath the surface appearances' (Bryman, 2004:280) of reality to provide a detailed account of what goes on in the setting being investigated. In this study, such an approach enabled the researcher to understand from the perspective of the journalists, what goes on 'behind the scenes'- what economic and political constraints influence their decisions and how they respond to them. Qualitative research typically emphasizes the contextual understanding of

⁹ The Interpretive paradigm suggests that human /social sciences are concerned with understanding human behaviour and the primary goal of the interpretive researcher is to embrace the subjective world of the people they are studying and try to see the world through their eyes. Interpretive epistemology is associated with qualitative research in contrast to positivism epistemology, which focuses on objective reality knowable through empirical observation associated with quantitative research (Baxter & Babbie, 2003; Crotty, 2005).

social behaviour and seeks to provide a detailed account of the context within which people's behaviour takes place (Bryman, 2004; Silverman, 2005; Baxter & Babbie, 2003). Based on the responses from the journalists, their behaviour and decisions can be understood within the context of the NMG, which captures the essence of this study- not to generalize the findings, but to understand the actions of the journalists within a particular context.

A Quantitative approach on the other hand, which is generally associated with the positivist epistemology, focuses on the measurement of variables, collection and analysis of numerical data and it seeks explanations and predictions with a view to generalize research findings (Baxter & Babbie, 2003; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:6). In contrast, the qualitative approach focuses on exploration and insight and uses forms of data collection methods and analysis such as qualitative interviews and qualitative content analysis, which rely on understanding with an emphasis on the meanings that people bring to them. The exploratory nature of qualitative research enables the researcher 'to embark on a mission of discovery rather than one of verification' (Bryman, 2004).

This means that qualitative researchers attempt to make sense of, or interpret reality in terms of the meanings that people bring to them and not the meaning imposed by the researcher through the relationship between variables (Silverman, 2005; Bryman, 1984). A qualitative approach regards the actor's perspective as the empirical point of departure unlike a quantitative approach, which tends to understand the actor and phenomenon

under investigation from the outside with little reference to the meaning from the point of view of the actor (Bryman, 2004; 1984).

Because the qualitative approach uses data collection methods that enable the researcher to get ‘an insider’s view’ of the phenomenon under investigation and to generate ‘rich’ detailed data unlike a quantitative approach which generally produces ‘superficial’ data based on the causal relationships between arbitrarily chosen variables which have little or no meaning to those individuals whose world they are meant to represent (Bryman, 1984: 79), it was found to be more suitable for this study.

The semi- structured interviews of individual journalists enabled the researcher to get an ‘insider’s view’ of how they experience economic and political pressures in an attempt to answer the second research question namely: How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions?

4.3 Research Methods

4.3.1 Institutional analysis of Relevant Company Documents

To answer the first research question on what contextual factors have shaped the cross- media ownership structure in Kenya, the researcher analysed the responses of the interviewed journalists on the same and did an institutional analysis by reviewing and analyzing relevant company documents among them: (*Nation Media Group: 50 Golden Years* in the *Daily Nation*, Thursday, March 18, 2010; *The Journey of the Nation* in the *Daily Nation*,

April, 8, 2010; *2010 Nation Media Group Sustainability Report*; *Nation Media Group Annual Report, 2010*; *The Journey of the Nation 1960-1969*; *The Journey of the Nation 1970-1979*. The information from the company documents formed a background for the interview questions on the contextual factors that have shaped the growth of the NMG. Written texts/documents are crucial reservoirs of secondary data for researchers because they are the “paper trail” left by events and processes (Lindlof, 1995; Baxter, 2003).

Bertrand & Hughes (2005:111) observe that institutional research help the researcher to ask three basic questions: 1) what was the institution like and how did it come to be that way? (Studies of the past), 2) what is the institution like and how did it come to be that way? (Studies of the present) and 3) How can knowledge of the past and present of the institution help us to determine what the institution might or should become? (Studies of the future). This study therefore used institutional analysis of relevant documents to understand and explain the performance of the NMG in the past (when it was only a one medium enterprise), to evaluate how it operates now and what factors have contributed to the present growth in an attempt to explain how journalists are likely to make decisions in the future with the increasing conglomeration.

Documents produced within the institution being studied ‘document’ a particular moment in time, thus allowing the researcher to follow changes in policy and practice (Bertrand & Hughes 2005:133). In this study, the institutional analysis of company documents enabled the researcher to trace and follow how the NMG has evolved over time from a one medium outlet

to the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa and the factors that have facilitated this growth. The researcher then sought to find out from the interview responses if the expansion of the Group has brought with it increased pressures on journalistic agency.

Through the review and analysis of these primary sources, the researcher was able to document the economic and political factors that have shaped the present media ownership structure of the NMG. This qualitative method was preferred because it typically emphasizes the contextual understanding of social processes; we can't fully understand the behaviour and performance of a particular institution (in this case the NMG) or members of a particular social group (in this case individual journalists at the NMG) other than in terms of the specific environment in which they operate (Bryman, 2004; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

As part of the institutional analysis, the researcher also examined the constitution of the management board of the NMG (the Board of directors and the executive team profiles). The aim was to get background information on the professional qualifications of the management team (if they are trained journalists), the ethnicity of the key board members as well as the interlocking business and political interests of the board of directors and the executive team. The researcher then probed from the interviews to find out if the professional orientation or the ethnicity of the management board influences their expectations of individual journalists (focusing on the bottom line- profits or biased reporting based on ethnic identities). The researcher also sought to find out the extent to which the affiliate interlocking business interests of the management team influence the

professional decisions of journalists at the NMG. For instance, the researcher was interested in finding out from the interviews if journalists experience pressure to protect any of the companies that the chairman of the NMG is also a director and chairman.

The researcher also sought to find out from the interviews how and who appoints the management board members and if this in any way influence the decisions of the journalists. The researcher also analysed the role of the executive team and the board of directors as spelt out in the company's Annual reports in an attempt to establish from the interviews if there is a conflict of interest between the management board's roles and those of the professional journalist.

The researcher further examined the main shareholders of the NMG according to the 2010 NMG Annual report in an attempt to get background information for the interview questions on owners and shareholders influence on journalists' ethical decisions in line with the first filter of the propaganda model: the size, concentrated ownership, owners' wealth and the profit orientation of the dominant mass- media firms.

4.3.2 Qualitative Semi- structured interviews

Qualitative interviewing involves an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in a particular way (Baxter & Babbie, 2003). Qualitative interviews enable the researcher to encourage the respondents to freely articulate their experiences and explanations about

a particular phenomenon. Qualitative interviews therefore focus on eliciting the respondents' point of view rather than confirming the interviewer's fixed position (Bryman, 2004; Lindlof & Taylor 2002).

In this study, the researcher asked the purposively chosen practicing and former journalists at the NMG a set of semi-structured questions, probing for details where necessary, but largely letting the respondent to tell their story. This method was best suited to gather information about the economic and political pressures that influence journalists' decisions, which could not be achieved effectively through other means. This method was also the best suited to probe for oral histories of the growth of the NMG from purposively chosen respondents who have been with the Group for more than 10 years.

The qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to get accounts of how journalists experience economic and political pressures in their work, to understand from the point of view of the journalists how these structural constraints inherent in commercial media like the NMG compromise their professional ethics and to establish what ethical framework guides the journalists in their day-to-day work. The semi-structured interviews were preferred over structured interviews to allow for maximum flexibility and to make the respondents more at ease.

Qualitative interviewing focuses on understanding meanings and meaning-making and is often regarded as a conversation with a purpose (Baxter & Babbie, 2003:324). Qualitative interviews provide accounts of people's experiences and offer explanations of behaviour (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Qualitative interviews give the respondents an opportunity to freely express

their perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and construction of reality (Punch, 1998). In this study, the interviews enabled the researcher to get an ‘insider’s view’ of how journalists experience economic and political pressures and to what extent these pressures influence their ethical decisions in an attempt to answer the second research question namely: How do journalists working at the NMG experience economic pressures that may influence their ethical decisions?

Qualitative interviews can also be used to verify, validate or comment on information obtained from other sources to achieve efficiency in data collection (Chibita, 2006:7). In this study, the interviews were used to verify, validate and comment on the information obtained from the institutional analysis of relevant company documents and literature. Qualitative interviewing enables the researcher to learn about things that cannot be observed directly by other means of verification, validation or commentaries on data obtained from other sources (Lindlof, 1995).

Qualitative interviewing also enables the researcher to get closer to the people being investigated, thus reducing the possibility of imposing inappropriate conceptual frameworks on them (Bryman, 2004). The interviews therefore enabled the researcher to get closer to the journalists and to understand some of the issues that could not have been understood through the analysis of documents. The questions in the interview guide were structured in a way to facilitate guided conversations (See interview guide/ schedule in the appendix).

Although the interviewer had a list of broad areas of inquiry touching on the contextual factors shaping cross media ownership structure, normative aspects, economic/political influences and related questions guided by the five filters of the propaganda model, the interviews did not proceed in a fixed order with a fixed set of questions. The formulation of the interview questions was guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework. The first set of questions was on the contextual factors that the journalists attribute to the growth of the NMG. The researcher was interested in getting detailed accounts of what in the journalists' view has led to the conglomeration of the NMG and centered on political and economic liberalization in line with the first research question: What contextual factors have shaped the cross- media ownership structure in Kenya? The researcher aimed at finding out if conglomeration at the NMG has led to increased political and economic pressures.

The second set of questions revolved around the normative values and the political and economic pressures on these values (see a copy of the interview questions attached as Appendix A). The researcher was interested in finding out the ethical values that guide the journalists in their work and the normative framework that journalists profess to abide by. The researcher then sought to find out the political and economic pressures that journalists experience on these values. The researcher then proceeded to ask the journalists questions touching on media freedom and responsibility. The focus was on the journalists' interpretation of the meaning of media freedom and responsibility; if they enjoy media freedom and the major threats to this freedom.

The third set of questions was on political and economic influences. The researcher was interested in finding out if the journalists think that the market is a threat to journalistic freedom and the forms of market pressures on the journalists' decisions. The focus was on market pressures from owners/ shareholders, advertisers, and political interests in line with the second research question: How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions?

The researcher then asked journalists if they think these market pressures should be checked and how, in line with the third research question; What potential policy interventions can journalists propose to check the impact of cross media ownership on media ethics in Kenya?

The interviewees were asked roughly the same questions in nearly the same order (see a copy of the interview questions in the appendix), but each interviewee was free to express him or herself at length although the researcher ensured that their expressions were in context. The interviewer also probed for explanations and clarifications from the respondents where necessary to get as much details as possible about the subject under investigation.

4.4 Sampling procedure

The study used purposive sampling to select the journalists to interview. Purposive sampling involves the selection of a sample on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population and its elements and the nature of

the research aims (Baxter & Babbie, 2003: 135). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which the researcher is interested (Silverman, 2005:129). Most qualitative researchers prefer purposive sampling to random sampling because this allows them to purposively seek out groups, settings and individuals where the process being studied is most likely to occur (Silverman 2005:129).

A purposive sample of 25 respondents was chosen based on specific characteristics that were of interest to the researcher. One of the key considerations was to select journalists from the main divisions of the NMG (print, electronic and online divisions). The researcher also purposively looked for journalists who have worked for the NMG since its inception to get some form of a 'oral history' of the structural evolution of the Group in an attempt to establish any connection between the Group's expansion and commercial/economic constraints on the professional ethics of the journalists.

Senior current and former journalists like the Group's editorial director, managing editors and senior editors were also be purposively sought to get their view on the prevalence (if any) of economic and political constraints and how they experience and/or respond to them. The views of junior journalists like sub editors, correspondents, reporters and news anchors were also purposively sought in an attempt to find out if their sentiments are in tune or different from those of their seniors on the same. Former journalists who have quit either voluntarily due to alleged economic or political pressures or those who have been sacked from the NMG were also sought to

get their version on the forms of political and economic constraints on journalistic ethics at the Group.

The researcher purposively chose journalists who are well known to her (to enhance honesty and the freedom to express their views). The researcher then used these sources to lead her to other sources that were willing to share their views on the subject. The researcher was primarily interested in understanding how economic and political pressures can influence journalists' ethical decisions and how journalists respond to these pressures (by succumbing to pressures or resisting them in various degrees). In all interviews, the researcher assured the interviewees of anonymity and source confidentiality to guarantee honesty. Respondents' names are therefore omitted from the data analysis in chapters 5 and at the appendixes.

4.5 Data Analysis

The interview responses were analyzed and categorized on the basis of the five filters of the propaganda model as the general themes. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher read and re-read the data noting down the main ideas in each set of data on the basis of the research questions and theoretical framework. The researcher first coded¹⁰ the data to see what themes emerged, then re-coded the data according to the themes that had been identified. The identified themes were then compared with the 5 filters to see

¹⁰ Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive data. Codes usually are attached to 'chunks' of varying size- words, phrases, sentence or paragraphs connected or unconnected to a specific setting (Neuman, 2006:460). Coding entails reviewing transcripts and giving labels or names to component parts of the data that seem to be of potential theoretical significance. The data are treated as potential indicators of concepts and the indicators are constantly compared to see which concepts they best fit (Bryman, 2004:402).

if they correspond. The researcher then organised the data on the basis of the identified themes in line with the five filters of the propaganda model: 1) the size, ownership and profit orientation of the media 2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media, 3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power and 4) flak as a means of disciplining the media 5) Anti- communist ideology, which in this study is used in the revised version to mean the ideological force of the belief in the miracle of the market and hegemony (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; 2008).

With the aid of thematic analysis, the transcripts of the interviews were therefore analysed for recurring patterns and meanings. The recurring patterns or themes in an interview capture the essence of an account and lead researchers to a practical understanding of meanings and actions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Bryman, 2004).

The researcher therefore undertook the following activities in the first wave of thematic analysis:

- 1) Reading and re-reading all the interview answers carefully bearing in mind the interview questions, research questions, study objectives and discussion topics
- 2) Grouped all responses under the broad themes of: growth of NMG, influence from owners, shareholders/ non- media interests, influence from advertisers, influence from political interests, media freedom and

responsibility, threats to media freedom and measures to counter market pressures

- 2) Underlined parts of the responses that captured a particular sub- theme and made rough categories of all answers that seemed to belong together creating a label/code in the form of one word or two at the bottom of each response
- 3) The coded responses were then subjected to constant comparative analysis, where each response was compared with all others to establish consistencies or differences in themes in order to develop conceptualizations of the possible relations between the various pieces of data.

In the second wave of analysis, the identified and coded key words and categories within each broad theme were narrowed down into sub-topics and secondary themes for the purposes of in-depth analysis, in chapter 5 on the presentation, discussion and analysis of study findings. For instance, data under the broad theme of contextual factors for growth of NMG, further categories were developed: political, economic and technological factors. Under the category of political factors other sub- categories were developed: increased democratic space, nationalist movement at independence, change of political regime in 2002 and the new constitution.

On the broad theme of advertisers influence, the data was grouped under two categories: internal and external influence. The data was then analysed under several sub-categories: threatening to withdraw advertising revenue, calling the top management to complain, top management interferes with journalists

work to protect advertisers, advertisers using PR departments to lobby for favourable coverage, sponsoring news programs and journalists' activities.

On the responses on the broad theme of owners/ shareholders' influence, the data was grouped under four categories: internal, external, direct and indirect influences. From these four categories the data was further subdivided into various sub-categories: business interests affiliated to the NMG, influence from the main shareholder (Aga Khan), and influence from other shareholders who have other business interests elsewhere, silent policies and influence from top management.

Under the broad theme of influence from political interests, the data was grouped under various categories: influence from politicians, government, political affiliation of the media house and journalists' individual political biases and the highly ethnicised nature of politics in Kenya. The data from these various categories was further sub- categorized on the basis of the forms that the pressures take: bribes from politicians, killing negative stories or journalists acting as 'ethnic point men' to monitor any negative coverage of particular political leaders.

The analysis of the qualitative interviews on the above themes helped the researcher in answering the First and second research questions respectively: What contextual factors have shaped the cross- media ownership structure in Kenya? And how do journalists working at the NMG experience economic and political pressures that may influence their ethical decisions?

To address the third research question: What potential policy interventions can journalists propose to check the impact of cross media ownership on media ethics in Kenya?, the interviewer posed the following question to every interviewee: ‘Do you think these market pressures should be checked? If Yes, How? If No, Why?’ The interviewer’s main aim of posing this question was to get some insights on what potential policy interventions the journalists can propose to check the impact of economic and political pressures on journalism ethics in Kenya. Through this question, the interviewer sought the journalists’ views in the form of recommendations on how best they think journalists can go about their professional business amidst all these pressures from advertisers, shareholders, public, politicians, and the government without compromising their professional ethics. The journalists’ responses on this question were analysed under the sub-theme of how to resist/check these pressures in chapter 5.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the choice and justification of the research methodology, methods and procedures. Depending on the research objectives and questions, the chapter has elaborated why the qualitative research methodology was considered the most appropriate to get ‘an insider’s view’ of the phenomenon under investigation and to generate ‘rich’ detailed data unlike a quantitative approach which generally produces ‘superficial’ data based on the causal relationships between arbitrarily chosen variables which have little or no meaning to those individuals whose world they are meant to represent (Bryman, 1984: 79).

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Analysis of Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, discusses and analyses the main trends of research findings from the qualitative semi-structured interviews of journalists. The qualitative face-to-face interviews were recorded then transcribed. The transcribed interview data provided a basis for an inductive¹¹ thematic analysis of the data to provide a qualitative understanding of how journalists experience commercial, economic and political pressures that are likely to influence their ethical decisions. An inductive approach is based on the interpretative paradigm whereby social reality is seen as being created and maintained by the subjective experiences of people (see Baxter & Babbie, 2003).

The chapter gives an in-depth thematic analysis and discussion of the interview findings based on the five broad themes that informed the interview questions. The main aim is to link the research findings with the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. The themes are therefore in line with the five filters outlined in the propaganda model. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the interview questions were categorized into three broad areas: contextual factors shaping cross media ownership structure, normative aspects and economic and political influences. The questions on contextual

¹¹ Inductive reasoning moves from the particular to the general, from a set of specific observations to the discovery of a pattern that represents some degree of order among all the given events (Baxter & Babbie, 2003:69).

factors were generally meant to get an insiders' view of how media conglomeration influences journalists' role in the society. The researcher wanted to understand if economic and political pressures have increased with the conglomeration of the NMG (if the journalists' experienced lesser pressures when NMG was a one medium enterprise than they do today).

Questions on the normative aspect were meant to find out the normative framework within which journalists operate, the key ethical values that guide journalists in their daily work, the pressures they experience on their professional values, the notion of media freedom and responsibility and the threats to media freedom and responsibility. The main aim of the questions under normative aspect was to establish the normative values that the journalists profess to uphold and their perception and interpretation of media freedom and responsibility. The researcher sought out to find out how political and economic pressures compromise those normative values that they profess to uphold as they make their decisions. The questions under economic and political influence were meant to find out the ways in which ownership, advertisers, political interests, shareholders and the market are likely to pressure journalists to compromise their ethical values as they make their daily decisions (see interview guide attached as appendix A).

Twenty-five current and former journalists at the NMG were interviewed between July 2011 and August 2011. Twenty-two of the twenty-five interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. Three of the interviewees did not want to be tape recorded pointing out 'the sensitivity' of the interview questions; therefore the researcher took hand notes of their responses, which she later transcribed along with the recorded interviews.

The researcher assured the interviewees confidentiality and anonymity and therefore all the responses were coded for identification. For example GED was used for responses from the Group's editorial director, SUB for sub-editor, FED for former editorial director, SE for senior editor, RPT for reporter, COR for correspondent, ED for editor, FME for former managing editor, CSUB for chief sub- editor and FE for former editor. However, in the text, the researcher will just give the quotations without attribution, to ensure anonymity. The chapter ends with a summary of the research findings discussed which leads us to the next chapter on the overall conclusions that can be deduced from the study findings and the recommendations that can be made.

5.2 Responses on the contextual factors for the growth of NMG in line with the first research question

To get an insider's view of the contextual factors that have led to cross media ownership structure at the NMG, the researcher sought detailed accounts from journalists who have worked for the Group since its inception or those who have worked with the NMG for over ten years. The main aim was to get an insider's view of how the NMG has grown over the years from one newspaper to a media conglomerate with cross media ownership in the three East African countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). The researcher was interested in finding out if conglomeration brought with it increased political and economic pressures.

From the responses, the researcher established that although at the surface, the growth can generally be attributed to political- economic liberalisation and technological advancement; there were other ‘hidden’ factors that contributed to the Group’s growth, which the researcher could not have established through the review of documents. For instance, some of those who have been with the Group since the 1960s and those who have worked for over twenty years cited the ‘ruthless business acumen’ of the founder and major shareholder of the Group, the Aga Khan. The respondents observed that the Aga Khan is one individual who from the start ‘sees business opportunities and makes the best out of them’. This is how one of the veteran journalists interviewed summed up the factors leading to the growth:

... The NMG started as *Sunday Nation* in 1959 by the Aga Khan and then grew from a one medium to many media. When I joined the Nation in 1966, there was only the *Nation* newspaper and a sister publication in Kiswahili, *Taifa Leo*, but by the time I left in 2008, it was a conglomerate...as I have said before the Aga Khan was a very shrewd young business man who saw the opportunity and grabbed it.. he invested in the *Nation* at the height of nationalist movement and this made the *Nation* to attract a lot of readership from many Kenyans and that is how the *Nation* managed to overtake the Standard- the newspaper of the colonialists by the colonialist in those days. At independence the *Standard* was the people’s newspaper but the *Nation* overtook it slowly both in advertising and circulation...but for eleven good years the Nation did not make a single profit so the Aga Khan just kept on pumping in money anticipating its growth... (Interview, 2011)

The responses also seemed to confirm what the review of relevant documents had established: that the growth of the media in Kenya is closely

tied with the political and economic history of the country. Most of the respondents cited economic growth, increased democratic space and technology as the key factors in the growth of the media in Kenya and the NMG in particular. Over and above the positive effects of political and economic liberalization, which they largely attributed to the growth, most of the respondents singled out the ‘visionary leadership’ of the founder and major shareholder and ‘aggressive corporate and business strategies’ as the major factors for the expansion of the Group.

Some of the senior journalists interviewed made their observations as follows:

...When I joined there were only three papers, *The Daily Nation*, *Taifa Leo* and the *Sunday Nation*. I would attribute the growth to visionary leadership from the Aga Khan. When he started the Nation in 1960, his mission and vision was to give the African population a voice as the country transited from colonialism to self-rule in 1963. At the time, the biggest competition was the *Standard* which was a colonial newspaper and it is through identifying with nationalism that the *Nation* overtook the *Standard* to become the leading newspaper up to date (Interview, 2011)

Another respondent added,

.... The Aga Khan is a very serious investor and he had established connections to tap the best of talent who advised him on technological development ... he also had the financial muscle to invest in the best technology and to expand into the greater East African region... the Aga Khan is a great investor in the East African region in many sectors- health, education, hospitality industry, insurance industry, banking industry among others and commands a lot of respect in the region... he is actually treated as a head of state and therefore he was able to open a lot of doors because of his clout...(Interview, 2011).

From the responses on the broad theme of the contextual factors contributing to the growth of the NMG, the researcher identified three main categories: economic, political and technological factors. Most of the respondents who were asked this question attributed the growth of the NMG to the interplay of these factors. We will therefore further analyse the responses on the growth of the NMG on the basis of these categories to show the possible relationship between the growth and journalistic agency.

5.2.1 Economic Factors for the growth of NMG

From the responses, it emerged that the performance of the country's economy and socio-cultural institutions influenced the growth of the media sector in Kenya. Most of the respondents observed that the media industry in Kenya has grown with the overall economic growth. They argued that before economic liberalization which came with political liberalization in the 1990s, the NMG had a stunted growth; it still had two dailies (*The Daily Nation* and *Taifa Leo*) after being in existence for three decades. The NMG has therefore grown from one medium outlet into the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa in only two decades (between 1990 and 2011).

The interviewees noted that before political and economic liberalization in 1990, the government tightly controlled the media and therefore the major threat to journalistic freedom and responsibility was the government (see also Ogola, 2011; Makokha, 2010). But after economic liberalization, which opened up the media sector to more investors, meaning more media players and hence more competition, the NMG had to put in place a 'creative

business strategy' to survive in the new highly competitive media market. The Group had to fiercely compete for advertising revenue from the corporate sector and with this came new corporate pressures to play to the rules of the 'free market'. It can therefore be argued that the bigger the media, the more the market pressures on journalistic agency (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). The Group also had to look for investment opportunities both locally and regionally hence horizontal integration in the three East African countries.

This is how one senior journalist summed up the economic factors that have facilitated the growth of the NMG:

...I would say it is a combination of factors....one is the business strategy to exploit the market fully....there was a change of management, change of corporate strategy, which was more aggressive to grow the company....two, with time, the Kenyan economy has grown and we have grown with it...and three, there was this projection and changes in the media market which warned us about the future of print...we realized that we could not rely on print-the *Daily Nation* and its sister publication *Taifa Leo* and therefore this necessitated the need to diversify...therefore we ventured into broadcasting...hence some sort of horizontal integration as a strategy to survive in the market...(Interview, 2011).

The respondents also cited other economic factors leading to the immense growth such as the issue of licenses and the privatization and commercialization of the media sector. Before 1990, the government had monopoly control of broadcast licenses, but after liberalization, private investors came in. One of the respondents noted that

...When I joined, it was a one medium company but now it has grown to a multimedia company both here and in the greater East African region. I would attribute the growth to many factors. One, the economy has changed- the economy has grown and this has seen companies grow as well hence we are able to invest and this has meant growth in advertising revenue over the years. Then we have the change in the political climate, increased democratic space since multiparty politics in the early 1990s...the reason why Nation took such a long time to venture into broadcasting was because of the monolithic hold of broadcast licenses by the authoritarian government of the KANU regime... the Nation had spent close to ten years since multi party politics in court fighting for broadcasting licenses in vain... it was not until 1999 that Nation ventured into broadcasting close to ten years since political and economic liberalization in the early 1990s...(Interview, 2011).

The respondents however noted that although the media sector in Kenya and the NMG in particular has reaped immense benefits, there have been challenges. Some of the respondents observed that although political and economic liberalization has meant more opportunities for the media industry to grow, journalists are faced with new challenges from the corporate sector. As some of the interviewees observed, journalists' decisions are now more likely to be influenced by pressure from advertisers and other market forces than from the government. This is what one of the junior journalists had to say:

Journalists have become more authoritative in their reportage, but challenges still abound. The media has also spread its wings in a rapid expansion that has seen more media houses. At NMG, the growth is manifested in the success of its stables in East and Central Africa. This expansion has led to more revenue for the giant company in terms of advertising and circulation, viewership and listenership...Multi-party democracy has certainly changed

journalism practice but to a minimal extent... NMG is a commercial media house, driven by profit margins. All editorial policies are geared towards objectivity and balance...But editorial independence is not absolute, some advertisers and other market forces still influence editorial and advertising content... (Interview, 2011).

Another respondent added that

....Opening up the media market has made the media improve on its watchdog role as the Fourth Estate...the media, including NMG, has made a great stride in holding the political class and senior public servants to account for their actions.... But this is sometimes not done with the zeal as it ought to be.... External factors still exist as shadows towering above the editors...for example exposing ills in government may lead to censor through existing archaic laws and the infamous libel suits as well as pressure from politicians or advertisers (interviews, 2011).

The responses generally pointed to the positive and negative effects of economic liberalization in the media scene in Kenya. They observed that due to political and economic liberalization, the media in Kenya have grown and diversified but on a negative note this growth and expansion has led to often subtle economic pressures on journalistic agency (see also Ali, 2009; Nyabuga, 2007). The following two responses sum up the new challenges for journalists in the liberal environment:

....The business side of the Group is handled by top decision makers including the senior editors and other departments who deal one on one with the shareholders. These are the ones who feel these pressures first hand from the owners and advertisers and of course they make the ultimate decision of what will appear and what will not pass as news...we as sub editors just do our work within the given space

without knowing the factors that might have come to play for a particular story to be allotted particular space and go home... (Interviews, 2011).

I can only say that there have been challenges that have come with these changes over the years...during Moi era (authoritarian) our role and agenda was very clear- to fight a common enemy- dictatorship in order to secure our freedom- there was therefore a single cause that guided our operations. ...But unlike in the authoritarian regime where your role is clearly defined, in the liberal regime it is more challenging and it forces you as a journalist and the media as a whole to sit back and reflect what exactly is your duty...(Interviews, 2011).

5.2.2 Responses on Political factors influencing growth

The advent of political democratisation in Kenya in the early 1990s had a significant impact on the media landscape both in terms of policy changes and ownership structure. The respondents observed that the authoritarian control of the media for political means gave way to political and media liberalization in the early 1990s (see also Ali, 2009; Ogola, 2011). With increased democratic space, the media in Kenya pluralized and diversified. The respondents attributed the stunted growth in the media industry before liberalisation to the authoritarian control by the KANU regime. They observed that although the dictatorial KANU government led by President Moi did not fully relinquish its authoritarian control on the media, after liberalization, the media has enjoyed immense benefits from the political changes that took place in the country in the early 1990s (see also Mkali, 2003; Ali, 2010). The interviewees unanimously attributed the growth to the increased democratic space and more media freedom in that the government

no longer interferes in a big way in the operations of the media. This is what some of them had to say:

...then of course opening up of the political and democratic space which played a big role because media unlike any other business cannot thrive without a conducive political environment...media business is so intertwined with the political climate of the day...Democratization has played a key role in the growth of the media in Kenya...if you look at the history of the NMG, you will realize that most of the strides we have made were after multiparty politics in 1992... the government does not want to be on the wrong side of history so government has opened up the space not because they want, but because they can't stop it...(Interviews, 2011).

The respondents however observed that it was after 2002 when the dictatorial regime of President Moi was ousted that media in Kenya has significantly proliferated. Before 2002, there were indirect political controls that stifled the growth of the media.

... then there was the opening up of the democratic space which also played a big part in the growth especially after 2002 which is regarded as the second liberation in media freedom...(Interview, 2011).

The responses pointed to the fact that with increased democratic space came more journalistic freedom to discharge their roles in the society. Therefore democratization translated to media freedom from government control, which is the liberal- democratic notion of media freedom. The commercial threats to this form of freedom as identified by the journalists will be discussed later in this chapter when we discuss the different interpretations of media freedom as emerged from the interviews.

The veteran journalists interviewed also attributed the growth to the political strategy of the founder of the Group, the Aga Khan. They observed that from its inception in 1959, the Aga Khan presented the Nation as the vessel to champion nationalist ideologies in the run up to the independence in 1963 (see also Abuoga & Mutere, 1988). The people therefore identified with the *Nation* (which is today the *Daily Nation*) from the start and that is how it overtook its main competitor *The Standard*, which had been in operation since 1902, but largely perceived as promoting pro-white settler interests. This is how one of the respondents put it:

...I can say that the reason why the *Nation* newspaper overtook the *Standard*, which had been there for longer, is because people identified with it and the role it played in the fight for independence in 1963. The *Standard* was regarded by the public as largely a foreign newspaper and this explains why in my view the *Nation* overtook the *Standard* in circulation in 1970, just 10 years after its inception...to me the growth of NMG has to do with historical, political and economic factors which liberalisation is a part... (Interviews, 2011).

5.2.3 Technological factors facilitating growth of NMG

Most of the journalists noted that technological advancement has played a major role in the expansion of the Group. Technology has provided the Group with ‘more opportunities than threats’. The company has diversified from being exclusively print media and ventured into broadcast and online media. Through technology, the Group has been able to integrate into the larger East and Central African region at a minimal cost. As some of the interviewees noted, ‘through the use of technology, the Group can duplicate news stories across all networks without necessarily having different personnel for print, broadcast and online media’.

But although this makes business sense, it has brought with it some normative challenges. The duplication of news and cost cutting measures has meant loss of diversity; hence the multiple media under the Group do not translate to diverse voices. Horizontal integration through cross media ownership has enabled the Group to minimize business risks and consolidate market power as a strategy to survive in the market (see also Ali, 2010; Botma & Wasserman, 2008) and this has in a way compromised the Group's capacity to fulfill its normative roles in the society. This is how some of the respondents summarized the technological benefits to the company:

...I think technology played a big part also because now a copy could be send to other sister publications in Uganda and Tanzania without necessarily having to have someone redoing it...we had people called copy typists who were paced out with the rise of technology...(Interviews 2011)

...When I joined, the Nation newspaper was a 24 pager but now it is a 64- 68 pager so it has grown in volume and content. We have also ventured into broadcast and online media...there is new technology which has presented us with both opportunities and threats. For instance, new media has presented us with the opportunity to go on-line but at the same time threatened the existence of the newspaper as it were because now people can access news from their cell phones and the internet...but we saw that coming and what we have done is to grow with the change by incorporating new media, going online and into broadcast media (Interviews, 2011).

The responses from the excerpts cited on the growth of NMG point to the fact that the growth has been closely connected to the political and economic history of Kenya as a country. The findings show that although political and

economic liberalisation in the early 1990s brought with it immense benefits to the media sector, this has not been without challenges on the individual journalists.

The expansion of the NMG into a media conglomerate has brought with it more economic and commercial pressures to journalists as the Group strives to come up with ‘creative business strategies to survive in the highly competitive media market’. Political and economic liberalization gave way to increased media and journalistic freedom; the government was no longer a major threat to media freedom. In the new liberal environment, commercial pressures are the major threats to media freedom and responsibility. This confirms one of the key hypotheses of the study that the present media structure and performance in Kenya has its roots in the political and economic history of the country and to evaluate media performance, one has to take into account the political and economic constraints inherent in a liberal media environment.

5.3 Responses on Influence from owners, shareholders and non- media interests of the NMG in line with the first filter of the Propaganda Model

Introduction

This section discusses and analyses how shareholders’, owners’ interests/wealth and the profit orientation of the NMG influence journalists’ decisions in a manner that compromises their journalistic ethics to answer the second research question: How do journalists working at the Nation

Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions? in line with the first filter of the propaganda model. Herman and Chomsky (1988; 2002) observe that dominant media firms are quite large businesses; they are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market- profit oriented forces. Interview questions touching on this theme were therefore meant to establish how shareholders both at the NMG and in the other ‘sister’ companies affiliated to the NMG are likely to influence journalists’ decisions.

Most of the journalists admitted that ‘it is always at the back of their minds when they are handling a story about an affiliate company or a shareholder’. This means that they have to be cautious how they approach such stories and sometimes it might mean ‘forgetting the story altogether’ even if it is in public interest. This points to the fact that although the journalists are free to make rational choices about their work, their agency is largely compromised by the pressure to protect the owner’s interests (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). As the respondents put it ‘if you are a journalist at the NMG, you just know that you can’t touch some stories; you don’t have to be told’. This means that what journalists do, what they see as news worthy and what they take for granted as the ‘way things are’ can be explained by the pressures, routines and constraints incorporated into the media structure of the NMG (See Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Generally, the responses point to the fact that the most common conflict of interest at this level arises from the journalists’ responsibility to guard and

promote the owners' interest and the desire to discharge their public interest role. The respondents unanimously said that they feel that they have an obligation to protect the company interest mainly because the owner 'pays our salary'. They observed that such a conflict of interest presents real ethical challenges to the journalists because in most cases, journalists are forced to compromise their ethics mainly because most of the times, owners' interests reign supreme. From the responses, pressure from owners, shareholders and the business orientation of the NMG on journalists' decisions can be categorized into two: Internal and external pressures. The analysis will therefore proceed on the basis of these two categories.

5.3.1 Internal Pressures from owners, shareholders and non- media interests of the NMG

From the responses, it was evident that owners and shareholders' interest do directly and indirectly influence the ethical decisions of journalists mainly through the appointment of the top executives of the company and the silent policies put in place to protect owners and shareholders' interests. As the findings show, at the NMG, journalists' autonomy is influenced by the fact that the main shareholder, the Aga Khan, appoints all the 15 members of the Board of Directors and the senior managers including the chief executive officer. It can therefore be observed that most of the biased decisions by the journalists arise from the pre-selection of right thinking board of directors (people at higher levels within the media organization who are chosen to implement the owners' policies (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002). The institutional analysis of the 2010 NMG Annual Report had shown that the

board of directors consists of 15 members none of whom is a trained journalist. The researcher therefore sought to find out from the interviews how the members of the board are appointed and the influence they have on journalists' decisions.

The interviewees observed that the senior managers (executive team) and the members of the board are supposed to be the 'eyes and ears' of the Aga Khan as some of the senior journalists interviewed put it. The board of directors, who are 'the eyes of the owner', may therefore exert pressure on the top management who in turn exert pressure on individual journalists to promote the owners interests. This is how some of the interviewees summed up this internal influence:

...well like in the case of NMG, the main share holder is the Aga Khan with over 40%... and therefore you have to do as he wants... after all he is the one who directly picks the director/CEO and even the senior managers, so these people have to protect the business interest of the Aga Khan...(interviews 2011)

...The board of directors comprises of 15 people all of whom are the Aga Khan's direct appointees and therefore they are there to fight for his interest...to be his eyes...If there is any negative story that is likely to jeopardize his business interests, then you will definitely expect some pressure to protect them....(interviews 2011).

From these responses, it is evident that although journalists may not be directly coerced to protect the owners' interests, media owners or their appointed top executives have the final say in what the organization and the journalists do (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Reese, 2001; Hackett &

Uzelman, 2003). As the senior journalists interviewed observed, ‘the board is the custodian of the shareholders and the public and if they feel that any of the divisions of the NMG are doing anything that jeopardizes either the returns of the NMG or its sister companies, the board of directors exert pressure on the top management, which then trickles down to the individual journalists’. The internal influence from owners and shareholders can therefore be said to be through the pre-selection of right thinking personnel at the top management and the internalization and adaptation by these personnel to the constraints imposed by proprietary, the market and other centers of power (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

Internal influence also takes the form of ‘silent’ policies that though not formal, journalists always keep it in their minds that there are some stories that ‘you cannot touch’ because they are about ‘our sister’ companies or that ‘you have to handle them with care’. As Herman and Chomsky (2002) observe, mainstream media interlock with other institutional sectors in ownership, management and social circles, effectively circumscribing their ability to remain analytically detached from other dominant institutional sectors. Censorship is therefore largely self-censorship by reporters and commentators who adjust to the realities of source and media organisational requirements (see also Klaehn, 2002; 2009). This is how some of the interviewees explained this self censorship necessitated by the silent policies:

... I would say that this doesn’t come to you as a reporter directly but you find that there is a silent policy where with time you come to learn the other businesses that have connections with the NMG and

which you are supposed to either handle very cautiously or to leave alone... (Interviews, 2011)

...honestly I would say yes to some extent shareholders and owners' interest get in the way although this may not be very common...sometimes as a journalist you have to use common sense to know that you cannot write a negative story about the main guys... most of the times, I would say journalists result to self censorship...so most of the times its not so much direct owners' interference but is using common sense to know what to report or what not to report as a journalist at the NMG (Interviews, 2011).

The researcher sought to find out if the non- media interests of the main shareholder and other shareholders in any way influence the decisions of journalists. There was consensus among the interviewees that the fact that the main shareholder, The Aga Khan, is also a major investor in the hospitality industry, education, health, banking and insurance industries both in Kenya and in the East African region where the NMG operates, this creates a conflict of interest to the journalists and the NMG as a whole. The responses indicate that although the journalists may want to observe their professional code of conduct and do what is in public interest, more often, these silent policies make them either to 'kill' or 'ignore' a story that negatively touches on these sister companies or if they do publish it, they 'cover it in a way that the shareholder's voice comes out strongly' at the expense of public interest. This is what some of the respondents had to say:

...i would say through the editorial policy guidelines that are put in place by the owners and the top management because they dictate how you operate...so according to the policy guidelines there are things that you can do...things that you can report and things that you

cant as a journalist at the NMG...so if you have this story and you are told that you cant publish because it goes against the editorial policy guidelines, then I think, in that way owners through these guidelines and the top management can influence your decision as a journalist at the lower level...(Interviews, 2011).

...I have of course seen a lot of non media pressures from the sister companies of the NMG... I will give you an example... Aga Khan Hospital, Diamond Trust Bank, Serena Hotels, jubilee insurance....all that is Aga Khan and as a journalist at the NMG, you know that you cannot write anything negative about such...you don't even have to be told...you only need to read the editorial policy guidelines and do as it dictates....a clear example is look at page two of our paper today...there is a story about a woman receiving an award from Jubilee insurance...then you ask yourself whether that warrants the story to be on page two...may be not, but because the editor knew that Jubilee insurance is part of us...(Interviews, 2011).

This shows that although the journalists and editors retain agency to resist these pressures to protect owner's wealth, they largely engage in self-censorship, allowing only those stories that do not in any way endanger the owner's wealth and business interests (see Herman and Chomsky 2002; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

The owner's wealth in the form of these businesses integrates the NMG into the corporate market system where the pressure to protect these business interests may take precedence over the journalists' agency and autonomy (see Curran, 2000; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Zollmann, 2009). Most of the journalists also seemed to agree that it is impossible to separate the profit motive and the public interest motive in a commercial media like the NMG.

The responses resonate with Graham and Murdock (1973) view that the media are first and foremost commercial enterprises.

The interviewees unanimously observed that since the media is a business with owners who expect returns and profits, the most practical thing for the individual journalist would be to look for a way to balance the commercial interests of the owner with the journalist's responsibility to promote the public interest. Most of them acknowledged that sometimes, commercial interests may not necessarily be in the public interest, and most of the times, if there is a conflict of interest between the commercial and public interest, the commercial interests take precedence. The capacity of the journalists to report accurately and fairly on events of the day are therefore constrained by the necessity to protect the interests of these corporate companies closely related to the NMG (see Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

From the findings, it is evident that although self censorship may be a form of journalistic agency (see Jansen, 2010), the fact that it results to either suppressing or ignoring some stories to protect owners interests does raise ethical issues. It can therefore be observed from the responses that in most cases, the structural constraints on journalists to protect owners interests are implicit hence are not readily available to direct observation (see also Reese, 2001). As much as journalists may accurately state that no one told them to suppress or ignore a story, such self-policing is more dangerous than direct censorship especially because outsiders (the public) are often not aware that anything has taken place (see Klaehn, 2009; Zollmann, 2009; Reese, 2001). As most of them put it: 'You always have it at the back of your mind that there are shareholders' interests to protect'. Most of the interviewees cited

the ‘silent policies’ as the key guideline on what is the ‘right thing’ to do as a journalist working for the NMG. With time, the journalists internalize these silent policies so much so that when they make a decision, it seems as the ‘natural’ thing to do (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Jansen, 2010).

The respondents also pointed out that the profit orientation of the Group does influence the ethical decisions of journalists. They observed that ‘to the media owner and the shareholders, the media is a business’ and therefore the journalists are supposed to be in the business of maximizing returns for the shareholders. This means that some times, journalists have to focus on ‘what is likely to bring the money rather than what is of public interest’. It can therefore be argued that the profit orientation of the NMG compromises the journalists’ ideal role in the society, which they described as doing ‘what is in public interest’. Through the institutional analysis of documents, the researcher had established that the CEO and the chairman of the editorial team is a trained accountant and not a trained journalist. Through the interviews the researcher therefore sought to find out if the business orientation of the CEO with a focus on profits compromises journalistic agency.

This is what one of the respondents had to say,

Shareholders are only concerned about money and profit returns and therefore they will not allow you to do anything that is going to jeopardize returns, ethics or no ethics. It becomes a delicate balancing act because you have to publish what sells which might not necessarily be in public interest...the main shareholder, the Aga Khan, once in a while summons the CEO and senior editors to Paris if things are not looking good...the bottom line is profits for the top guys (Interviews, 2011).

5.3.2 External pressures from shareholders and interlocking directorships

Through the institutional analysis, the researcher had established that the three key members of the board of directors- the chairman of the board, the CEO and the chairman of the editorial committees at the NMG are also chairmen and directors of other prominent corporate organizations in Kenya such as the East African Breweries, Standard Chartered Bank, Barclays Bank and the Serena Group of Hotels and lodges. The researcher therefore sought to find out if these interlocking directorships of the board members influence journalists decisions.

The respondents observed that there is external pressure by shareholders in the NMG who are also shareholders in other companies and want to use the NMG to either do PR for this other companies or to 'kill' negative stories about these other companies. Some of the journalists saw the owners and shareholders influence as emanating from the fact that most of the members of the board of directors in the NMG are also members of board of directors in other corporate organizations. This is how some of the respondents put it:

...And you see also the CEO of NMG then Mr. Wilfred Kiboro was also the chairman of the Standard chartered bank and Mr. Hannington Awori who was in the Board of directors in the Standard Chartered bank was also the Chairman of the NMG. And now Mr. Kiboro is the chairman of the NMG and Standard Chartered Bank respectively. This means that Stan Chart Bank has protection from all sides and therefore nothing negative about the bank can be reported by the Nation...There is usually some sort of a symbiotic relationship

between these shareholders and the media...so you see its tricky really...(Interviews, 2011).

Other respondents also pointed out the fact that ‘there is a network of CEOs in Kenya, which makes it possible for CEOs in different corporate organizations, the NMG included to know each other on a personal basis’. They observed that sometimes, they are investigating a story about a particular corporate organization then the CEO of that organization calls the CEO of the NMG and tells him to stop the journalist from writing the story if it is negative.

One of the respondents observed that,

...there is also a network of CEOs in Kenya so they know one another personally so sometimes the CEO for instance from Kenya Airways will call the CEO here and say your reporter is writing something about us which I think is not good so maybe you can be told to abandon the story or to re-work it so that it is fit for print... (Interviews, 2011).

An analysis of the names of the 10 major shareholders of the Group also showed that corporate organisations such as Barclays Bank, Kenya Commercial Bank, Jubilee Insurance and Old Mutual Company are among the principal shareholders. The interviewees observed that any journalist at the NMG ‘knows that these are shareholders who should be handled with care or whom the silent policies dictate that they should be protected’.

Therefore the findings show that while individual journalists may scrupulously avoid conflicts of interest that may bias their reporting, their employers may be intimately linked to larger corporate interests through

interlocking board of directors and other elite connections (see Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Klaehn, 2009; Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

Most journalists also pointed out that the shareholders in the NMG are also shareholders in other corporate organizations and most of the times, ‘they want to push their agenda; they want the NMG to protect these corporations, to do publicity for them and to kill any negative coverage’. As one of the senior journalists observed, ‘if we are not careful, we can end up just writing stories that promote the interests of these shareholders’. There was near unanimous agreement that shareholders do sometimes meddle in journalists’ work in a way that can influence their ethical decisions. This is how some two journalists summed the influence:

...yes because shareholders here are also shareholders in other companies out there and they want us to cover these other firms positively for their own good. So if these firms have a scandal then they will want to use their influence here to prevail upon editors and top management to kill the story even if it is in public interest...and of course the main shareholder the Aga Khan also has other business interests and it becomes like our obligation to protect these other businesses... (Interviews, 2011).

...of course we are a large family and shareholders will always want us to say good things about their other businesses...it happens so many times internally where some shareholders want to push their agenda...(Interview, 2011).

It can therefore be argued from the research findings that media conglomerates like the NMG interlock with other institutional sectors in ownership, management and social circles to result to journalistic self censorship without the need of any significant coercion (see Klaehn, 2002;

Herman & Chomsky, 2002). The business interests of these shareholders are so broad and far reaching such that there are very few economic sectors that do not affect some part of the media conglomerate (see Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). As news companies become part of large, global conglomerates, it is often difficult to anticipate the many conflicts of interest that may arise, and journalists find it difficult to avoid reporting that has a relationship to one or more aspects of their parent company's interests (see Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

It can also be argued that the fact that media conglomerates like the NMG are by definition big businesses involved in many different types of non-media businesses creates the very real possibility of conflict of interests in a variety of fields (see Reese, 2001). Therefore the capacity of the journalists to report accurately and fairly on events of the day may for instance be constrained by the necessity to protect the interests of corporate 'sister companies' closely related to the particular media who may need to minimize any negative news about their operations in order to promote their business interests (see also Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Hackett & Uzelman, 2003). The autonomy and agency of both the journalists and the managers to adhere to the principles of professional ethics is therefore constrained by the sharp constraints from owners, shareholders and other market-profit-oriented forces (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002).

5.4 Influence from advertisers in line with the second filter: Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media.

Introduction

This section analyses and discusses the various ways in which advertisers influence the ethical decisions of journalists and the ways in which journalists respond to these pressures in an attempt to answer the second research question: How do journalists working at the NMG experience economic and political pressures that are likely to influence their ethical decisions?

The interview questions under this broad theme were meant to establish if advertisers influence journalists' decisions, the forms that the influence takes and the ways in which journalists respond to this influence. The interviewer posed the following question to all interviewees and probed for details:

Have you or any of your colleagues ever felt pressured to report a story, or to cover it in a particular way, or to suppress it to promote advertisers' interests? *(If yes, what sort of advertiser? Did you give in and why?)*

All the 25 journalists interviewed said that advertisers do in a big way influence journalists' ethical decisions. Some journalists said that they had personally experienced the pressure from advertisers or that they knew of a colleague who had experienced such pressure. Most of the interviewees' recounted instances where big corporate companies such as Barclays Bank, Kenya Airways, Safaricom, East African Breweries, Kenya Power and

Lighting Company, Kenol Kobil had either threatened to withdraw advertising revenue or actually withdrew advertising revenue if the media published a negative story about them. The interviewees gave the researcher some examples about cases where advertisers had influenced journalists' decisions that she could identify from the Kenyan market.

From the institutional analysis, it is worth noting that some of the 'big clients' such as Barclays Bank, Kenya commercial Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and East African Breweries among others have a proxy relationship with NMG media Group either by virtue of the chairman of NMG and other members of the board of directors being chairmen in some of the companies such as Standard Chartered Bank and East African Breweries or that the big clients are also some of the principal shareholders at the Group such as Barclays Bank. This in effect means that the big advertisers in some cases also double up as principal shareholders making their relationship with the Group more intricate.

From the responses, it was evident that the pressure from advertisers take many forms: threatening to withdraw advertising revenue, withdrawing advertising revenue in case of negative coverage, calling the top management to complain about negative coverage, giving incentives to journalists to get favourable coverage, prevailing upon journalists and top management to tilt a story in their favour, sponsorship of news programmes, sending press releases in the form of PR materials and pushing their paid for adverts in a manner that can interfere with the editorial content. Journalists respond to these pressures in various ways: they kill the story, they tilt the story or they run the story. The analysis and discussion of the responses on

this broad theme of advertisers' influence will therefore be done under two categories: the form of pressures/ influences and how journalists respond to these pressures.

5.4.1 Forms of advertiser influence

Most of the respondents mentioned what they termed as 'valuable' or 'big' clients/advertisers who wield enormous power in compromising media and journalists' capacity to promote public interest. The respondents observed that these powerful and valuable clients who 'put full colour adverts or who bring in the millions in advertising revenue are almost sacred'. Their enormous power and pressure is felt across the board right from the reporters to the editorial director and they 'have to be handled with care' because as some of the journalists observed, they are the source of their 'bread and butter and commercial media cannot do without them'.

Some names of these valuable and big clients kept on coming up interview after interview. For example, almost all respondents mentioned Safaricom, which is the leading mobile provider in Kenya and the biggest advertiser in all media across Kenya according to those interviewed. Most of them also mentioned East African Breweries, which is a leading alcohol manufacturing company, Barclays Bank, Kenya Airways, Kenya Power and Lighting Company among others. This is what some of the respondents had to say:

...In a way yes...because if for instance you have this big advertiser, those that place full colour full page adverts everyday and they have this negative story or a scandal, as an editor you will think twice before you run it because they may withdraw all their adverts from

your media... and therefore in some cases someone above you might tell you no, no you cant touch that story which has happened to me personally when I was investigating a story about Kenya power and energy saving bulbs. In the Western countries these bulbs are treated with care because they have very high contents of mercury which are harmful. But I could not run the story and therefore it becomes very difficult to balance the commercial and public interest...look at the story about power black out at the air port today...because it was obviously in public interest we had to run it...but even then, not with as much robustness like if Kenya Power was not one of our big advertisers (interviews, 2011).

In the above case, the interviewee was giving a personal testimony of how Kenya Power as a 'big advertiser' influenced his decision to abandon the story about energy saving bulbs (which the researcher was familiar with) because of 'pressure from above'. The interviewee also gives another incidence of Kenya Power influencing how a story about power blackout at the Jomo Kenyatta International Air port had affected operations. There had been a power black out for three days at the biggest airport in Kenya as the researcher was collecting data. This shows how the over dependence on advertising revenue by commercial media like the NMG can have compromise the ethical decisions of journalists (See also Herman and Chomsky, 2002).

Another respondent noted that

.... this happens all the time... big advertisers like Safaricom, Barclays, Kenya Airways, Standard Chartered bank etc... in fact when you talk about media regulation, advertisers are the most effective and dangerous media regulators...if they have a scandal or a negative story they want you to kill it otherwise they will threaten to withdraw all their advertising revenue in all the media outlets... and

you know that is our bread and butter.. .we cannot survive without the advertisers....(Interview, 2011).

From the responses, it was evident that unless a negative story about these 'valuable clients' is a matter of 'do or die' it will most probably not see the light of day. The interviewees gave personal accounts of how they had to abandon a story in public interest about these powerful clients due to pressure from the top management. Most of the junior journalists (reporters, sub editors, correspondents and even editors) said that 'these big advertisers deal directly with the CEO'. They call the CEO directly to complain about negative coverage a fact that was confirmed by responses from the senior journalists. This is what one junior journalist had to say:

.....of course many many times.... In fact advertisers are the worst because they will simply call the CEO directly and threaten to pull out advertising revenue if a negative story that is in public interest is not pulled out....so there are some stories about some advertisers that you can not touch like Kenya Airways, Safaricom, Barclays, Kenya Breweries...these big time advertisers they will always threaten... (Interviews, 2011).

Another respondent gave his personal account as follows:

...personally I have had big issues with East African Breweries, which is one of those big advertisers, because of rubbing them in the wrong way and I even have a memo to that effect... so yes they are a real threat.....in some cases, if these advertisers prevail upon the editor for example to ensure that the story is killed, the editor will sit with you and ensure that either that story doesn't pass or is framed in a way that will not hurt the client....such cases are rare but they are there (Interviews, 2011).

From the responses, it is evident that private media's overdependence on advertising as their primary source of revenue directly influences media performance hence journalists' decisions (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Klaehn, 2002; Boyd- Barrett, 2004).

Both the junior and senior journalists gave accounts of different situations where these advertisers made good their threat and withdrew adverts worth millions of shillings because the media went ahead and published a negative story that was obviously in public interest. Most of the respondents gave such accounts as follows:

...so I would say that mostly advertisers will once in a while try to compromise the top guys by threatening to withdraw millions of shillings worth of advertising revenue...I will give you an example...Safaricom, which is a big advertiser across all media made good its threat and withdrew advertising worth millions of shillings because we published this scandal that they had but which was clearly in public interest...they had tried in vain through the top guys to stop the story...so although such cases maybe rare we do have them (Interviews,2011).

A retired veteran senior journalist had this to say

...It happened many, many times...advertisers always threaten to pull out advertising revenue if you expose any of their wrong doing and as you know adverts are even more important for the survival of any media more than even sales...that happened to me and to journalists working under me many times...ask this journalist, Dorothy Kweyu, she once wrote a story about BAT Kenya highlighting the negative effects of cigarette smoking and BAT pulled out its adverts from the Nation...personally I resigned one time as the editor when the

managing editor came and pulled out a story that was offensive to a key advertiser...(Interviews, 2011).

Just like in the case of owners and shareholders, the journalists observed that advertiser influence leads to self censorship to protect big advertisers' interests and this in effect compromises journalistic agency. It can therefore be observed from the responses that advertisers meddle in journalists decisions in a way that largely compromises journalists' ethics. As one senior journalist observed, 'it is an occupational hazard that we have learned to live with'. The findings in this study about advertiser influence agree with the findings of other studies done on the media in Kenya (see Ali, 2009; 2010; Ogong'a & White 2008).

It can therefore be argued that just like shareholders' and owners' interests, advertisers entrench the media into the corporate market system thereby compromising the media's capacity to effectively play the watchdog role on behalf of the public. The media and the journalists find themselves at crossroads because they are controlled and influenced by the same corporations that they are supposed to keep watch over (see Herman & Chomsky 2002; Zollmann, 2009).

5.4.2 How Journalists respond to the pressures from advertisers

From the findings, it emerged that journalists respond to pressures from advertisers in three major ways: they kill or tilt the story to protect the advertiser's interest or they take the 'risk' and run the story 'though not without consequences from the top management'. Some of the them

observed that although sometimes, journalists and top management can overlook the pressure and go ahead with the story, depending on how much is at stake, 'it is a gamble that we do not want to engage in often'. Most of them observed that it is almost impossible for any media to operate without the support of advertisers. This is how some of them put it:

....yes I would say there is a lot of pressure from advertisers but at least I see some concerted efforts from the management to counter these pressures...I think that even internally the management has put us in very different wings...the news team and the sales team are floors apart...but once in a while when you have this very big valuable client who brings in the biggest advertising revenue, then there might be some sort of compromise where if they have a scandal ...sometimes its not that we will not cover it, but it will not be with as much robustness and thoroughness like if it was not a valuable client...so I admit that in most cases it is impossible to achieve the ideal situation in such cases...(Interviews, 2011).

...I haven't experienced that personally but I know that such things happen especially at the business desk....in fact it was a big issue it was even raised in a staff meeting. But the sub editors and editors who were involved said that they had been told to do so by guys from the top...they had been told that they have to handle advertisers with care because they are the ones who pay the bills...you remember the case of Coca-Cola and Dasani water...so yea advertisers do influence journalists decisions (Interviews, 2011).

From the above response it is evident that advertisers' influence put individual journalists in a fix as they try to balance their professionalism with internal and external pressure to protect advertisers' interests. The case that the interviewee refers to above about Coca-cola, which is a

multinational company, was about Dasani Mineral water packed and distributed by Coca-Cola Company, which was found to have dangerous Lead particles in major shopping malls in Nairobi as cited else where in chapter. Although the Daily Nation ‘blew the whistle’ on the matter they soon retracted and let the story ‘die’ after pressure from Coca cola.

Most of the journalists also said that advertisers use their PR departments to try to influence content while others try to prevail upon the top management and editors to kill a negative story. Some of the junior journalists also said that they have once in awhile experienced pressure from within to drop a story or not to produce a story that advertisers may find objectionable. One of the journalists observed that there are

... the paid advertisers who use their PR departments or call directly to influence either the angle of the story or the killing of the story... a case in point is Safaricom where there was this recent issue of number portability and the other cell phone companies like YU, Airtel and Telecom were complaining that Safaricom is frustrating the public attempt to move...there was some truth to those allegations but we just chose to ignore the story although it was clearly in public interest...because the current PR officer at Safaricom is a former employee of Nation and therefore he used his links to ensure that the story fades off.. (Interviews, 2011).

The respondents pointed out that the commercial media has two major sources of revenue: sales of the media products like newspapers and advertising revenue. As the journalists observed, ‘advertising is the major source of revenue for the media and the advertising companies know that’. Media revenue from advertising in Kenya has steadily grown since 2003 and in 2008 it was estimated at \$1.9 million annually (see Steadman Report,

2008) and this is consistent with the growth of additional segments of the media. It can therefore be observed that for the NMG to remain financially viable, it must sell markets (audiences) to advertisers (see Klaehn, 2002; Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Some of the interviewees observed that in the highly competitive media environment, ‘the NMG has had to put in place creative business strategies to pull readers in order to attract advertising revenue’.

One of the former senior journalists lamented how the NMG had even put in place a policy where the news executives would accompany the business executives to corporate organizations to lobby for advertising. Although this plan failed after a while, he acknowledged that it was a clear violation of journalistic principles and it ‘shows how bad it can get’. This is what he had to say:

...And then there is something else, two years ago, the NMG came up with this policy that the editorial side should also understand how the business side of the media works...what this meant was that the editorial team had to accompany the business team as they go and lobby for adverts from the advertisers...but you have to realize that there is a line, no matter how thin between the business side and the editorial side and there is just a point where the two cannot meet no matter how much we try... I mean I did a lot of that- accompanying the business guys to go lobby for advertising, I did it for Nakumatt, Kenol Kobil, Barclays, but it just could not work...but yes that tells you how bad it can get... (Interviews, 2011).

Some journalists also expressed concern that sometimes they feel that ‘they are giving the public a raw deal’. This is because although there is the official policy of 40:60 ratio of advertising to editorial content, ‘sometimes a

news story will be left out simply because the advertiser has already paid for the center spread and we can't leave out the Ad'. Some senior and junior journalists said that sometimes the adverts are so many and very little editorial content and this raises concern even from among the journalists themselves.

Some of the business reporters interviewed said that advertisers also exert their pressure through sponsoring news programs especially business news. They observed that when a particular corporate organization sponsors a news program, 'then they expect you to give them good publicity mostly at the expense of their competitors'. As one journalist observed, 'sometimes the reporter is in a fix because the sponsor's competition has a big story that is of public interest and you do not want such a story to overshadow your sponsor's 'small' story'. This is how one of the business reporters recounted his situation:

...A practicing journalist always has ethical concerns especially in business journalism where these are more apparent because we deal with corporate bodies...there is no where ethical dilemmas are more prevalent than in business journalism because you cover the main guys who bring in the money... so sometimes, you are caught in a situation where we have this big story about this corporate institution for instance, Equity Bank, but then its main competitor in business, Family Bank, is the one that is sponsoring the business news so just before you start the business news, there is this big Family Bank banner that runs... so then you are left wondering, do you leave this Equity story out or do you broadcast it...(Interviews, 2011).

As the interviewee observes above, during prime time business news, there is always a banner of a particular corporate organization (the sponsor).

During the time that the researcher was conducting the interviews, the sponsor of business news for NTV (a NMG TV station) was Equity Bank. So before the anchor presents the news, there is usually a commercial by the sponsoring organization to introduce to the viewers “Business news brought to you courtesy of Equity Bank”. This as the business anchor observes is likely to compromise the journalist’s capacity to present a negative story about the sponsor due to the apparent conflict of interest.

As one of the respondents observed, ‘the day advertisers became the major source of revenue for the media is the day we lost our freedom’. This sentiment captures the effect of the commercialisation of the media and the operation of the media like any other business in the market on journalists’ ethics. As a commercial enterprise, the journalists at the NMG can not claim to make independent decisions free of commercial influence from the main funders of these media- the advertisers (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Richards, 2004; Hackett & Uzelman, 2003). The following respondent’s comments sum up the dilemma which journalists working for private media have to live with in regard to advertiser influence:

....I would say that the media has developed some form of symbiotic relationship with advertisers...we have the big time advertisers who want to bully the media to have their way and they will openly threaten that we should not bite the hand that feeds us...we have had cases of advertisers such as Airtel, Safaricom, Kenya Breweries you name them who have held us at ransom because we are afraid of loosing the millions in advertising revenue ...but at the same time, we have to fulfill our duty of highlighting a scandal in public interest... there is a sense in which these advertisers have succeeded in intimidating the media because we are practicing journalism, but we

cannot afford to rise above these commercial interests.....there are certain advertisers we can't touch no matter how big the scandal is or if we do, we have to be very cautious about how we go about it...(Interviews, 2011).

It can be observed from the findings that in commercial media like the NMG, there is a blurring line between the editorial and business side of the news and the traditional 'church- state wall' that used to denote the separation of the business and editorial sides of the media is slowly crumbling (see McManus, 1994). Responses from both senior and junior journalists attest to the fact that advertisers do largely influence journalists' ethical decisions as they try to balance commercial and public interest. It can therefore be argued that commercial interests from advertisers compromise the media's monitorial role to keep watch over all sectors in the society (see Christians et al, 2009).

5.5_Analysis of Responses on influence from political interests (Ethnicity in the newsroom)

Introduction

This section discusses the influence from the political arena from a broad perspective to include influence from politicians, the government and the nature of politics in Kenya in line with the third filter of the propaganda model: the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power and the proposed 'sixth filter' of influence- ethnicity in newsrooms in Kenya.

The analysis of interview findings indicated that aside from the political forms of influence outlined by Herman and Chomsky in their propaganda model (influence from the political elite and the government), the most prevalent form of political influence that journalists experience is ethnicity in the newsrooms. Most of the journalists cited the highly ethnicised nature of politics in Kenya as a key factor that politically influences journalists' decisions because 'ethnicity is rife in newsrooms'. Most of the journalists also said that they had experienced political pressure from either politicians or government officials in a way that influenced their decisions. This section therefore focuses on how journalists experience political pressure owing to the symbiotic relationship between the NMG and the political community in Kenya.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, under the general theme of influence from political interests, the journalists were asked questions touching on how political interests from politicians, government, political affiliation of the media house and journalists' individual political biases influence their decisions in an attempt to answer the second research question: How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions?

From the responses, it was evident that the most common form of political influence on journalists' decisions takes the form of the media or the journalists being co-opted into the ethnic/tribal nature of politics in Kenya. The findings show that there is need to expand and modify the propaganda model in the Kenyan context to include ethnicity as one of the primary filters

that influence journalistic agency hence media performance. The findings in this study on the influence of ethnicity on journalists' decisions point to the tension between the journalist's normative obligation to be professional and impartial in their work and their conflicting loyalty and attachment to their ethnic community (see also Nyamnjoh, 2010; 2005). The responses will therefore be analysed on the basis of two categories: forms of political influence and responses to these influence.

5.5.2 Ethnicity in the Newsroom as the proposed 'sixth Filter' of the Propaganda Model

As most of the interviewed journalists noted, 'tribalism is very rife in the newsrooms' and during critical political events like elections and referendums, 'newsrooms are divided right in the middle along tribal lines'. During the most controversial 2007 general elections in Kenya since independence, and the consequent post election violence which left thousands dead and millions homeless, the mainstream media were accused of fuelling ethnicised politics because they had taken explicit political stands (see Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service Report, 2008).

These allegations were confirmed by the responses from the interviews. Most of the interviewees confessed that the NMG was generally supporting the PNU side which is largely associated with the Kikuyu ethnic community and its sympathizers. The sitting president, Mwai Kibaki, belongs to the Kikuyu ethnic tribe and he was running on a PNU ticket, while the current Prime minister and the then main political opponent, Raila Odinga belongs

to the Luo ethnic community. The NMG was therefore regarded as supporting the status quo, a fact that was also confirmed from the interviews. It is also worth noting that the Chairman of the NMG, Mr. Wilfred Kiboro and the CEO, Mr. Linus Gitahi are also from the Kikuyu ethnic community. Apart from this general political affiliation of the NMG, the journalists from within were also divided along tribal lines. The editorial director at the NMG, Mr. Joseph Odindo and the chairman of the editorial committee, Mr. Francis Okello belong to the Luo ethnic community, which is the ‘political enemy’ of the Kikuyu ethnic community. As some of the senior journalists observed,

...political interests do affect a lot... in the 2007 elections and its aftermath, newsrooms were divided right in the middle along tribal lines between Kikuyus and their sympathizers and Luos and their sympathizers... in my own media house at the Nation, we had two TV sets one tuned to KTN which was aligned to ODM (Luo faction) and another tuned to NTV which was pro PNU (Kikuyu sympathizers)... so the influence is huge, it is a sorry state but it is the reality...(Interviews, 2011).

...Every media house in Kenya has a political affiliation and the so called ‘independent’ media is just a myth...the NMG for instance is aligned towards the PNU wing which is seen as largely pro-government and its main competitor, The Standard, is former President Moi’s business and therefore sympathetic to his political allies...and therefore yes media in Kenya are at the mercy of the political establishment and politicians... (Interviews, 2011).

From the above responses, it is evident that the media and the journalists were caught up in the tribal nature of politics in Kenya and they could not be professional in their work because they could not dis-engage themselves from their tribal cocoons (see also Makokha, 2010). It also emerged from the

responses that ‘some journalists in the newsroom act as political think tanks of major political parties’ and ‘other journalists are on the payroll of politicians, government ministers and political parties to act as their point men in the newsroom’.

As some of the journalists observed, sometimes, when they are just about to run a negative story about a powerful government official like a government minister,’ the minister can call to stop the story or he can walk into NMG and stop the story or influence its angle. This is after ‘their point men tip them off about what is coming up’. In such cases, it is very challenging for such journalists to observe the principles of accuracy, fairness, truth, independence and objectivity as is expected.

As Herman and Chomsky (2002) observe, because of their services, continuous contact on the beat and mutual dependency, these powerful political elite can use personal relationships, threats and rewards to further influence and coerce the media. The media may in turn feel obligated to carry extremely dubious stories and mute criticism in order not to offend their sources and disturb a close relationship.

To illustrate how big political and tribal influence is in the newsroom, one of the journalists recounted that

...for example during the 2007 general elections, the Nation had its own monitoring unit for votes in all constituencies but when Kibaki their preferred presidential candidate started losing, the system was broken down and all data erased...of course by a very senior and powerful person from within....so in that particular case, powerful political interests from inside overtook the national interest to report

accurately and fairly about the election results and therefore Kenyans were denied their right to know...(Interviews, 2011).

Generally, the findings show that media managers, journalists and shareholders have political ideologies and affiliations which influence media performance of the NMG as is the case above. Promoting and protecting personal and institutional political interests may not necessarily be in public interest and just like in the case of owners and advertisers' influence, public interest is more often sacrificed to protect the individual journalist's interest or the prevailing institutional political interest.

It also emerged from the findings that journalists go out of their way to protect 'their person' (politician from their ethnic community) and this means that they cannot abide by the ethical principles of accuracy and fairness. In fact, biased and inaccurate reporting based on the ethnic bias of individual journalists was cited as one of the ways in which the media fuelled the post election violence in the last general elections in Kenya in 2007 (see also Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service Report, 2008).

This in effect means that journalists do enjoy some form of agency to act contrary to the macro structural constraints as outlined in the filters. Journalists at the individual level also influence news production through their personal biases, which may be different from the biases of the Establishment (see Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). This points to the fact that there is need to modify the explanatory power of the Propaganda Model to include the role of the individual journalist as a 'sub-filter' (see Pedro, 2011) that should be understood in relation with the other five primary filters

To illustrate how journalists at the individual level influence news content one of the senior journalists gave a personal account as follows,

...I will give you an example... when I was the Bureau Chief in Kisumu all the journalists in my team were from the same community (Luo community) and so Raila visits Kisumu and they have all these nice things to say about Raila... and Kibaki visits Kisumu and they cannot see anything good to say about him...so I had a meeting and told them that we cannot go on like that...we have to have balanced reporting...so what I did was to tell them that we reach a gentlemanly agreement that when Raila visits they have the freedom to say all those nice things about him, but when Kibaki visits I will personally cover him and see if I can find anything positive to say about him...so you see tribalism is very rife in the newsroom and this impacts on our professionalism

In the account above, the senior journalist who comes from a 'neutral' ethnic community (neither Kikuyu- where Kibaki the president comes from nor Luo- where Raila the prime minister comes from) observes that he had to cover the president himself although he was the Bureau Chief to ensure 'some objectivity' because the journalists working under him were totally blinded by their ethnic affiliation to 'write good things' about 'their person' the Prime Minister, Raila Odinga.

This points to the fact that although the NMG as an institution is largely regarded as pro- Kibaki, individual journalists have a leeway to exercise their autonomy to resist the macro pressure to be pro- Kibaki and use their personal biases at the micro level to influence news content. This means that journalists do enjoy some form of agency to counter the macro constraints at

the structural level and therefore their actions are not overly determined by the structural constraints. The study's findings therefore support Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) observation that the individual journalist is a level of influence in the news production process. The findings point to the fact that the actions of individual journalists are not totally determined by structural constraints as Herman and Chomsky observe in the classical version of the Propaganda Model.

From the research findings, it can therefore be observed that as journalists protect 'their people' who belong to their ethnic tribe, their ethical and professional values of accuracy and fairness suffer and as the media protect their political interests the public interest as a whole suffers.

The findings however point to a different form of political influence from that envisioned by Herman and Chomsky in the US media- that of ethnic bias, which should be understood in relation to the other filters if the model is to be used to comprehensively assess media performance in the Kenyan context. As most of the journalists noted, two vices from the political front compromise journalists' professional ethics: bribery/corruption and tribalism. Most of the journalists noted that political influence is 'more a matter of the journalists allowing themselves to be co-opted into the web of tribalism at a personal level rather than from the management'. They noted that 'just the same way Kenya as a society is highly ethnicised politically, so are the journalists because they are members of the same society'. This is how one of the respondents analysed the situation:

...In fact the worst hit lot in regard to this are the journalists who do political reporting... they have been_corrupted through being bought

by political parties and politicians to write in their favour... so sometimes this pressure is not so much from being told you write in a particular way...but it is us journalists who have allowed ourselves to be swallowed into this biasness... (Interviews, 2011).

Political influence was also seen by some journalists from the perspective of political advertising during election or referendum campaigns. Some journalists noted that the dominant political parties spent millions of shillings worth of political advertising; 'they end up buying media freedom'. In the last general elections in 2007, the three main political parties (ODM, PNU and ODM-K) spent well over \$ 395,000 (see Makokha, 2010).

As some of the interviewees observed, 'since no media house wants to loose out on these millions, politicians end up buying media freedom and the media often end up acting as campaign mouth pieces of these parties sometimes at the expense of public interest'. It can therefore be argued that these powerful political sources use their prestige and importance to the media as a lever to deny critics access to the media. Critical sources may be avoided not only because of their lesser availability, but also because the primary powerful sources may be offended and may even threaten the media using them (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002:22).

Most of the journalist therefore observed that political influence is more from politicians than from government officials. Most of them said that there is minimal interference from the government on the running of media operations both at the NMG and other media in Kenya. The politicians present themselves as credible and ready news sources and use their close links with the media to influence journalists' and the media's decisions. As

Herman and Chomsky (2002) observe, economics dictates that journalists focus where significant news often occurs, where important rumours and leaks abound and where regular press conferences are held.

Some of the journalists pointed out that most politicians use their close links with media managers and journalists to push their political agenda to the public most of the times at the expense of public interest. They noted that ‘most of the time, there is near obsession of the media with politics and politicians and a near neglect of the ‘common man’ issues’. This, as one of the senior journalists observed, has seen them get a backlash from the public. ‘The public sometimes reacts by boycotting buying the newspapers and watching prime news. This has forced us to ‘re-strategise’ and tone down on politics in the news’.

Another way in which politics influences journalists decisions from the responses is that the public can force the media to focus on some political personalities and dubious political issues to appease publics in different regions depending on the political affiliation and ethnic tribe in that region.

As one of the journalists observed,

... I know of a situation where because of the highly ethnicised political arena, if you make some story about Uhuru Kenyatta headline for instance in a place like Kisumu the newspapers will come back but if you make Raila the headline then all the newspapers will go...(Interviews, 2011).

Another added that,

...the task of balancing of stories for instance to fit particular political or commercial interest can compromise your professionalism. For

instance in 2007, the Nation was clearly pro PNU and a strong supporter of Kibaki, so what happened was that in some regions that were against Kibaki and PNU, we could not sell the paper if the story in the headline was about Kibaki. So what we did was to have different editions of the same paper to suit different regions so that what made headline for the Kisumu edition, which was pro- ODM is different from the Central edition, which was pro- PNU. We still do that even today... (Interviews, 2011).

These two responses capture the extent to which the public as the audience are also caught up in the tribal web of ethnicised politics in Kenya hence the need to modify the propaganda model to include ethnicity as a key filter in the Kenyan context. Since the media wants to make money especially through newspaper sales, they end up sacrificing issues of national importance to appease the highly ethnicised public in different regions.

In the first response above, 'Uhuru Kenyatta' is the current Deputy Prime Minister in Kenya and one of the core contenders of presidency in the 2012 general elections. He comes from the Kikuyu tribe. 'Kisumu' is largely inhabited by 'Raila's' ethnic tribe, the Luo, who are the 'political enemies' of the Kikuyus and that is why the respondent says if 'Uhuru' who is a bitter political rival of 'Raila', the current Prime Minister makes headline, no one in 'Kisumu' will buy the paper. In such a situation, it is difficult for journalists trying to appease these divergent ethnicised publics to be fair and accurate in their reporting hence this compromises their ethical decisions. It can therefore be argued that in such cases, the media and the journalists feel obligated to carry extremely dubious political stories and mute criticism in order not to offend the politicians and the equally ethnicised publics (see Makokha, 2010; Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

As some of the respondents observed, this animosity from the highly ethnicised public against the perceived (and apparent) ethnic bias of the NMG was so fierce, ‘sometimes the Nation newspapers had to be flown to Kisumu and Eldoret (the ODM strongholds) because the transporters’ safety could not be guaranteed on the roads’. From the responses, it can therefore be argued that as much as the macro constraints at the media organizational level play a major role in influencing the decisions of journalists, the power to shape content is not the media’s alone, but is shared with a variety of other sectors in the society, including the public (see Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

5.5.3 How Journalists respond to political pressure

As was evident from the responses, journalists respond to political pressures by killing the story, tilting the story to write in the politician’s favour or monitoring any negative coverage. As some of the interviewees observed, some of the journalists ‘have been corrupted through being bought by political parties and politicians to write in their favour...’ what is popularly referred to as ‘kitu kidogo’ a Kiswahili word for ‘something small’ to mean giving a bribe, what is commonly known as ‘brown envelopes’ in journalistic circles.

Brown envelope journalism which is defined as a practice that involves news sources granting monetary incentives to journalists (Kasoma, 2009) is well documented in the African context (Kasoma, 2009; Lodamo & Skjerdal,

2009; Ndangam, 2006). The respondents observed that although the management is very serious about such malpractices, they do happen. Journalists are given some incentives especially by politicians from their ethnic communities to write in their favour or to monitor and block any negative coverage.

This is how one of the respondents put it:

...of course politicians are the main newsmakers so they influence a lot when it comes to story angle. Corruption (bribery and tribalism) play a major part here....journalists will either tilt a story because it is about a politician from their tribe or because the politician has given them something as an incentive..... Politics in Kenya is played out in the media and journalists have fallen prey to the two vices: corruption and tribalism... (Interviews, 2011).

It is important to note that ethnicity/ tribalism is central to politics in Kenya (see Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service Report, 2008; Oloo, 2010; Mungai, 2010). A core feature of the post- colonial state and society in Kenya is its fragmentation along ethnic cleavages (see Chacha, 2010). The ethnicisation of power, including media power and electoral competition poses a danger to the consolidation of electoral democracy and the future of the state. In the controversial 2007 general elections, media houses were accused of fuelling ethnic strife by taking sides with particular political parties, which are largely formed on ethnic lines.

The media were accused of providing propaganda, incitement as well as ethnic hate speech. The government even attempted to form a task force after the post- election violence to investigate the conduct of the media and their role in the post election violence. The media, however, successfully fought this move, with the Media Council of Kenya putting in place a

parallel task force (see Makokha, 2010). The responses from the interviewees seem to confirm these allegations of the media playing a major role in fuelling ethnicity in the run up to the 2007 general election and the ensuing post election violence.

The findings therefore show that aside from the ‘traditional’ forms of political influence identified by Herman and Chomsky in their Propaganda Model, there is need to include ethnicity as a key political filter when applying the model in the African context (see also Nyamnjoh, 2005; 2010; Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust Service Report, 2008) and especially Kenya. In democratic societies, the media literally define the issues that take prominence in public agenda during general elections, and as the findings of this study show, ethnicity is at the center of how media covers political issues during such critical democratic moments in Kenya, hence the need to emphasize ethnicity as a key ‘sixth filter’ of a modified Propaganda model.

5.6 Sources of Flak/ Threats to Journalists’ Freedom and Responsibility in Line With the Fourth Filter of the Propaganda Model

This section outlines and discusses the main sources of threats to journalists’ freedom and responsibility as emerged from the interview responses in line with the fourth filter of the propaganda model: “Flak” as a means of disciplining the media. The interview questions touching on economic and political forms of flak were meant to establish how economic and political pressures threaten the journalists’ freedom and responsibility to play their

ideal role in the society. This was in an attempt to answer the second research: How do journalists working at the NMG experience political and economic pressures that influence their ethical decisions.

It emerged from the interviews that “flak”, which refers to the negative responses to a media statement or program (see Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002) may lead to self censorship at the level of individual journalists and corporate censorship, which is ‘silently’ imposed from within the media organizations. From the responses, it emerged that the journalists experience both internal and external forms of flak. Internally, there are the open and silent pressures and threats from the senior management and the Establishment on individual journalists to report or not to report on a particular issue because of the interlocking political and economic interests. The analysis will therefore be categorized into these two forms of flak: internal and external sources of flak.

5.6.1 Internal Forms of Flak

From the responses, it emerged that journalists sometimes ‘refrain, ignore or kill stories’ that are of public interest because they are ‘afraid of the negative response from the management which can range from a serious reprimand, memo, summon or dismissal’ as the respondents put it. So in our discussion, we will use ‘flak’ from a broad perspective to include these negative responses from the senior managers and the establishment to individual journalists, which forces the journalists to self censor themselves in fear of

offending the Establishment or violating the silent policies on what can and cannot be reported.

As one of the respondents observed, such internal sources of flak influence the ethical decisions of journalists; ‘ they end up practicing ‘the journalism of self preservation’ because they want to keep their jobs and the owners want to make money’. We therefore build on Herman & Chomsky’s idea of flak as a means of disciplining the mass media to introduce a new dimension; that of internal flak on the individual journalists in response to the internal institutional pressures.

It was near unanimous that most of the journalists try to be ethical and professional in their work by observing both the code of conduct and the editorial policy guidelines. But, they also observed that there are real challenges and threats that sometimes compromise their capacity to fulfil their ideal role as journalists, which most of them singled out as always ‘doing what is in public interest’. Most of them cited the ethical principles of accuracy, fairness, truth, objectivity and public interest as the principles that guide them everyday in their work. But most of them also observed that ‘sometimes it is more practical to violate these principles in order to survive’.

The following two sentiments capture the journalists’ dilemma to fulfil what they perceive as their ideal role (to promote public interest) and their employer’s expectation to contribute to maximum returns.

...I would say my first responsibility is to the public interest because that is the essence of journalism...to inform the public and promote

public interest ... I see my role as to accurately, fairly and in a balanced manner report human interest stories. So my responsibility is to the audience although sometimes it might not be possible because of conflict of interest...I mean the media is a business and shareholders expect returns... (Interviews, 2011).

Most of them also observed that:

‘...we are free to fulfil our role as journalists, but there is a sense in which the ownership influences our freedom’

‘...but we are limited by commercial interest in our freedom as journalists’,

‘...there is a lot of self censorship in the media mainly because of pressure from owners through the managers and senior editors’,

‘... you may want to do the right thing, but these commercial threats to media freedom come everyday...’,

‘...but as an individual journalist you are in a catch 22 situation because you have a responsibility to the society to report fairly and accurately yet you do not have the freedom to do that without shareholders and advertisers influence’ , (Interviews, 2011).

It emerged from the responses that journalists have different conceptions of media freedom and responsibility (see also Wasserman, 2010). They identified freedom in the political sense; ‘constitutional freedom as provided for in the constitution whose main threat is usually the government and freedom from commercial and political pressures from owners, shareholders, advertisers and the political elite’. There was a unanimous observation from the respondents that the media and journalists in Kenya enjoy constitutional freedom from direct government interference (freedom in the political sense). As some of the respondents observed, ‘in Kenya, we are way up

there in regard to this interpretation of media freedom compared to most other African countries’.

Most of the respondents identified both commercial and political pressures from advertisers, shareholders, owners, politicians and the public as a market as the main threats to their freedom to act responsibly. It was evident from the findings that individual journalists experience ethical dilemmas emanating from the desire to fulfil their ideal role as journalists and the need to preserve themselves against internal and external threats as they adjust to the realities of the corporate newsroom. As one of the respondents put it: ‘... freedom from commercial interests... I do not think that there is any private media in the world that is free in this sense because the media is a business and someone owns that business...’

Some of the respondents captured their different interpretations of media freedom in the following ways:

...On paper we derive our freedoms from the Bill of Rights, but in practice our freedom is defined by the owner- my employer because you can say as a journalist I can have the freedom to go out there and investigate this story about corruption, but I can only exercise this freedom to the extent that the owner allows me to....the government is no longer hostile to the media but we are limited by commercial interests in our freedom as journalists... so we are free, but there is a sense in which the ownership influences our freedom and we cant confront this, the ownership determines what kind of freedom I have...(Interviews, 2011).

Yet another one observed,

...when we talk about media freedom we have two aspects... we have media freedom as a political construct...we are all free...we have this sense of freedom as individuals and as journalists. During the authoritarian regime of Moi, before multiparty politics, I would say that there was concerted effort from the Nation media to resist the government's interference in the running of the media...and even up to 2002 when Moi was in power.....then there is the aspect of journalists' freedom and independence to discharge their duties as professional journalists...now this form of freedom although we keep on saying that we are free...it is a tricky form of freedom because you are supposed to be free to play the watchdog role in the society, but as an individual journalist you are in a catch 22 situation because you have a responsibility to the society to report fairly and accurately yet you do not have the freedom to do that without shareholders and advertisers influence...so to the individual journalist, I would define freedom in relation to what shareholders expect of you...i mean you are free....you have that sense of freedom, but your shareholders expect something from you....to make profits...(Interviews, 2011).

Most of the respondents observed that they feel that they enjoy media freedom in the sense that most of time, no one comes directly to tell them what to do or what not to do. As noted in the previous sections on influence from advertisers and shareholders, sometimes when advertisers for instance call the top management and threaten to pull out adverts worth millions of shillings, the management put pressure on the individual journalists either to 'be careful with the big advertisers or not to report anything that is likely to portray the advertiser in a negative light' (see also Ongong'a & White, 2008).

But as the journalists noted, ‘with time you come to learn who are the valuable advertisers whom the editors keep reminding you that they should be handled with care’ or which companies ‘should not be touched’. You also learn ‘which commercial activities are part of the NMG as a corporate institution so that you can be careful not to write anything negative about them’. It can therefore be observed that in most cases, there is no need for owners to intervene directly because the logic of the market and the ‘silent policies’ ensure that by and large the output endorses rather than opposes their general interests (see Murdock, 1980). As most of the journalists observed, they also have to self censor themselves because of personal career plans since as they put it ‘you want to keep your job’.

One of the interviewees observed that:

...in a way as a journalist, you may find yourself in a compromised position when it comes to reporting negative about these other companies that have links with the Nation...when it comes to these companies there is always this fear at the back of your mind which leads to self censorship..(Interviews, 2011).

And another said,

...I would say the most common ethical dilemmas come from you balancing what the owner wants...because that is the first thing... and then the society... and then your colleagues....and advertisers....so sometimes you want to be objective and to tell the truth...and then you can write a very objective story.....personally I have had to deal with cases where I wrote this very objective story but my manager and my fellow journalists were not happy so it was not published...(Interviews, 2011).

Because of these fears emanating from explicit and implicit internal flak, most journalists prefer to ‘toe the line’ and ‘keep it at the back of their minds’ that there is ‘a way that things should be done’. It can therefore be argued that the journalists work under these constraints mostly with integrity and commitment, and formally adhere to professional news values, because the operation of these filters occurs so naturally that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable (see Herman & Chomsky, 1988; 2002).

5.6.2 External Forms of Flak

It also emerged from the interviews that external flak to the media as a whole takes many forms: withdrawing of advertising revenue by aggrieved advertisers, threats to withdraw advertising revenue, threats from politicians not to give interviews after negative coverage, threats not to place political adverts in their media in case of negative coverage, threats from the public to boycott buying the newspaper if the Nation portrays their preferred political candidate in a negative light and the nature of the highly tribal politics, which force the journalists and the Group not to report on particular issues.

The media and journalists respond to all these forms of external flak by ‘treading very carefully’ on negative stories that touch on these powerful sources of flak because they need them to survive in the market. Sometimes, this ‘careful treading’ means compromising journalistic ethics and sacrificing public interest. Therefore, although as the journalists noted, this does not happen all the time; that these sources of flak will always have their way, it does happen enough times to raise ethical concerns. This is what one of the respondents had to say:

...I would say yes.....because media houses rely on advertising revenue for operations and profits. The market is therefore a threat to media freedom...Companies wield the carrot and stick to have their way and say into newsrooms.....if you do not cooperate they can choose to keep the much-needed revenue away or give it to competitors if you do not toe their line...(Interviews, 2011).

Apart from the commercial pressures from the shareholders, the owners to maximize profits and the advertisers to give them favourable coverage, the interviewees also consider the 'free market' and the audience as a threat to media freedom. The respondents observed that although the doctrine of the free market is much more plausible than direct government control, if unchecked, the market can be 'even worse than the government'. This is because the control and interference from the market is more subtle and indirect. It can therefore be more dangerous to journalistic freedom than direct censorship (see Jansen, 2010; Reese, 2001).

As one of the interviewees observed,

...the market can be a very powerful force...more than even the government because they vote with their pocket and we are here to make money.....markets bring down governments and the same can happen to the media...(interviews, 2011).

Another respondent pointed out that:

.....I would not call the market a threat as such but a challenge....and this is why...media depend on the market for revenue and if commercial media didn't operate the way they do...if they left journalists to strictly adhere to public interest issues, they would not fulfil the shareholders expectations...we should remember that media owners are first and foremost business people who have invested in

the media business...so the political and economic factors that influence editorial matters sometimes force the media to relegate professional ethics...am sorry to say that at the end of the day it is the shareholders expectations that carry the day...unless of course it is something that is glaringly of national interest (interviews, 2011).

As noted earlier in this chapter, the respondents cited the highly ethnicised Kenyan audience as one of the major external political threats to journalistic freedom and responsibility. This is because the public from different ethnic regions in Kenya force the media to focus on some political figures or issues especially during elections or referendum not because they are newsworthy, but simply because they want to sell the newspaper. This is especially during critical times like general elections and referendum when public opinion is highly critical.

As one journalist put it, ‘in some places if you do not put the name of a particular politician as the headline, the newspapers will come back in heaps’. So even if their preferred political (read ethnic) leader has nothing newsworthy to report on, the media still have to put him on the front page of the newspaper. This is what one of senior journalist had to say:

Of course yes... the task of balancing of stories for instance to fit particular political or commercial interest can compromise your professionalism. For instance in 2007, the Nation was clearly pro PNU and a strong supporter of Kibaki, so what happened was that in some regions we could not sell the paper if the story in the headline was about Kibaki...so what we did was to have different editions of the same paper for different regions so that what made headline for the Kisumu edition is different from the City edition or Coast edition

depending on the region's ethnic/political affiliation...we have these editions even today...(interviews, 2011).

This points to the highly ethnicised nature of politics in Kenya, which is played out both at the market level and newsroom level 'as journalists are co-opted into their ethnic cocoons'. From the study findings, we therefore propose the inclusion of ethnicity both in the newsroom and at the political level as a key 'sixth filter' that influences media performance in Kenya.

5.7 Responses on how to check/ resist commercial and political pressures

The last question that the interviewer posed to every interviewee was: "Do you think these market pressures should be checked? If Yes, How, If No, Why?" in an attempt to answer the third research question: What potential policy interventions can the journalists propose to check the impact of economic and political pressures on journalism ethics in Kenya?

Through this question, the interviewer sought the journalists' views in the form of recommendations on how best they think journalists can go about their business amidst all these pressures from advertisers, shareholders, the public, politicians, and the government without compromising their professional ethics.

It was evident from the responses that most of the journalists interviewed believe that personal integrity, which according to them is a matter of personal and professional ethics, is the best way for journalists to resist market pressures. This is what some of them had to say:

.... personal integrity I would say... both professional and personal integrity. If you follow the code of conduct and your personal moral values then you will uphold your professionalism. So I would say journalists have to be guided by their personal and professional integrity in order to counter these pressures because that is what makes a good journalist (interviews, 2011).

And another senior journalist observed that,

... I would say it all boils down to professionalism... our own personal integrity as people and as journalists...as a journalist you should strive to do the right thing not because anyone is watching but because that is what is expected of you. I always tell my journalists that there is no greater power over a powerful political figure than a bribe whose offer you have turned down and there is nothing as difficult as having a media that is fighting corruption with corruptible staff because you will be fought with as much force if not stronger... so my approach is to advice my journalists to uphold their personal integrity and professionalism because I have seen it work for me and others because your capacity to do the right thing as media depends on the quality and integrity of your journalists (Interviews, 2011).

Some of them also think that journalists have to know to what extent market forces can have their way in the media without compromising public interest, which most of them believe is the essence of journalism. This is how one of the senior journalists put it:

...this involves a very delicate balancing act...we as the media have to look for a way to balance our commercial interests and the public interest.... we have to look for a way to fulfil our role in the society and know how much we can allow from the commercial side without killing ourselves because we need to survive as a media house (Interviews, 2011).

Yet another added,

...and at the individual level, journalists need to step back and have a very constructive dialogue with the owners, the senior management to tell them that this profession needs objectivity, fairness and the promotion of public interest which ideally is why we are here...I think it largely depends on the character of the editor...if he is someone who can stand up to the CEO he can get away with a few of this although this has a limit... (Interviews, 2011)

Professionalism in the media from these responses is therefore a matter of balance, a give and take because the media has the dual role of promoting the shareholders' interests and the public interest. There was a unanimous observation from the interviewees that despite these threats, 'media freedom should not and cannot be absolute'. There should be some form of self regulation to ensure that media does not abuse its power even as it is shielded from these threats. On being asked if they think that the Media Council of Kenya is effective, most of the journalists observed that they do not think that it 'has the teeth to bite' and it need to be strengthened.

This is what some of them said:

.. .no... media freedom should never be absolute... there should be checks and balances to check this freedom... I am for self regulation... but the self regulation that we have now in the form of Media Council does not have the teeth to bite because it doesn't have the legal powers... so I would advocate for a more powerful Media Council but no government regulation because that is what we have been fighting all along ...I think that we are getting there where we can be said to be effectively self regulated....to me it is the lesser evil than being controlled by big brother the government (Interviews, 2011).

...No, not absolute freedom because that would invite anarchy ... I think we should have regulation, self regulation so that we can have guidelines to check on media power... I think like the Media Council although it has largely been regarded as a toothless bulldog... I think right now it just arbitrates and has set out the code but it needs to be given more powers (Interviews, 2011).

None of the interviewees was for absolute media freedom. Most of them thought that self regulation is ideal through an independent institution like the Media Council of Kenya. But, like the two respondents above, most of them felt that the Council as it is, is not effective. Some of the interviewees observed that most people in the society do not know what the media council does, including some journalists. They observed that this can partly explain the low number of cases reported to the council. The researcher only found 8 complaints against the NMG lodged at the council for the last three years.

This is what one of the retired senior journalists had to say,

...I am for self-regulation although as it is now, the Media Council needs to sort out its membership in order to be effective. It is skewed towards the media industry and that undermines its capacity as the self-regulatory mechanism. It should have diverse membership especially from the consumers and professionals and get a chair who is not from the media fraternity. They should also look for ways of publicizing their operations especially the rulings... I would also advocate for co-regulation so that we have a self-regulatory mechanism, but also find a way to work with statutory control in order to make it more effective. The Council should also diversify its sources of funding so that no one sector can claim its ownership because it funds it (interviews, 2011).

Yet another senior journalist observed,

....so I think there should also be an external mechanism...maybe one that involves both the media and the private sector...some sort of a multi-sectoral approach which involves all stakeholders so that it includes more than just the media...(Interviews, 2011).

A few of the interviewees felt that there is need to incorporate more than just the media fraternity in the council membership to enhance its effectiveness. On being asked if he thinks the fact that the CEO and editorial director of the NMG are council members influences the number of complaints filed at the council against NMG, this is what one of the junior journalists had to say,

... I think as much as self regulation is good it should be by a body that does not have media people... we should not have the same media people making decisions about complaints about the media.... I mean how do you expect the Media Council to take a journalist from NMG to court when it relies on NMG for funding? (Interviews, 2011).

Still on the composition of the council another respondent observed,

...we should have both internal and external self regulation like it is with the Media Council to keep the media in check...you see this thing is a business and the business temptation is very strong...as it is now, the owners have a very strong voice...in fact if I had a way I would say that there is regulation of the number of media one owner can control in the same market....i would limit it to 40%_because this media monopoly can be very dangerous... like now you would think that we have so many media, but how many players do we have? ...just about three and this hurts diversity... (Interviews, 2011).

As noted in chapter 3, the Media Owners Association has three slots in the Council and as the respondents above note, this can in a way compromise the effectiveness of the council as a self regulatory body. Most of them however, observed that they believe that if journalists are of high personal and professional integrity; that they always observed their ethical principles of truth and accuracy; 'if they always have their facts right', they would shield themselves from both these internal and external threats to some extent.

Both senior and junior journalists noted that 'as long as you have your facts right, you are fair and objective in your reporting, you can rise above these threats and do what is in public interest and use the editorial policy guidelines and the code of conduct to defend yourself if summoned by senior management. Although there is a limit to which you can do this, it can be done'. Most of the journalists also observed that some threats such as those from politicians and some advertisers can more easily be resisted than those from shareholders and owners.

Building on the interviewees observations that the most common threats to media and journalistic freedom and responsibility in Kenya today is market/commercial threats, we argue that there is need for a normative paradigm shift from the prevailing liberal- democratic model. There is need to re-define the watchdog role function of the media to include watch over these internal and external commercial and political pressures to media freedom. The liberal- democratic model only focuses on the government as the sole threat to media freedom and responsibility and this in effect means that it

does not take cognizance of the commercial and other political pressures such as ethnicity from the market in the new liberalized environment.

As emerged from the interviews, after the change of regime in 2002, which ended the near dictatorial leadership of former president Moi, the government no longer interferes in the freedom of the media. It is the commercial and political pressures from the owners, shareholders, advertisers, politicians and the highly ethnicised politics in Kenya that the interviewees singled out as the major threats to their freedom and responsibility.

This study therefore observes that it does not make sense for the media in Kenya to be evaluated in terms of the traditional liberal- democratic model, which largely defines media freedom in the political sense of freedom from government control and overlooks these economic and political threats to media freedom. The journalists unanimously said that they enjoyed freedom in the political sense of non- government control but did not enjoy freedom in the economic sense of non- interferences from owners, advertisers and shareholders. The responses from the interviews attest to the fact that the unchecked 'free market' can even be a worse threat to media freedom to fulfil its 'watch dog' role because as the journalists observed, 'the markets vote with their pockets' and are 'the worst form of media regulators'.

5.8 How the political and Economic Influences promote a dominant ideology in Kenya in line with the fifth filter of the propaganda model

The final level of analysis involves a critical examination of how the preceding levels of influence contribute to a coherent ideological result in news content (see Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1971) under the ‘miracle of the neo-liberal market’ (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there is a tendency in the media in Kenya and the NMG in particular to over rely on the political and business elite as their primary sources of news. As evident from the research findings, these political and corporate sources influence the decisions of journalists to protect their interests. The media can therefore be regarded as playing to the tune of the established dominant ideology. Because of the symbiotic relationship between the political and economic elite, people or institutions that introduce agenda that is radically different from the dominant ideology are often shut out or down played (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002).

The media in Kenya have been accused of colluding with the economic and political elite to promote their interests (see Mutere, 2005; Oriare, 2010; Ogola, 2011), a fact that was confirmed by the interview findings. As the respondents observed, during critical times like referendum or general elections when public opinion is critically important, the mainstream media, the NMG included take political sides hence compromising the agency of the journalists to make independent decisions. As it emerged from the

responses, ‘politics in Kenya is played out in the newsroom’ and therefore media have largely remained a tool in the hands of the entrenched political interests keen to direct public discourse (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002). From the findings, it can be observed that there is some form of ‘elite continuity’ (see Sparks, 2008) in mainstream media in transitional democracies like Kenya, where the political and economic elite seem to influence media performance in a significant way.

This ideological control as emerged from the interviews is further maintained through the appointment of journalists whose worldview is in tandem with that of the interests that control the media. With the extensive internal and external influence from the shareholders and their interlocking business interests and the ethnicised political class, the media are made to serve the ideological interests of the capitalist class (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002). As the respondents observed, sometimes the media have to ‘tread very carefully’ when the interests of these political and business elites are at stake and ‘this sometimes means relegating professional ethics’.

The political and economic elite in Kenya rally behind the neo-liberal policies of privatization, liberalization and de-regulation and this has strengthened the grip of market ideology (Klaehn and Mullen, 2010; Herman and Chomsky, 2002). Although from the responses, it is evident that journalists have internalized the ideology of the free market, they do have some reservations. As most of them observed, ‘the market can be very dangerous to media freedom’ and therefore there is a need for some form of regulation to check the power of the ‘free’ market.

The media owners in Kenya seem to glorify the power of the free market to guarantee media's capacity to fulfil their democratic roles in the society and are opposed to any form of regulation (see also Oriare, 2008). Owing to the immense commercial and political pressures that the NMG faces as emerged from the research findings, it can however be observed that although the liberal ideology of free market has brought with it more robust and plural media in Kenya, this has not necessarily ensured accessibility and the commitment to prioritise public interest over commercial interests.

An ideological analysis of media performance in Kenya would therefore involve assumptions about political and economic power and how it is distributed in the society (see Klaehn, 2002; Herman and Chomsky, 2002). This entails an analysis of the recruitment of journalists, their organizational policies; their routines and the media's position in the larger social structure (see Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In the case of the NMG, it emerged from the findings that by virtue of 'the main shareholder, the Aga Khan, directly appointing and hiring the board of directors and the senior management in consultation with other shareholders, he ensures that they promote and protect his interests'.

It also emerged that during critical political times, especially during general elections, journalists are mostly assigned on 'tribal/ethnic beats' to cover a political leader from their ethnic community. The political elite exploit this close relationship with journalists from their ethnic community to promote their dominant ideology through the media (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002). From the findings it is also evident that mainstream media like the NMG in Kenya take explicit political stands or they are owned by prominent

politicians. This in effect means that the particular media promotes the ideology of their preferred political candidate or political party. The masses therefore most of the times will ‘innocently’ consume what the media produces without necessarily knowing that the content is biased towards a particular economic or political ideology.

From a critical perspective, an ideological analysis of media performance is therefore concerned with how political and economic power is exercised by the natural workings of the media system, creating a process of hegemony, which may be defined as the systematic engineering of mass consent (See Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Reese, 2001). As emerged from the findings, with time, journalists internalize this ‘natural’ way of doing things and abide by the ‘silent policies’ without any external coercion (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002). This in turn influences the decisions they make on what is and what is not news. So at the end of the day, the public get as news what has successfully gone through the five successive filters as outlined by Herman and Chomsky in the propaganda model plus the proposed ‘sixth filter’ and this largely determines their interpretation of reality; their ideology.

Therefore owing to the immense influences from the political and economic capitalist class on the ethical decisions of journalists at the NMG, it can be observed that the dominant ideology in Kenya is the ideology of the minority ruling political and economic class. The macro analysis of media performance using the filters draws our attention to the fact that media are subordinated to elite interests in the larger system (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Reese, 2007; Sparks, 2008). It appears from the research findings that

the media institutions that emerged from the process of transition from authoritarianism to democratisation and liberalisation like the NMG are still largely influenced by the political elite (see Sparks, 2008).

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Summary of Research Findings

The discussion and analysis of research findings in Chapter Five shows that ownership, shareholders, advertisers, political interests (ethnicity in newsrooms) and flak do influence journalists' ethical decisions. The findings point to the fact that although the political and economic context within which the NMG operates in Kenya is totally different from the U.S context where Herman and Chomsky originally applied the Propaganda model, the filters as outlined in the model are appropriate analytical tools in examining the political and commercial pressures that journalists face as they make their daily decisions at the NMG.

The analysis of findings also show that there is a need to expand the explanatory power of the propaganda model in the Kenyan context to include a 'sixth filter' of ethnicity in newsrooms as a key political constraint that compromises journalists' ethical decisions. The findings show that over and above the influence from the five primary filters, 'ethnicity is rife in newsrooms' and 'journalists cannot rise above their ethnic cocoons especially during elections and referendum' when public opinion is critically important. Journalists face political pressure from the tribal nature of politics in Kenya which makes the media and the journalists to take explicit political stands especially during elections and referendums, and this compromises their professional ethics. Ethnicity at the public and newsroom level should therefore be considered as a key 'sixth filter' that should be understood in relation to the other five primary filters outlined in the propaganda model.

From the findings, there seem to be a conflict between journalists' attempt to maintain autonomy and neutrality as envisioned by the liberal-democratic normative model while at the same time maintaining 'belonging' to a particular ethnic community (see Nyamnjoh, 2010; 2005) as they make their professional decisions.

The findings also point to the fact that journalists do enjoy some limited agency to resist the structural constraints as outlined in the filters. Most of them observed that 'if you observe the ethical values outlined in the code and the editorial policy guidelines plus an individual's personal values, then you can resist some of the pressures especially from politicians and advertisers'. Most of them also noted that 'sometimes you can stand by your decision and even go against the management's position on a matter of public interest and use the code and the policy guidelines to defend yourself'. This in effect means that journalists' decisions are not overly determined by the structural factors; they do have some agency. The findings of this study therefore indicate that there is a need to modify the explanatory power of the Propaganda Model to incorporate 'journalistic agency and professionalism' as a 'sub- filter' (see Pedro, 2011) that should be understood in relation with the primary five filters.

It has also emerged from the interviews that due to the inherent structural constraints under which commercial media like the NMG operate, and the interlocking relationships with capital and other dominant institutional sectors, such media is likely to result to self- censorship at the journalist level and corporate censorship through the silent policy guidelines (see also Reese, 2007; Hackett &Uzelman, 2003). This therefore largely compromises

the agency of individual journalists. Such pressures put both the journalist and the media in a compromising situation because they are supposed to keep watch over the same forces that own and control the media (see Klaehn, 2002). It therefore becomes very challenging for the media to fulfil the Monitorial, radical, facilitative and collaborative roles in the society (see Christian's et. al, 2009).

Although most of the journalists would want to be 'good journalists' in the moral sense by observing all the outlined ethical principles both in the code of conduct and in the editorial policy guidelines, sometimes 'it is more practical to compromise these values and do what the owner wants or what the advertiser wants in order to keep your job'. Although journalists participate in micro-processes of negotiation which depending on the persistence and relative power of the parties involved, may produce different results, which are sometimes those desired by honest journalists (Pedro, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), they do not operate in a vacuum, but within the limits of routines that are deeply naturalized and embedded in the media work (see Herman and Chomsky, 2002). Most of the journalists also believe that ethics is a matter of personal integrity and values and although they cannot do without the code, the journalists have to make a personal choice to abide by the code for their own good and that of the society.

From the research findings, most journalists perceive the growth of the media in Kenya as being closely intertwined with the political and economic development of the country. The NMG has particularly grown from a one newspaper media into the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa 'because of its creative and strategic business strategy, conducive

political climate due to increased democratic space and the overall economic growth of the country'. From the findings, the expansion of the NMG into a media conglomerate has brought with it increased political and economic pressures as journalists strive to balance their professional ethics with the myriad economic and political interests of the group.

The findings show that journalists experience economic and political pressures that are likely to influence their ethical decisions through the following: advertisers pushing their agenda mainly through the top management because they bring in the 'bread and butter' through advertising revenue, formal and informal, open and silent policies to protect the business interests of the main shareholder- The Aga Khan, the internal commercial pressures to maximize profits and returns for the shareholders hence focus is more on what sells which might not necessarily be in public interest and ethnicity in news rooms. Although journalists retain their agency to make independent decisions, this autonomy can be said to be influenced by the factors that Herman and Chomsky outlined in the five filters, hence resulting to self censorship, which compromises the journalists' capacity to fulfil their normative public interest role in the society.

Most of the journalists also perceive the promotion of public interest as the ideal role of journalism, but they admit that in reality, this might not always be the case because of the pressure to protect commercial and political interests inherent in the media organizational structure. The findings show that most journalists consider the ethical values of truth, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and the promotion of public interest as the key guiding principles in their daily decision-making. Most journalists also consider themselves as

enjoying freedom of the media in the political sense, largely because the government does not meddle directly in the operation of the media and because the management to a large extent does not interfere in their decisions.

Most of them however observed that 'it is not practically possible for a journalist to be completely free of commercial pressures in a commercial media environment like the NMG'. Most of them therefore perceive commercial and market pressures in the form of advertisers, politicians, shareholders, ethnicity in the newsrooms and at the public level as the major threats to media freedom in Kenya today. On the issue of checks on media freedom, the findings indicate that most of the journalists advocate for self-regulation of the media through an independent media council. Media freedom should not be divorced from media responsibility and from the responses, the journalists do not believe in absolute media freedom. Most of the journalists believe that the best way to ensure that economic and political pressures do not compromise their professionalism is to ensure personal and professional integrity in their work. As most of them observed, 'it is a tall order owing to these immense pressures, but it is the best'.

It can therefore be argued from these findings that in practice, most of the times, journalists rely less on the written codes and more on 'practical' mechanisms for dealing with these growing influences of forces outside the newsroom such as the executives of corporations that have direct links with the news media, the interests of corporate 'siblings' and the markets for investors, advertisers, sources and consumers (see McManus 1997). This is because 'even as we follow the code, there is a way in which commercial

interests can get in the way of these values' It therefore seems that commercial, political and corporate interests have the potential to influence media performance at every level identified by Shoemaker and Reese in their Hierarchy of Influences Model and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model.

6.2 Conclusion

This chapter has given a summary of the in-depth discussion and analysis of the research findings. The in-depth analysis and discussion of the research findings in chapter 5 was linked to the overall theoretical framework. The chapter discussed the major factors that influence journalists' ethical decisions, the various ways in which these factors influence journalists' decisions and the ways in which the journalists respond and attempt to resist these pressures as emerged from the research findings in line with the five filters of the propaganda model and the proposed 'sixth filter'.

The main focus of the study was to establish the ways in which journalists experience commercial/ economic and political pressures that are likely to influence their ethical decisions. From the findings, it emerged that the economic and political pressures that compromise journalists' ethics can be broadly classified under four broad categories: pressure from advertisers, pressure from owners and shareholders, pressures from politicians, ethnicity in the newsroom and pressures from the public as a market. The journalists therefore often face the dilemmas of trying to fulfil their responsibility as journalists; to do what is in public interest and to adjust to the realities of the

newsroom which are influenced by these economic and political market forces.

The first Research question: What contextual factors have shaped the cross media ownership structure in Kenya? was answered through the analysis of the responses of the interviewed journalists on the same and an institutional analysis of relevant company documents among them the Group's Annual reports, the constitution of the Board of directors and the major shareholders. The second research question: How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions? Was answered through the analysis of the interview responses on how journalists experience economic and political pressures from owners/ shareholders, advertisers, and political interests (ethnicity in the newsroom). To answer the third research question: What potential policy interventions can journalists propose to check the impact of cross media ownership on media ethics in Kenya? the researcher posed the following question to all interviewees: 'Do you think these market pressures should be checked? If Yes, How? If No, Why?' The responses on this question were then analysed to get an 'insider's view' of how to check economic and political pressures on journalists' ethical decisions at the NMG in Kenya.

The researcher did not intend to generalize the findings from this study, but rather to get a detailed account of how journalists at the NMG experience and respond to these economic and political pressures. Therefore, although the findings do not claim to represent an overall picture of how journalists experience economic and political pressures in Kenya, the findings can be

used as a bench mark to make some key observations and recommendations. The researcher therefore proceeds in the next chapter to make observations and recommendations on the possible policy interventions on how to check these commercial and political pressures as emerged from the research findings.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and summarizes the major issues that have been raised in the study, the significance of the study and the recommendations that can be made on the basis of the research findings as a guide for policy formulation and future research on the political economy of the media and media ethics in Kenya.

The general objective of the study was to investigate how media ownership structure, economic and political constraints inherent in a horizontally integrated media conglomerate like the NMG are likely to influence the ethical decisions of journalists. The general objective of the study was to find out how these inherent economic and political constraints influence journalists as they make their day- to-day ethical decisions. To achieve this general research objective and to answer the research questions, the study used an institutional analysis of relevant company documents and qualitative interviews of journalists at the NMG. The analysis and evaluation of the performance of the NMG and that of the individual journalists was done through the critical political economy theoretical framework, using the filters outlined in Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model as the analytical tools.

The study therefore generally examined the structural questions of ownership, market structure and commercial support and how these

influence journalists, affect media content and overall media performance (see Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2003; Boyd-Barrett, 1995). The propaganda model was preferred as an analytical tool in this study because the filters served as appropriate indicators of the sources of economic and political pressures on journalists' ethical decisions.

7.2 General conclusions from the study

Through the analysis of the study findings, this study has successfully tested the validity of the filters outlined in the propaganda model as appropriate analytical tools of the forms that economic and political constraints take at the NMG in Kenya. The study has established that journalists experience political and economic pressures from owners, shareholders, advertisers, the profit orientation of the NMG as a commercial media and political pressure in the form of ethnicity at the individual and institutional level. The findings therefore show that if the propaganda model is to be effectively applied to explain media performance in Kenya, there is need to modify its explanatory power by incorporating ethnicity as a key 'sixth filter' that works in line with the other five primary filters outlined in the original version of the model.

Tribalism/ethnicity and corruption in the newsroom emerged as the major political threat to journalism ethics. Journalists reported not to be able to rise above their tribal cocoons when reporting on political issues especially during general elections and referendums when the media is more likely to shape public opinion. From the findings, ethnicity elicits patterns of

'belonging' to an ethnic community among journalists contrary to liberal-democratic model's emphasis on individualism and autonomy (see Nyamnjoh, 2005). Media houses like the NMG also take political stands and promote the political cause of particular politicians or political parties. There seems to be some form of 'elite continuity' (see Sparks, 2008) at the NMG as an independent media in a democratic society. The NMG in general and individual journalists seem to collude with the political and business elite to promote elite interests (see also Makokha, 2010; Mutere, 2005).

Although structural constraints largely influence journalists' decisions, their actions are not always overly determined by these structural constraints as the classical version of the propaganda model puts it. There is a form of agency on the part of journalists no matter how minimal it may be. The findings of this study therefore re-affirm the strengths of the propaganda model by showing the relevance of the filters as analytical tools while at the same time confirming the concerns of 'sympathisers' (see Sparks, 2007; Boyd-Barrett, 2004) of the model that it should be strengthened by incorporating other elements such as journalistic agency and professionalism and ethnicity in the news room as illustrated in this study.

This study therefore recommends that the explanatory power of the propaganda model should be expanded by incorporating the element of 'journalistic agency and professionalism' as outlined by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) in their Hierarchy of Influences model as a 'sub-filter' and ethnicity in newsrooms as a 'sixth filter' that should be understood in relation with the five primary filters when applying it to the Kenyan context

and other African countries where ethnicity plays a major role in the political process (see Nyamnjoh, 2005; 2010).

On being asked to recommend a way forward on how journalists can resist these economic and political pressures, the journalists unanimously said that at the individual level, journalists should observe personal and professional ethics in their work. They said that although it may be challenging, they believe that observing the code of conduct and acting within the provisions of the editorial policy guidelines can ‘save your neck in case the top management comes for you after running a story that you felt it was out rightly in public interest, but against the Establishment’s interests’. This shows that journalists do act as a level of influence in the news production process (See Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Their actions are therefore not totally determined as the original propaganda model presents; they influence the “filtering” process at the micro level.

Generally, the findings from the analysis and review of relevant company documents and literature as well as the responses from the interviews confirmed the second assumption of the study: that the present media structure and performance in Kenya has its roots in the political and economic history of the country. The responses from the journalists confirmed findings from the literature reviewed and institutional analysis that the NMG grew from a one media outlet to the largest media conglomerate in East and Central Africa due to the interplay of economic, political and technological factors. Through the interview responses and the institutional analysis of relevant company documents the Researcher was

able to answer the first research question: What contextual factors have shaped cross media ownership structure in Kenya?

Political and economic liberalisation, which led to media liberalization in the 1990s and the change of political regime one decade later in 2002 were singled out as the major political factors facilitating the growth. The journalists observed that economic growth both nationally and regionally in the East African region opened up business opportunities, which the main share holder The Aga Khan strategically maximized. The advent of new media technologies made the overall operations of the Group more efficient and cost effective and it also enabled the Group to venture into online media.

The findings from the qualitative interviews confirmed the first assumption of the study: that several economic and political structural pressures that are inherent in a particular media house influence journalists' ethical decisions. The responses confirmed that journalists experience commercial pressures from the interlocking 'sister' business interests of both the Aga Khan and other shareholders in a way that compromises their ethical decisions. This is because journalists at the NMG are expected to protect the interests of these sister companies sometimes at the expense of public interest and the principles of professional journalism. Shareholders' and owners' expectation of profits and returns on their investment also influence journalists to focus more on what is likely to sell, which may not necessary be the ethical and professional thing to do. Through this, the researcher was able to answer the second research question: How do journalists working at the Nation Media Group experience the influence of economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions?

From the responses, it was evident that the government is no longer a major threat to media freedom in Kenya. Most of the journalists observed that they enjoy more political freedom than they did before the change of regime in 2002. They unanimously cited commercial pressures and ethnicity as the biggest threats to their freedom and professional ethics. Democratisation has therefore brought greater freedom for the media, but it has also opened up the media market to commercial influences with implications on the media's capacity to fulfil its democratic roles in the society.

It also emerged from the interviews that most journalists are keen on observing the code of conduct for journalists in Kenya provided by the self regulatory body, the Media Council of Kenya and the ethical values outlined in the editorial policy guidelines of the NMG. Most of the journalists singled out the ethical principles of fairness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and the promotion of public interest as the guiding principles that they use to make their daily decisions. They however, observed that in some situations, it is not practically possible to adhere to these principles as they make their decisions especially if there is a conflict of interest between doing the ethical thing and promoting the owners' interest. In such cases, most of the times, 'the owners' interest carries the day'.

Most of the journalists cited the most prevalent ethical dilemmas as emanating from the often subtle internal pressures to observe 'silent policies' not to report anything negative that may endanger the business interests of the 'sister' companies, not to offend a big advertiser, the pressure to maximize profits for the shareholders and during critical political times

like elections and referendum, the pressure to balance your professionalism with the implicit political leaning of the NMG and their own tribal affiliation with politicians from their ethnic community.

The journalists unanimously said that media should not be left to enjoy absolute freedom. There should be some form of a self-regulatory mechanism. Most of them said that the best form of media regulation should be internal and external self regulation through the policy guidelines and an external independent body like the Media Council of Kenya. Most of them however observed that as it is now, the Media Council of Kenya does not have ‘the teeth to bite’ and should therefore be strengthened and be given powers to prosecute. A few were for co- regulation by both the Media Council and the government. Through the analysis of these ‘journalists’ proposals’, the researcher was able to answer the third research question: What potential policy interventions can journalists propose to check the impact of cross media ownership on media ethics in Kenya?

7.3 Challenges/ Limitations encountered

During the literature review phase of the research, the researcher experienced challenges on accessing academic literature on the media in Kenya. A general review of the available literature revealed that very little has been written in the academia about the media in Kenya and more so in the field of media ethics and political economy of the media.

During the collection of data phase of the research, the researcher also faced challenges in accessing ‘substantive’ number of ethical complaints lodged at

the Media Council of Kenya against the NMG. The researcher only found eight complaints against the NMG. Interviews with the journalists pointed to the fact that the reason why there were such few cases reported was probably because most people including journalists 'do not know what the Media Council does and the Media Council does not have the teeth to bite' and therefore most people do not have faith in it. They also observed that the composition of the council members and the source of funding for the council contribute to its ineffectiveness. The media owners are represented by three members including the CEO of the NMG and the council is partly funded by the government and the media owners.

7.4 Significance/ contribution of the study

This study makes a contribution to the academic literature on the political economy of the media and media ethics in Kenya. As mentioned above, the researcher faced challenges in contextualizing her study because there is a dearth of literature on media ethics and political economy in Kenya. The findings in this study therefore address part of that gap.

Theoretically, the study tests the validity of the propaganda model in a setting that is different socially, economically and politically from the original setting, the U.S and in this way the study contributes to the overall debate and counter- criticisms of the model; that it is applicable in different settings. The study also proposes the modification of the conceptual and explanatory power of the propaganda model in two ways. One, although the study uses the five filter elements as the analytical tools; it incorporates the element of agency of journalists through the qualitative interviews to

establish how structural constraints as outlined in the filters influence their ethical decisions. The study therefore proposes the incorporation of journalistic agency and professionalism as a ‘sub- filter’ that should be understood in relation with the five primary filters. Two, from the findings, this study proposes the inclusion of ethnicity in newsrooms as a key ‘sixth filter’ to expand the explanatory power of the Propaganda Model in the Kenyan context and other African contexts (see Nyamnjoh, 2010; 2005).

Through the interviews, the study established that although journalists’ decisions are largely influenced by the structural constraints as outlined in the filters; journalists do enjoy some form of agency to resist these constraints. This points to the fact that Herman and Chomsky’s model can also be strengthened by incorporating the elements of other Models like Shoemaker and Reese’s Hierarchy of Influences Model, which was used in this study. Journalists reported that they are able to exercise their autonomy to favour politicians from their ethnic tribe whose political ideology may be different from the general political stand taken by the NMG as an institution. Journalists’ decisions are therefore not always overly determined by the constraints as the classical version of the propaganda model puts it, but journalists act as a level of influence at the micro level as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) observe in their model.

This study therefore appreciates the strengths of the model while seeking to extend its explanatory power (see Sparks, 2007). In this way, the study addresses part of the concerns of scholars who have advanced a ‘sympathetic criticism’ of the model (see Sparks, 2007; Boyd-Barrett, 2004) that the aim of any adequate revision of the model must be to provide a more

comprehensive framework that can give a better account of the evidence that critics advance to challenge the theory.

The notion of “flak” outlined as the fourth filter in the propaganda model is also re-defined in this study to include both internal and external forms of flak. Herman & Chomsky define flak as ‘the negative responses to a media statement or program, which may take the form of letters, telegrams, lawsuits etc’ (Herman & Chomsky, 2002:26). In this study, the term flak is used from a broad perspective to include the negative responses from the management and establishment, which make journalists to self-censor themselves in fear of upsetting the status quo. Flak in this study is also used to include the external commercial and political pressures from shareholders, owners and the political arena which lead to both individual self censorship and corporate censorship in fear of the negative response from these powerful forces.

By presenting a detailed account of the political and economic factors that have contributed to the growth of one of the largest media houses in East and Central Africa, the NMG, this study provides a basis on which further research can be conducted on the growth of other media houses in the region. It also provides a rich reservoir of reference material on the media scene in Kenya.

The findings of the study on the economic and political pressures that journalists experience in a horizontally integrated media conglomerate, point to the need for further research on the effects of commercialisation and marketisation of the media in other emerging democracies like Kenya. The

study therefore calls for a re-examination of the prevailing normative framework within which media performance in Kenya is analysed; the liberal- pluralist model.

As the research findings show, the doctrine of the free market of ideas has led to commercialisation and marketisation of media practice. This has in effect largely compromised journalistic ethics. The study findings also show that the government is no longer a major threat to media freedom and responsibility in Kenya today hence the need to call for revision of the liberal-pluralist model, which is based on the traditional libertarian tradition. According to the liberal- pluralist tradition, the government is the major threat to media and journalistic freedom to fulfil their democratic role in the society. This normative tradition ignores the commercial threats that the free market poses to media freedom and ethnicity in newsroom, which compromise the media's capacity to fulfil its watchdog role in the society. The liberal-democratic model ignores the fact that ethnicity in newsrooms elicits patterns of 'belonging' to ethnic communities rather than individual autonomy to be neutral in reporting political issues (see Nyamnjoh 2005).

The study has successfully applied the filters of the propaganda model in analyzing media performance in Kenya hence providing evidence that the model is objectively applicable as an 'institutional critique' of media performance in any democratic society. The model is 'often sidelined and ignored in mainstream media analysis discourse; it's dismissed as pure conspiracy (see Klaehn, 2002).

The significance of this study is further reinforced by the fact that it focuses on both critical political economy and media ethics. This enriches the findings of the study. More ethical questions regarding the commercialization and marketisation of the media could therefore provide focus for further research. We now proceed to make recommendations for future policy considerations and further research on media ethics and the political economy of the media in Kenya based on the study's findings and the general conclusions outlined.

7.5 Recommendations

From the foregoing discussions and analysis of research findings, the following recommendations can be made in line with the third research question on 'what policy recommendations journalists can propose to check these political and economic pressures on journalism ethics in Kenya?'

- It is evident from the findings that journalists consider professional ethics as key in resisting the economic and political pressures. The study therefore recommends that the management in news media should make concerted efforts to ensure that journalists embrace ethics not just because there is a code or because they are afraid of the consequences as it emerged from the interviews, but because that is the right thing to do. There should be more mentoring and more in-house debates on ethics to keep the debate alive and to make the journalists internalize these values as a way of their professional life. Some journalists observed that they did not think that the management

handled the issue of ethics ‘with the seriousness it deserves’ although most of them were quick to add that ethics is a matter of personal integrity. The management should therefore make it part of their agenda to nurture journalists of high moral integrity.

- It also emerged that most of the interviewees do not think that the Media Council of Kenya as the official regulatory body has ‘the teeth to bite’. This study therefore recommends the strengthening of the Council to give it the teeth it needs to act effectively. We also recommend that the Media Council should put in place a mechanism to check these economic and political structural pressures that compromise journalists’ ethics. We recommend that there should be a code of conduct for media owners in Kenya that stipulates the ethical principles that should guide the operation of the media business in Kenya. This can be part of the recommendations for the expansion of the powers of the Council as evident from the findings. This is because outlining the ethical principles to guide the journalists does not resolve the question of the inherent pressures from owners’ economic and political interests.
- We also recommend that the Council should reconstitute its board members to make it more effective. As the institutional analysis of the council structure and some of the interviewees observed, as it is now, ‘it is skewed towards the media industry and that undermines its capacity as an independent regulatory mechanism’. It should have diverse membership especially from the consumers, journalists and professionals to voice out their concerns.

- As much as the gains from political and media liberalisation are lauded in this study, there is need for the formulation of a policy framework to guide the immense growth that has been witnessed in the media scene in Kenya in the last two decades. We recommend that there is a need for anti-trust laws and cross-media ownership policies that limit the number and type of media that one company can have in a local market. This will regulate the emerging trend of media concentration in Kenya in an attempt to diversify the shapers of public opinion during critical times like elections and referendums.
- The growth of media conglomerates like the NMG, with so many interlocking economic and political interests to protect has implications for its capacity to fulfil its democratic roles in the society as the findings have illustrated. Policies that address issues of media ownership and media ethics in the commercialised and globalised media environment should be put in place to address the inherent economic and political structural constraints, which impair the journalists' capacity to discharge their roles in the society.
- As some of the respondents observed, there is need to adopt a multi-sectoral approach involving all stakeholders- the media, the government, the private sector, the citizens and the civil society to come up with policies that address the economic and political threats to media freedom in a fair and inclusive way.

- Lastly we recommend that there is a need for further research focusing on the impact of commercialisation and marketisation on the professional ethics of journalists in other leading media outlets in Kenya. There is also need for comparative studies to examine if journalists experience similar economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions in other media conglomerates in other African countries.

This study has examined how journalists experience economic and political pressures on their ethical decisions at the NMG in Kenya. My aim in conducting this study was not to generalize or to give a representative picture of how journalists experience these pressures in all media in Kenya, but to give a detailed account of the ‘behind the scenes’ economic and political pressures that influence journalists’ decisions at the NMG. Although the study did achieve that aim, the issues arising from the research findings are too extensive to be covered within the limits of this study. I therefore challenge other scholars in Kenya to continue with the debate that the study has initiated.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: Interview guide

Interview guide questions for journalists

Introduction

Thanks a lot for taking time to talk to me.

Let me give you some background information on the research for which am conducting the interviews.

I am a PhD student at the School of Journalism and Media studies, Rhodes University, South Africa. My PhD thesis is titled “An investigation into how Journalists Experience Political and Economic Pressures on their Ethical Decisions at the Nation Media Group in Kenya”. The main idea of the interviews is to find out if/ how commercial, shareholders/owners, political and business pressures may influence the professional ethics of journalists as they make their daily decisions. The interviews are therefore part of my data collection process to complete my PhD thesis.

I would like to tape-record this interview to make sure that none of the information will get lost. I would however like to assure you that any information you are giving during this interview will be treated with absolute confidentiality. All interviews will be transcribed into text, and there will be no mention of names either in the transcribed text or in the finished PhD thesis. The transcription will use codes to anonymise the identity of the interviewee. So any publication or report will use only that code. We will also make sure that any details for example specific job titles

that could help reveal the identity of our interviewees will be deleted from the transcribed text,

Please keep in mind that I am interested in your own opinions and experiences in how you personally see ownership, political and business pressures/ interests impacting on your professionalism as a journalist at the NMG.

Interview questions

Contextual factors shaping cross media ownership structure

1. How long have you worked as a journalist at the Nation Media Group/ current position?
2. What would you say are the factors that have contributed to the growth of the media in Kenya and the NMG in particular?
3. What would you say is the connection between multiparty democracy and growth of the NMG?
4. Would you say opening up the media market brought benefits for the media industry in Kenya and NMG in particular? Any negative effects?

Normative aspect

5. What ethical values guide you as a journalist in your day-to-day work?
6. Where do you get those values?
7. What are the ethical dilemmas you most often have to deal with?

8. How do you make decisions about those dilemmas?
9. Do you refer to a code of conduct in your ethical decisions in your daily work? (If yes give an example when you used. If No explain why)
10. Do you find that the code of practice is applicable to your practical work as a journalist at the NMG?
11. Do you sometimes experience pressure on your ethical or professional values? (If Yes, give the kind of pressure and how you responded)
12. What do you understand by media freedom or freedom of the press?
13. Do you think that you as a journalist in Kenya today and at the NMG enjoy media freedom?
14. Are there any threats to media freedom? If yes, what are they?
15. What in your view entails media responsibility?
16. What do you think your responsibilities are as a journalist at the NMG?
17. Do you think that media/ journalist freedom should be absolute or are there circumstances in which it can justifiably be checked? (*If there are circumstances, give examples*)

Economic/Political influences

18. Do you think the market is a threat to media/journalist freedom?
19. Why do you say so?
20. Do you experience pressures from the market in your day-to-day work? (*If yes, how do you experience them and how do the pressures influence your decisions*).

21. Do you think you have a duty to promote the company's interest?
22. How do the many non-media businesses that are affiliated to the NMG as a conglomerate affect you as a journalist?
23. Have you or any of your colleagues ever felt pressured to report a story or to cover it in a particular way or to suppress it in a bid to protect owners/share holders' interests? *(If yes, what form of pressure and by whom)? Did you give in to the pressure and why?*
24. Have you or any of your colleagues ever felt pressured to report a story, or to cover it in a particular way, or to suppress it to promote advertisers' interests? *(If yes, what sort of advertiser? Did you give in and why?)*
25. Have you or any of your colleagues ever felt pressured to report a story or to report it in a particular way or to suppress it to protect political interests- the government, politicians, political parties? *(If yes, who exerted the pressure? What form did the pressure take? Did you give in and why?)*
26. Do you think these market pressures should be checked? If Yes, How? If No, why?

Thanks a lot once again for taking time to answer the questions

About the interviewee and the interview

To be filled in by interviewer:

1. Name of interviewee
2. Job title
3. Sex
4. Date/time of interview
5. Duration
6. Location

APPENDIX B: Media owned by the NMG in Kenya

- *The Daily Nation* (plus the *Saturday* and *Sunday* editions),
- NTV (TV station)
- E-TV
- Easy FM
- Q FM
- K FM
- *The East African Newspaper* (regional for the East Africa region)
- *The Business Daily*
- *The Daily Monitor* (which is also published in Uganda)
- *Taifa Leo* (published in Kiswahili)
- *The Citizen*
- *The Africa Review*
- *Daily Nation* online

APPENDIX C: Principal shareholders at the NMG

1. Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) with a total of 70,165,286 shares translating to 44.66% ownership
2. Mr. Amin Nanji Juma with a total of 12,811,400 shares translating to 9.98% ownership
3. National Social Security Fund with a total of 5,701,916 shares translating to 3.63%
4. Nima Investment Limited with a total of 2,874,775 shares translating to 1.83%
5. John Kibunga Kimani with a total of 1,581,611 shares translating to 1.01%
6. Barclays Kenya Nominees Limited A/c 9230 with a total of 1,045,075 shares translating to 0.67%

7. Kenya Commercial Bank – Nominees A/c 769G with a total of 849,053 shares translating 0.54%
8. Insurance Company of East Africa with a total of 819,876 shares translating to 0.52%
9. Jubilee Insurance Company Limited with a total of 752,699 shares translating to 0.48%
10. Old Mutual Life Assurance Limited with a total of 724,217 translating to 0.46%.

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