

Kenya has become a media lab

By [Aly Khan Satchu](#)

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I always marvel at the popularity of my newspaper seller. The appetite for news in Kenya is simply off the charts. And that has been the case for as long as I can remember.

Of course, once upon a time, we only had one channel the voice of Kenya. Subsequently we have had a massive channel explosion. We have a multiplicity of TV channels, radio stations.

Others are consuming their news via the internet leveraging the real time via the likes of Twitter and predominantly via the mobile phone. If you pause for a moment, its actually an extraordinary and increasingly 21st century information landscape. We have venerable players like the Nation Media Group, the likes of *Citizen* and the Radio Africa Group who were onceupstarts and start ups.

Not forgetting Christopher Kirubi's Capital radio. The likes of CCTV have set up shop in Nairobi and last week *The New York Times* said this about that: 'Chinese news media officials chose to set up shop in Nairobi because of its role as a news hub for the English-speaking countries in East Africa.' And thats the point. We talk often of being a regional hub but we are also a news hub and in what is clearly an information century that is a marvellous thing.

By the way, the Chinese are spending \$7b on this media expansion and have set up quite a swanky gig in the K-REP building in Nairobi. I did an interview with Beatrice Marshall, where we were on a simultaneous live feed with Tehran, Beijing and Washington. That's pretty impressive, in my humble opinion.

Look at Bharat Thakrar's ScanGroup which has parlayed a position in Kenya into an imminent sub-Saharan Africa position. The eyeballs and the scale of the market are confirmed by the congregation around my newspaper seller. The media ecosystem is in fact multi dimensional. There is the traditional offline newspaper and incredibly is very profitable, whereas in other parts of the world its simply cratered.

Then at the other end of the spectrum, we have the digital experience. I am an evangelist when it comes to the digital space and think there is a parabolic growth curve in mobile, digital media. Nation Media Group released strong first half results and the share price has rallied about 15% since that release. The catalyst was the announcement of his diaspora remittance card.

All of us who have been abroad have used the Nation website for our daily dose of home news. The eyeballs the Nation has on its website was never the issue. The issue was how were they going to monetise? The card was all about the monetisation of eyeballs. And it is that penny that dropped with investors.

There is a bucketload of cash looking for toothpaste and consumer businesses to buy out as everyone gets excited about the East African consumer, I grant you that. However, I venture our media sector in its many dimensions and complexities is simply red hot and right now a yellow brick road.

Source: [allAfrica](#)

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