The impact of new media on journalism practices in Tanzania

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The mass media in Tanzania are grappling with the problem of poor quality and quantity of local content: as a result, they have swamped with foreign news. New media offer a novel platform to improve significantly the local news content, if integrated effectively in the news gathering and processing routines. This study delved into local journalists’ new media use in Tanzania to ascertain their impact on journalism practice and determine emerging practices linked to their application. To achieve the study objectives, 66 local journalists, who were selected randomly from eleven major national media outlets in Tanzania, were recruited to participate in an online questionnaire survey and the content of their Facebook accounts were analysed to respond to the first and second research questions on emerging journalistic practices. Data were processed using an online digital research platform—SurveyMonkey.com. The study has established that 68 per cent of the local journalistic in Tanzania are experienced new media users and most of them (75%) often use social networking platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter. However the vast majority (78%) do not use new media to source, share, or get feedback on the local news, and up to 74 per cent use new media for entertainment. The broad conclusion drawn based on these findings is that, local journalist in Tanzania have essentially been using new media for entertainment, not for professional engagement, particularly improving the local news content, whose quality and quantity the country’s ICT policy acknowledges is poor and needs to be improved. Therefore, the study recommends that concerted efforts be made through training and favorable media as well as ICT policies to shift from utopian predictions about new media and journalistic practices in Tanzania to ensure that local journalists embrace and use such media effectively to improve local news coverage.