ABSTRACT
This study examined the role played by the media in disseminating road safety information. Literatures on how media report road safety issues plus other materials on the same were reviewed. It focused on print media and more specifically the nation newspaper published in the period between January 1st 2013 and June 31st 2013.
To establish which stories fall into road safety and related categories, the researcher identified keywords that were found in the story. These were road safety, traffic, accident, crash and road carnage. In order to understand how Nation newspaper prime road safety information. The study looked at article placement, frequency, article size, theme of article and article prominence. It also looked at photos and graphics use.
The research found that the nation newspaper had most of articles on road safety published in the inner pages leaving prime pages for other news especially politics. Major road safety stories found their space on cover page only when there was a major crash involving many deaths. For the articles published, many were reduced to briefs. There were also very few photos and graphics to support these articles.
The research also found out that advertising plays a major role in determining the space allocated to editorial content. This has a direct impact on the size of stories in terms of length. Many stories are edited to fit in the little space provided, thus losing out some of the important story elements.
It was also found that much of road safety information was published in the month of May and June. This could be attributed to hype that came with the March 4th elections. In the period preceding the elections and after, many media houses focused and reported on politics thus paying little attention to other important issues such as reporting on road safety.
It was established that, NMG editorial policy plays a key role in dictating what kind of material is published. Any material considered not aligning with this policy is either edited to conform or discarded altogether. This could compromise or distort the content thus failing to convey the intended message.
In conclusion, though, nation newspaper has tried to play a role in passing road safety information to the public, a lot still needs to be done to address an obvious gap. Print media should improve its priming of road safety information. More space need to be allocated to road safety issues. All stakeholders should be encouraged to share their information and opinions regarding road safety. Information on road safety need to be published in prime pages regularly and not only when reporting on road carnage incidents.
The study recommends further research on the role played by media in addressing road safety information in Kenya.