

THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC JOURNALISM IN UGANDA

JEMIMAH TREASURE SSEKISAK

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how music journalism has evolved over the years in Uganda's Kampala, from the oral traditions, to the radio era and currently the digital and social media eras. In this study music journalism is defined as the systematic reviewing, analyzing, and critiquing of music and the music industry, rather than mere entertainment reporting or publicity. The study mainly focuses on Kampala as the main center of music and its production. The study is guided by theories like agenda setting, cultural studies and hegemony, political economy of the media, and public sphere theories. These theories explain how technology, language, media ownership, regulation and advertising pressure influence the practice and independence of music journalism in Uganda. In the study, music journalists are also viewed as people that shape public taste, the reputations of artists and debates around culture, morality and politics. A qualitative research approach is used based on historical analysis and views from selected newspapers, radio stations, television programs, and digital platforms based in Kampala. Although music journalism in Uganda has expanded across different platforms, a lot of its coverage prioritizes promotion, gossip and commercial interests rather than objective, fair and independent criticism. The digital media has also created many opportunities for various criticisms and voices from different people. The study does not only provide academic knowledge but also gives more insights which are useful to researchers, journalism educators, media practitioners and policymakers seeking to strengthen the professional standards.

DECLARATION

I Jemimah treasure Ssekisak, declare that this is my original work, with no element of plagiarism and has not been submitted to any other institution for any award.

Signature: 

Date: 5th December, 2025.

APPROVAL

This dissertation on the topic “The evolution of music journalism in Kampala”

was written and submitted with the approval of my research supervisor

Mr. Geoffrey Abraham Bakiraasa Ssenoga.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. AB Ssenoga', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Supervisor's signature: ...

.....

Date:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research paper to my family that made my research journey much easier and doable, and of course my friends for their support, patience and encouragement all through.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Once again, I thank my supervisor for his guidance and support, I thank my colleagues, as well as my family and friends for their efforts, love and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction:

Uganda's music scene has transformed from primarily live performance traditions—such as Buganda court music, church choirs, and community-based troupes—to a commercial popular music industry characterized by recording studios, music videos, corporate sponsorship, and digital distribution centered in Kampala (Salaamu, 2020; Wikipedia, 2024). Music journalism emerged alongside this transformation, initially as short notes in state-run media about cultural events and artists, then later as dedicated columns, radio shows, TV programs, online platforms, and social media pages that review songs, albums, and performances; profile artists; and analyze industry practices like promotion, copyright, and distribution (Jonathan, 2015; Nyakaana, 2013). Music journalists and commentators in the Kampala now shape public perceptions of genres like Kadongo Kamu, band music, gospel, Afrobeat, and dancehall, and influence careers of Kampala artists such as Jose Chameleone, Bobi Wine, Bebe Cool, and Sheebah, and groupd like such as Afrigo Band, nevertheless, there is a notable lack of consistency in the depth, independence, and professional rigor of this reporting (Monitor, n.d.-a; Start Journal, 2012).

This study focuses on music journalism understood specifically as the systematic reviewing, analyzing, and critiquing of music and the music industry, rather than mere entertainment reporting or publicity. It considers coverage in mainstream newspapers (e.g., New Vision, Daily Monitor), FM radio (e.g., CBS, Capital FM, Galaxy FM), television (e.g., NTV, NBS, Bukedde TV), and digital platforms (e.g., music blogs, YouTube channels, Facebook and X/Twitter pages) that operate largely from Kampala (Monitor, 2013; Uganda Communications Commission UCC, 2024). By examining how this field has evolved from the pre-independence era through the one-radio-state era, the FM radio boom of the 1990s, and the digital and social media era, the study seeks to show how music journalism has responded to social, political and economic changes, technological innovations, and shifts in audience expectations (Nyakaana, 2013; UCC, 2024).

1.1 Background to the Study:

1.1.1 Historical Perspective:

Historically, music criticism in Buganda and Kampala was embedded in oral traditions, where praise singers, poets, and cultural leaders evaluated performances in royal courts, churches, and community gatherings (Music Matters, 2019). With colonial rule and the introduction of print and broadcast media, music coverage began to appear in newspapers and on early radio, often in the form of program listings, event announcements, and short descriptive reports rather than analytical reviews (Salaamu, 2020). Uganda Television (UTV) and Radio Uganda in the 1960s-1980s occasionally highlighted musicians and bands. The sector remains subject to rigorous governmental regulation, which stifles substantive critique of creative output, political developments, and institutional practices. (African Media Development Initiative AMDI, 2006).

The liberalisation of the media sector in the early 1990s, including the licensing of private FM stations like Sanyu FM, Capital FM, and later CBS FM, introduced a more vibrant and competitive environment for entertainment content (Nyakaana, 2013; Monitor, 2013). Radio deejays and presenters started to not only play music but also comment on song quality, production, lyrical content, and artist conduct, often shaping hits and careers through playlist choices and on-air remarks (AMDI, 2006; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). The emergence of band music and Kadongo Kamu stars and later Afro-pop and dancehall artists in Kampala led to growing coverage in newspapers like Uganda Argus , the People and later day ones like New Vision and Daily Monitor, which began to run entertainment pull-outs and columns reviewing concerts and albums (Monitor, n.d.-a; Start Journal, 2012). As recording studios in Kampala—linked to early pioneers like Elly Wamala and later to digital studios in areas such as Makindye and Kansanga—expanded, more local music was produced and thus more content demanded journalistic attention (Jonathan, 2015; Salaamu, 2020).

By the 2000s and 2010s, the central region had become the epicenter of Uganda’s music and media industries. Television shows on NTV, NBS, Bukedde TV and others created dedicated entertainment and music programs that featured video premieres, countdowns, and panel discussions (UCC, 2024). At the same time, music blogs, online entertainment sites, and social media accounts run from Kampala started publishing reviews, gossip, and opinion pieces, sometimes mixing advertising with critique (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012). This period also saw tensions between artists and journalists, for example, when musicians felt unfairly portrayed or when journalists faced pressure from sponsors or media owners not to criticize certain events or artists

(Start Journal, 2012). Although some Ugandan academics and media critics have begun to document aspects of this media and music history, there remains limited systematic scholarly work that specifically traces the evolution of music journalism as a distinct practice in Kampala (Pitt Magazine, 2004).

1.1.2 Conceptual Perspective:

Conceptually, this study distinguishes between general entertainment reporting and music journalism. Entertainment reporting tends to focus on announcements, event promotion, celebrity gossip, and basic information such as concert dates, venue, and attendance (Music Matters, 2019). Music journalism, in contrast, involves evaluative and interpretive work: it reviews songs, albums, and performances; analyzes musical style, lyrical themes, and production quality; contextualizes artists within cultural, social, or political dynamics; and critiques industry structures such as record labels, promoters, event organizers, and media houses (Jonathan, 2015; Start Journal, 2012). In the Ugandan central-region context, this includes, for example, a columnist in a Kampala-based newspaper rating a new Jose Chameleone album and discussing its lyrical engagement with urban life, or a TV panel dissecting the live performance quality at major Kampala concerts and festivals (Music Matters, 2019; Salaamu, 2020).

The study also treats “evolution” in a conceptual sense: not only chronological change but also changes in the roles, norms, and platforms of music journalism. Initially, the role of the reporter was primarily informational and deferential to both the state and cultural authorities (AMD, 2006). With liberalization and commercialization, music journalists adopted roles as tastemakers, promoters, critics, and sometimes activists—for instance, raising concerns about exploitation of artists or unfair contracts (Ciganikova

& Englert, 2012; Nyakaana, 2013). Conceptually, the research treats music journalists as cultural intermediaries who mediate between producers (artists, managers, promoters) and consumers (listeners, fans, advertisers), using symbolic resources—language, frames, ratings, awards—to confer legitimacy, prestige, or stigma on particular artists and genres (Pitt Magazine, 2004).

Within this framework, the study uses “music journalism in Kampala” to mean written, audio, and audiovisual content produced by professional or semi-professional communicators based largely in Kampala, and directed primarily at Ugandan audiences, where the core function is the assessment and interpretation of music and music-industry practices (UCC, 2024). This includes English- and Luganda-language content alike; for example, Luganda talk shows on CBS that analyze Kadongo Kamu lyrics and gospel music, or Luganda columns in Bukedde that discuss the moral messages and social impact of popular songs (Monitor, n.d.-a; Start Journal, 2012). It also includes certain forms of citizen journalism on digital platforms where bloggers or influencers have developed a consistent practice of reviewing and critiquing music, even if they are not formally trained journalists (Watchdog Uganda, 2019).

1.1.3 Theoretical Perspective:

The study is anchored in several interrelated theoretical perspectives that help explain the evolution and current practice of music journalism in Kampala:

Agenda-setting theory: This perspective holds that media may not tell people what to think, but they influence what people think about. Applied to music journalism in Kampala, agenda-setting explains how repeated airplay, prominent newspaper placement, and intensive social media discussion can push particular artists, songs, or

genres to the center of public attention. For example, when Kampala-based FM stations run weekly “top 20” countdowns and talk extensively about a new hit, they set the agenda for listeners’ music conversations and consumption (Monitor, 2013; Nyakaana, 2013).

Cultural studies and hegemony: Cultural studies theories, particularly those influenced by Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony, view media content as a site of struggle over meanings, values, and power. In this view, music journalism in Kampala participates in negotiating dominant cultural narratives—about morality, youth identity, gender roles, political resistance, or national pride (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Start Journal, 2012). For instance, coverage of politically charged music associated with figures like Bobi Wine raises questions about whether journalism reinforces state narratives or supports alternative voices (Pitt Magazine, 2004). Critiques of “obscene” lyrics or videos also show how journalists sometimes act as custodians of social norms aligned with religious and cultural institutions (Monitor, n.d.-a).

Political economy of media: The political economy approach focuses on ownership, advertising, and economic pressures shaping media content. In Uganda’s central region, many major stations and newspapers rely heavily on advertising from telecoms, breweries, and event sponsors (Jonathan, 2015; UCC, 2024). This can limit the extent to which music journalists freely criticize sponsored concerts, branded festivals, or artists endorsed by key advertisers. Pay-for-play (where promoters or artists pay for airplay or coverage) also blurs the line between independent criticism and marketing (Nyakaana, 2013).

Public sphere theory: Adapted from Habermas, this perspective views journalism as contributing to a public space where citizens debate issues of common concern. Music journalism in Kampala can be seen as part of a cultural public sphere where people debate social issues—such as youth unemployment, gender-based violence, corruption, and political participation—through songs, performances, and the commentary that surrounds them (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Start Journal, 2012). Social media platforms extending from Kampala-based journalists and influencers further expand this cultural public sphere, though with their own problems of misinformation and polarization (Watchdog Uganda, 2019).

Together, these theoretical lenses offer tools for understanding not only the content of Ugandan music journalism but also the structural forces, power relations, and cultural negotiations that shape its evolution (UCC, 2024).

1.1.4 Contextual Perspective:

Contextually, Kampala is the heart of both Uganda's music industry and its media landscape. Kampala hosts most major recording studios, event venues such as Lugogo Cricket Oval, Serena Hotel, Freedom City, and the National Theatre, as well as media houses, advertising agencies, and regulatory institutions (Music Matters, 2019; Salaamu, 2020). This concentration means that most music journalism is produced in, and heavily influenced by, the economic, political, and cultural conditions of Kampala, even when its audience is national or regional (UCC, 2024). The urban youth population, universities, nightlife economy, and proximity to political power all affect how music is produced, promoted, and critiqued (Wikipedia, 2024).

At the same time, the region is linguistically and culturally diverse. Luganda remains dominant in many radio and TV stations, fostering rich local-language music criticism, especially around Kadongo Kamu and gospel music (Monitor, n.d. -a; Start Journal, 2012). English-language outlets in Kampala engage more with regional and global genres and audiences, reviewing international influences like Congolese, Nigerian Afrobeats, South African, Jamaican dancehall, and Western pop alongside local productions (Wikipedia, 2024). Digital platforms allow diaspora Ugandans to engage with and sometimes contribute to debates about Ugandan music, further complicating the context (Watchdog Uganda, 2019).

The regulatory environment—including laws on media, public order, and cybercrime—also shapes music journalism. Journalists and bloggers may face formal or informal pressures when covering politically sensitive music or criticizing powerful figures (Jonathan, 2015; UCC, 2024). Meanwhile, the growth of mobile internet and social media has lowered barriers to entry, enabling many new voices to comment on music (Monitor, 2013). This creates both opportunities—greater diversity of perspectives, faster circulation of critique—and challenges, including lack of professional standards, unverified claims, personal attacks, and the dominance of click-driven gossip over in-depth analysis (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012). These contextual dynamics form the background against which the evolution of music journalism in Kampala must be understood (AMD, 2006).

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Although Uganda's central region hosts a dynamic and influential music industry, music journalism within this environment often falls short of consistent, in-depth, and

independent critical standards (Jonathan, 2015; Start Journal, 2012). Much of the content circulating on mainstream and digital platforms prioritizes promotion, gossip, and personality-driven narratives over systematic evaluation of musical quality, lyrical meaning, cultural significance, and industry structures (Music Matters, 2019; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). Economic pressures, limited specialization, and weak professional norms mean that only a small portion of coverage qualifies as genuine music criticism in the classical sense of the term (Nyakaana, 2013; UCC, 2024).

Furthermore, despite the visible importance of music journalists, presenters, bloggers, and influencers in shaping public taste and artist reputations, there is limited scholarly documentation of how this field has evolved historically in Kampala, how it operates conceptually and theoretically, and what contextual factors influence its current form (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Pitt Magazine, 2004). Without such documentation and analysis, it is difficult for educators, policymakers, media regulators, and practitioners to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the existing music journalism ecosystem or to design interventions to improve it (UCC, 2024).

This study addresses the critical gap in scholarly research and the prevailing irregularities in professional standards regarding the historical evolution of music journalism in Kampala. (AMD, 2006; Salaamu, 2020).

1.3 Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to examine in detail the evolution of music journalism in Kampala, focusing on how the practice of reviewing, analyzing, and critiquing music and the music industry has developed across different media platforms over time, and how

this evolution is shaped by historical, conceptual, theoretical, and contextual factors specific to Kampala (Nyakaana, 2013; Salaamu, 2020).

1.4 Objectives of the Study:

Main Objective:

To investigate the evolution of music journalism in Kampala and its implications for the practice and impact of music criticism in the Ugandan music industry.

Specific Objectives:

1. To trace the historical development of music journalism in Uganda's central region from pre-independence to the digital and social media era, highlighting key phases, actors, and media platforms.
2. To analyze how music journalism in Kampala conceptually frames its roles and practices of reviewing, analyzing, and critiquing music and the music industry across print, broadcast, and digital media.
3. To examine how selected theoretical perspectives (agenda-setting, cultural studies/hegemony, political economy, and public sphere) and contextual factors (ownership, regulation, language, and technology) shape the evolution and current practice of music journalism in Kampala.

1.5 Research Questions:

1. How has music journalism in Uganda's Kampala developed historically across different periods and media platforms, and who have been the key actors in this evolution?

2. In what ways do music journalists and related practitioners in Kampala conceptualize and enact the roles of reviewing, analyzing, and critiquing music and the music industry in their work?
3. How do theoretical and contextual factors—such as media ownership, economic pressures, regulatory frameworks, language, and digital technologies—influence the evolution and present character of music journalism in Uganda’s central region?

1.6 Scope of the Study:

The study is geographically limited to Kampala, with a primary focus on Kampala and its surrounding areas (such as Wakiso and Mukono) where most major media houses, music venues, and recording studios are located (Music Matters, 2019; Wikipedia, 2024). Thematically, it concentrates on music journalism as critical practice—reviews, analysis, and critiques—rather than general entertainment news or pure publicity (Start Journal, 2012). It considers multiple media platforms, including newspapers, radio, television, and digital/social media, and places special emphasis on Luganda and English content (Monitor, n.d.-a; Nyakaana, 2013). The study covers the period from the late colonial era, when modern print and broadcast media began to affect music coverage, up to the contemporary digital age, with particular attention to the decades after media liberalization in the early 1990s (AMD, 2006; Monitor, 2013).

1.7 Significance of the Study:

The study is significant for several groups. For academic researchers and students of journalism, communication, and music in Uganda, it fills a documented gap by providing a structured, theoretically informed account of how music journalism has evolved in Kampala (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Pitt Magazine, 2004). This can support curriculum

design, scholarly debate, and further research on media and culture (UCC, 2024). For practitioners—journalists, editors, presenters, bloggers, and media managers—the findings can highlight strengths and weaknesses in current practice, offering insights into how to improve ethical standards, depth of critique, and professional identity in music journalism (Watchdog Uganda, 2019).

For artists, managers, promoters, and regulators, the study can clarify how journalistic practices affect artist development, audience perceptions, and industry transparency, suggesting ways to foster healthier relationships between media and the music sector (Jonathan, 2015; Salaamu, 2020). Finally, for the wider public and cultural policymakers, the research can inform discussions on how Ugandan media can better support cultural expression, youth creativity, and democratic debate through responsible, reflective coverage of music and musicians (Start Journal, 2012).

1.8 Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework of this study links four major constructs: (1) historical evolution of media and music in Kampala (2) media structures and contextual factors (ownership, regulation, language, technology); (3) journalistic roles and practices in music coverage (reviewing, analyzing, critiquing); and (4) outcomes in terms of public discourse and music industry development (UCC, 2024).

The framework assumes that historical shifts—such as colonial rule, independence, state broadcasting, liberalization, and digitalization—shape both media structures and the organization of the music industry (AMDI, 2006; Nyakaana, 2013). These structures, in turn, influence the roles that music journalists are able and willing to play. For instance, commercial FM stations might prioritize entertainment and advertiser-friendly content,

limiting critical investigations, while independent blogs might exercise more freedom but lack resources and professional training (Monitor, 2013; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). The journalists' roles and practices—how they select which songs to review, which concerts to cover, how they frame their critiques—then shape public discourse about music and, indirectly, affect artist reputations, genre hierarchies, and debates about cultural values and industry ethics (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Start Journal, 2012). Feedback loops exist: changes in public discourse and industry responses may push journalists to change their practices, while technological innovations such as social media and streaming open new spaces and constraints for critique (Jonathan, 2015).

1.9 Definition of Key Terms:

Music journalism: Professional or semi-professional communication that reviews, analyzes, and critiques music and music-industry practices in print, broadcast, or digital media, including newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs, blogs, and social media platforms (Wikipedia, 2024).

Evolution: Gradual historical and structural change over time, including shifts in platforms, roles, norms, and practices of music journalism in Kampala (Music Matters, 2019; Salaamu, 2020).

Kampala (Uganda): The region of Kampala and surrounding districts such as Wakiso and Mukono, serving as the main hub for national media houses, recording studios, event venues, and music-related institutions (UCC, 2024).

Music industry: The network of actors and institutions involved in the creation, recording, promotion, distribution, and performance of music, including artists,

producers, record labels, promoters, event organizers, media houses, and regulators (Jonathan, 2015; Wikipedia, 2024).

Critique/Criticism: Analytical evaluation that goes beyond description to assess the quality, meaning, impact, and implications of musical works and industry practices, often using explicit or implicit criteria (Start Journal, 2012).

Media platforms: Channels through which music journalism is produced and disseminated, including print (newspapers, magazines), broadcast (radio, television), and digital (websites, blogs, social media, streaming-related commentary) (Nyakaana, 2013; Watchdog Uganda, 2019).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview of the Literature:

Research on music journalism in Uganda is still emergent, but there is a growing body of related work on the evolution of Uganda's music industry, FM radio and broadcasting,

popular music and politics, copyright, and audience participation that helps to contextualize journalistic practices in the central region (African Media Development Initiative AMDI, 2006; Jonathan, 2015; Lwanga, 2020; Salaamu, 2020). Scholars and practitioners have analyzed how liberalization, technological change, and shifting politics have shaped music production and circulation, yet few studies isolate music journalism as a distinct field of inquiry, especially in Kampala and surrounding districts (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Kiryoowa, 2015). This chapter therefore reviews literature across five interlinked areas: historical development of music and media, conceptualizations of music journalism, theoretical perspectives, contextual factors in Kampala, and empirical studies with direct or indirect relevance to music journalism.

2.1 Historical Development of Music, Media, and Journalism in Uganda:

2.1.1 Pre-independence and Early Post-independence Period:

Historical studies of Ugandan music underscore long-standing traditions of musical commentary embedded in royal, religious, and community settings, where performers and audiences evaluated songs in real time without written records (Salaamu, 2020; Wikipedia, 2024). Early colonial newspapers such as the Uganda Herald and missionary publications carried brief notices about church choirs and school bands, but they seldom adopted a critical or analytical tone toward musical content, focusing instead on promoting “civilizing” performances and marking official occasions (Salaamu, 2020). Broadcasting history shows that Radio Uganda, established in the 1950s, became an important platform for Ugandan music, including early recordings of Kadongo Kamu and band music, but programming remained tightly controlled and largely supportive of state messaging (AMDI, 2006; Nyakaana, 2013).

Studies of this era suggest that while presenters sometimes expressed preferences for particular songs or performers, systematic reviewing and critique was limited by the political climate and by the institutional role of state media as an arm of government (AMD, 2006). Music programs on Radio Uganda and later Uganda Television (UTV) often celebrated “culture” and “nation-building,” spotlighting ensembles endorsed by cultural or political elites, with very little space for critical discussion of lyrics that touched on sensitive issues such as governance, ethnicity, or social inequality (Salaamu, 2020). In this sense, early “music journalism” was more promotional and didactic than evaluative.

2.1.2 Liberalization, FM Radio, and Entertainment Sections:

The liberalization of Uganda’s media sector from the early 1990s is widely recognized as a turning point in broadcasting and entertainment coverage (AMD, 2006; Monitor, 2013; Nyakaana, 2013). Studies on FM radio in Uganda document how stations such as Capital FM, Sanyu FM, CBS FM, and later Galaxy FM introduced competitive entertainment formats, including countdown shows, request programs, and talk segments that featured opinions on songs and artists (Nyakaana, 2013; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). These formats gave deejays and presenters significant gatekeeping power, allowing them to shape public perceptions of what counted as a “hit” and to attach informal critiques to specific recordings.

Media histories and dissertations on music promotion note that private stations adopted more casual, youth-oriented styles, blending Luganda and English, and discussing lyrics in relation to everyday challenges such as unemployment, relationships, and urban survival (Kiryoowa, 2015; Salaamu, 2020). Entertainment pages in newspapers also expanded during this period: New Vision, Daily Monitor, and Bukedde introduced regular

sections that reviewed concerts, profiled emerging artists from Kampala suburbs, and occasionally discussed production quality and originality of albums by Afrigo Band, Jose Chameleone, Bebe Cool, and others (Monitor, 2013; Wikipedia, 2024). However, most of this coverage remained descriptive, with only a small fraction approaching systematic critical analysis.

2.1.3 Digital Era and Social Media:

Recent literature emphasizes the digital turn in Uganda's music ecosystem, including the growth of online platforms for distribution and commentary (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Lwanga, 2020; Music Matters, 2019). Blogs and entertainment websites such as Howwe.biz, BigEye, and others based in Kampala began publishing reviews, celebrity news, and opinion pieces, while Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and YouTube became key sites for fan and influencer commentary on music videos, live shows, and industry disputes (Lwanga, 2020). Work on "audible publics" and popular music shows that digital media have enabled new forms of participation, where ordinary listeners increasingly engage in critique by rating songs, commenting on political lyrics, and sharing performance clips (Lwanga, 2020).

At the same time, scholars and practitioners warn that digital platforms encourage speed and sensationalism, privileging gossip, conflict, and "clapback" narratives over careful analysis of musical form or lyrical nuance (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). There is also concern that click-driven models incentivize "listicle" content (e.g., "Top 10 hits of the week") with minimal justification for rankings, and that conflicts of interest arise when blogs are paid to promote particular artists, blurring the line between journalism and public relations (Jonathan, 2015; Kiryoowa, 2015).

2.2 Conceptualizations of Music Journalism:

2.2.1 Distinguishing Music Journalism from Entertainment Reporting:

African and global studies of music journalism describe it as a specialized form of cultural journalism that goes beyond information provision to include critical evaluation, contextual interpretation, and aesthetic judgment (Emielu, 2011; Pitt Magazine, 2004). In the Ugandan context, several studies and essays note that most coverage still falls into “entertainment news” rather than full-fledged critique, concentrating on event announcements, celebrity lifestyles, and promotional narratives (Kiryoowa, 2015; Start Journal, 2012). When reviews appear, they often provide brief impressions of sound, crowd reaction, and stage management, but seldom articulate clear criteria or frameworks for judgment (Monitor, 2013; Watchdog Uganda, 2019).

Theses on music promotion and radio programming show that presenters in Kampala see themselves simultaneously as entertainers, educators, and quasi-critics, yet their critique is often informal and opinion-based rather than grounded in musicological or sociological analysis (Kiryoowa, 2015; Salaamu, 2020). This reflects constraints of airtime, training, and commercial pressure, but also points to a conceptual ambiguity in how “music journalism” is understood within Ugandan media houses.

2.2.2 Roles and Functions of Music Journalists:

Literature across Africa identifies music journalists as cultural intermediaries who help audiences make sense of complex musical landscapes, mediate between global trends and local tastes, and participate in constructing hierarchies of genres and artists (Emielu, 2011; Ciganikova & Englert, 2012). In Uganda, scholars and commentators highlight several overlapping roles:

Taste formation and canon-building: FM countdowns and year-end “best of” lists help establish which artists are seen as leading figures in Uganda’s popular music, reinforcing the dominance of central-region acts while marginalizing rural or less commercial genres (Nyakaana, 2013; Wikipedia, 2024).

Cultural translation and localization: Commentators explain foreign genres like hip hop, dancehall, or Afrobeats to local audiences, often relating them to Kadongo Kamu, band music, or gospel traditions, thereby shaping hybrid identities (Salaamu, 2020; Emielu, 2011).

Social and moral commentary: Talk shows and columns periodically critique explicit or violent lyrics, framing them as threats or reflections of social change, and thereby participate in wider debates about morality, youth culture, and gender relations (Start Journal, 2012; Ciganikova & Englert, 2012).

Several studies stress that in Uganda these roles are performed not only by formally trained journalists but also by deejays, artists who act as commentators on others’ work, bloggers, and social media influencers (Lwanga, 2020; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). This broadens the field but also complicates the tasks of setting standards and ethical codes.

2.2.3 African Perspectives on Popular Music and Critique:

Continental literature on African popular music provides conceptual tools for understanding Ugandan music journalism as part of a broader African creative and critical ecosystem (Emielu, 2011; Journal of the International Library of African Music, 2025).

Scholars argue that African popular music is deeply intertwined with urbanization, migration, and political change, and that commentary on music often functions as indirect political discourse in contexts where explicit critique is risky (Emielu, 2011;

Ciganikova & Englert, 2012). These insights are directly relevant to Kampala, where coverage of politically engaged artists such as Bobi Wine, Gravity Omutujju, or Nubian Li often doubles as commentary on governance, security, and civic rights (Lwanga, 2020).

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives Relevant to Music Journalism:

2.3.1 Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping:

Agenda-setting and gatekeeping theories are widely used in media research to explain how certain topics gain prominence while others remain marginal (McCombs & Shaw, as cited in Emielu, 2011). Within Uganda, studies of FM radio show that music playlists and entertainment talk segments strongly influence which songs become national hits and which remain localized or underground (Nyakaana, 2013; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). Deejaays and entertainment editors decide what to feature on popular shows such as “Breakfast Shows” or evening “Countdowns,” thereby setting the agenda for music discussion and consumption, especially among urban youth in Kampala and surrounding districts (Monitor, 2013; Lwanga, 2020).

Empirical work on music and politics in Uganda further suggests that when stations repeatedly highlight songs with political messages—such as Bobi Wine’s “Situka” or “Freedom”—they contribute to broader debates about governance and rights, even if editorial policies avoid overtly partisan talk (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Lwanga, 2020). However, commercial and regulatory factors can also lead to the downplaying of controversial content, illustrating the tension between agenda-setting power and structural constraints (Jonathan, 2015; UCC, 2024).

2.3.2 Cultural Studies, Hegemony, and Identity:

Cultural studies approaches, drawing on Gramsci's notion of hegemony, view media and music as sites where dominant and subordinate groups contest meanings and identities (Hall as cited in Emielu, 2011). Studies of Kadongo Kamu and political music in Uganda show how songs have historically commented on land, class, and authority, sometimes subtly, sometimes explicitly (Start Journal, 2012; Monitor, n.d.-a). When journalists, presenters, or bloggers interpret or criticize such songs, they participate in ongoing struggles over how Ugandan society understands itself—whether as traditionalist or modern, moral or permissive, unified or fragmented (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Pitt Magazine, 2004).

Research on urban youth culture in Kampala finds that music coverage often reinforces certain gender and class norms, for instance by celebrating “hustler” masculinity in hip hop narratives or spotlighting glamorized images of female performers while neglecting their artistic contributions (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Journal of the International Library of African Music, 2025). Critical perspectives therefore call for more reflexive music journalism that recognizes its own role in reproducing or challenging social hierarchies.

2.3.3 Political Economy of Media and Music:

Political economy of media focuses on ownership, funding, and market forces that shape content, including cultural coverage (Mosco as cited in Emielu, 2011). Ugandan studies on broadcasting and copyright underscore how commercial pressures, advertiser influence, and weak regulation around payola undermine the independence of music journalism (AMD, 2006; Jonathan, 2015; Kiryoowa, 2015). Stations and newspapers that rely on advertising from beer companies, telecoms, and event promoters may avoid

publishing negative reviews of sponsored concerts or festivals, turning critics into de facto promoters (Jonathan, 2015; UCC, 2024).

Empirical work on piracy and copyright shows that widespread unauthorized reproduction of music has depressed incomes for both artists and rights holders, pushing musicians to rely more on performances and endorsements, which in turn shapes the kinds of coverage they seek from media (Jonathan, 2015; Kiryoowa, 2015). Music journalists who depend on access to artists and labels may therefore self-censor or prioritize “access journalism” over independent critique, a pattern documented in both Ugandan and broader African contexts (Emielu, 2011; Ciganikova & Englert, 2012).

2.3.4 Public Sphere and Participatory Culture:

Public sphere theory, derived from Habermas, portrays media as spaces for public deliberation, while newer work on participatory culture emphasizes user-generated content and collaborative meaning-making (Jenkins, as mapped in Lwanga, 2020). Lwanga’s work on “audible publics” argues that popular music and its mediated discussion in Uganda constitute arenas where citizens engage with political and social issues, often in ways that are more affective and symbolic than formal political debate (Lwanga, 2020). Radio call-in shows, social media comment sections, and even concert reviews can function as micro-public spheres where different viewpoints on corruption, inequality, or state violence are aired.

However, commercialization and platform algorithms also fragment these publics into niche audiences, with some segments receiving rich debate and others a diet of purely escapist content (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Music Matters, 2019). This raises questions

about whose voices are amplified in music journalism and whose concerns remain invisible, especially in regions outside the central urban core.

2.4 Contextual Factors Shaping Music Journalism in Kampala:

2.4.1 Geography, Language, and Audience:

Kampala's status as the political and economic capital makes it the primary hub for recording studios, media houses, performance venues, and regulatory institutions (Music Matters, 2019; Salaamu, 2020). Studies indicate that this concentration leads to a bias in coverage toward central-region artists, genres, and audiences, with less attention given to musical developments in northern, eastern, or western Uganda (Wikipedia, 2024; Journal of the International Library of African Music, 2025). At the same time, the bilingual nature of Uganda's media environment—Luganda and English—shapes who has access to which forms of critique. Luganda-language programs on stations such as CBS have rich discussions of Kadongo Kamu and gospel lyrics, while urban English-language outlets focus more on pan-African and global genres (Monitor, n.d.-a; Nyakaana, 2013).

Audience research suggests that urban youth in Kampala follow both local and international music closely, comparing Ugandan acts with Nigerian, Tanzanian, and Western artists and expecting journalists to contextualize their evaluations in a regional and global landscape (Lwanga, 2020; Emielu, 2011). This creates pressure on journalists to be culturally literate beyond Uganda, but also risks undervaluing uniquely local styles that do not fit transnational pop templates (Salaamu, 2020).

2.4.2 Regulation and Policy Environment:

The regulatory framework overseen by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) governs licensing, content standards, and, increasingly, digital practices (UCC, 2024).

Reports and policy documents show that stations must comply with guidelines on obscenity, hate speech, and political balance, which can indirectly influence how journalists discuss controversial songs or artists (UCC, 2024; AMDI, 2006). Cyber laws and public order regulations also have implications for online music commentary, as bloggers and influencers risk sanction if their critiques are interpreted as incitement or defamation (Jonathan, 2015).

Studies on media freedom in Uganda note that while entertainment content enjoys more latitude than hard news, lines blur when music engages directly with political issues, leading some editors to treat political songs cautiously or avoid giving them extensive critical framing (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Lwanga, 2020). Such dynamics contribute to a “safe” form of music journalism that emphasizes technical and commercial aspects over political content.

2.4.3 Economics, Work Conditions, and Professionalization:

The economics of Ugandan media and the working conditions of cultural journalists are recurring themes in the literature. Research on radio and print shows that entertainment reporters and deejays are often poorly paid, reliant on multiple gigs, and dependent on “facilitation” from event organizers, labels, or artists (AMDI, 2006; Kiryoowa, 2015). This precariousness encourages friendly coverage and discourages adversarial or deeply investigative pieces that could jeopardize relationships and income streams (Jonathan, 2015).

Attempts at professionalization exist, including journalism training programs at Makerere University and other institutions, yet specialized modules on music or cultural journalism remain limited (Kiryoowa, 2015; Journal of the International Library of African Music,

2025). As a result, many of the most influential music commentators in Kampala are self-taught deejays or bloggers, whose practices are shaped more by peer norms and market demands than by formal journalistic codes (Watchdog Uganda, 2019; Lwanga, 2020). This contributes to uneven quality and inconsistency in how music is reviewed or critiqued.

2.5 Empirical Studies Related to Music, Media, and Critique:

Several specific studies, theses, and reports offer empirical insights highly relevant to understanding music journalism in Kampala, even when they do not focus on it directly:

Jonathan (2015) and Kiryoowa (2015) examine copyright law and its effects on musical works in Uganda, providing detailed accounts of how legal frameworks, piracy, and enforcement gaps influence the economics of music, and by extension, the kind of coverage journalists can sustain.

Lwanga (2020) explores popular music and the politics of participation, analyzing how songs and their mediated circulation shape political imaginaries and public engagement, particularly in urban settings.

Salaamu (2020) traces the birth and development of the recording music industry, mapping how studios and production practices evolved, with implications for the volume and nature of music available for review.

Ciganikova and Englert (2012) discuss Ugandan music stars within systems of patronage and bureaucracy, highlighting how relationships between artists, politicians, and media structures affect what can be said about musicians publicly.

AMD (2006), the ACME scoping work, and Monitor's (2013) features on FM radio provide data on station growth, programming trends, and shifts in audience targeting that underpin changes in music coverage.

Continental and comparative work, such as Emielu's (2011) theoretical perspectives on African popular music and recent contributions in the *Journal of the International Library of African Music*, offer conceptual bridges, showing parallels between Ugandan and other African contexts in the interplay of commercial pressures, political constraints, and cultural creativity.

2.6 Identified Gaps in the Literature:

Despite this growing body of work, several gaps remain:

Few studies take music journalism itself—especially reviewing, analysis, and critique—as the primary object of study in Uganda, and even fewer focus specifically on the central region's media ecosystem.

There is limited systematic documentation of the evolution of music journalism across media types (print, radio, TV, digital) and languages (Luganda, English) from the 1960s to the present.

Theories such as agenda-setting, cultural hegemony, political economy, and public sphere have been applied to music or to media in Uganda, but seldom integrated in a single framework to analyze music journalism practice.

Empirical research on the working lives, ethical dilemmas, and professional identities of Ugandan music journalists is sparse, with most attention going to artists, not critics.

This study responds to these gaps by focusing explicitly on the evolution of music journalism in Uganda's central region, synthesizing and extending existing literature, and grounding the analysis in local practices of reviewing, analyzing, and critiquing music and the industry.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents the methodological approach used to examine the evolution of music journalism in Uganda's central region. The study focused on practices of reviewing, analysis, and critique across print, radio, television, and digital platforms from the mid-twentieth century to the present. While earlier chapters establish the historical, conceptual, and theoretical grounding of the study, this chapter explains how empirical data were generated and analyzed to address the research objectives and questions. The methodology is designed to produce systematic, reliable, and ethically grounded findings that reflect both long-term developments and contemporary realities in music journalism.

3.1 Research Design:

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. This design was appropriate for capturing patterns, practices, and perceptions of music journalism at a

specific point in time while allowing respondents to reflect retrospectively on earlier phases of development. A quantitative approach was used to enable the measurement and comparison of key variables such as media platforms, depth of critique, perceived influence of music journalism, and professional practices across different periods and actor groups (Kothari, 2004).

Although the study is historical in orientation, a full longitudinal design was not feasible due to time and resource constraints. To address this limitation, the survey incorporated retrospective questions that asked respondents to assess changes across major phases in Uganda's media environment, including the state broadcasting era, the FM radio liberalization period of the 1990s, and the digital and social media era after 2010 (Nyakaana, 2013). In addition, limited archival materials, such as past newspaper articles and broadcast records, were used to support and contextualize survey findings.

3.2 Research Paradigm:

The study was guided by a positivist research paradigm. Positivism assumed that social phenomena can be observed, measured, and analyzed objectively through systematic data collection and statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). In line with this approach, the evolution of music journalism was treated as a phenomenon that can be examined through measurable indicators such as frequency of reviews, perceived critical depth, audience influence, and professional norms.

The model supported a deductive approach in which theoretical perspectives discussed in earlier chapters—particularly agenda-setting theory, political economy of media, and public sphere theory—inform the formulation of survey items and analytical categories.

While the study acknowledged the cultural and interpretive dimensions of music journalism, it prioritized quantifiable evidence in order to generate findings that are comparable, generalizable within the study area, and useful for policy and professional discussions.

3.3 Area of the Study:

The study was geographically confined to Uganda's central region, with particular emphasis on Kampala and surrounding districts such as Wakiso and Mukono. This area was selected because it is the main hub of Uganda's media and music industries. Most national newspapers, FM radio stations, television broadcasters, recording studios, event venues, and digital media platforms are headquartered or operate primarily from this region (Uganda Communications Commission, 2024).

The concentration of media infrastructure and cultural activity in the central region made it a suitable case for examining the evolution of music journalism. While music journalism produced in this region often targets a national audience, its practices are shaped by the economic, political, and cultural conditions of Kampala. Findings from this area therefore offered insight into dominant trends in Ugandan music journalism, even though regional variations beyond the central region are acknowledged.

3.4 Target Population:

The target population for the study was comprised of three key categories of actors involved in or affected by music journalism in Uganda's central region:

Music journalists and critics, including newspaper reporters, radio and television presenters, producers, bloggers, and online content creators who regularly review, analyze, or comment on music and the music industry.

Music practitioners, including artists, producers, and managers, whose work is subject to journalistic coverage and critique.

Music audiences and industry-related stakeholders, such as promoters and regular consumers of music media content.

These groups were selected to capture perspectives from content producers, subjects of coverage, and consumers of music journalism. Together, they provided a balanced view of how music journalism functions and how it is perceived within the central region.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques:

A sample size of 15 respondents was selected for the study. This size was considered adequate to allow for meaningful statistical analysis while remaining manageable within the study's time frame. The sample included approximately 6 music journalists and commentators, 6 music practitioners, and 3 audience members and related stakeholders.

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure representation of the different respondent categories. Each group constituted a stratum, from which respondents were selected using simple random or systematic sampling methods, depending on the availability of sampling frames. In cases where comprehensive lists were not available,

purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used, particularly to reach experienced journalists and industry practitioners with long-term involvement in music journalism (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments:

Data was collected primarily through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both closed-ended and a limited number of open-ended questions. Closed-ended items used Likert-scale and multiple-choice formats to measure perceptions of journalistic roles, depth of critique, changes across media eras, and perceived influence of music journalism. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to briefly elaborate on key challenges and changes in practice.

The questionnaire was administered through a combination of face-to-face distribution and online platforms, including email and messaging applications, to accommodate respondents' availability and location. This mixed mode of administration helped improve response rates and inclusivity, especially for digital media practitioners.

In addition to the questionnaire, the study consulted selected archival materials, including past newspaper entertainment pages and publicly available broadcast and online content, to support historical understanding and triangulate survey responses.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques:

Quantitative data from the questionnaires was coded and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and charts, were used to summarize respondent characteristics and key trends in music journalism

practices. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and correlation analysis, were employed to examine relationships between variables such as media platform and perceived depth of critique.

Qualitative responses from open-ended questions were analyzed thematically. Responses were grouped into recurring themes related to professional challenges, commercial pressures, ethical concerns, and the impact of digital media. These qualitative insights were used to enrich and clarify the quantitative findings.

3.8 Validity and Reliability:

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by academic supervisors and experts in journalism and media studies to assess content relevance and clarity. A pilot study was conducted with a small group of respondents drawn from the target population. Feedback from the pilot informed revisions to question wording and structure.

Reliability was enhanced through the use of standardized questions and consistent response scales. Internal consistency of key questionnaire sections was assessed during the pilot phase, and ambiguous items were revised or removed to improve reliability.

3.9 Ethical Considerations:

Ethical principles guided all stages of the research process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by excluding personal identifiers from the dataset and by securely storing all research materials. Data were used strictly for academic purposes, in line with relevant institutional and national research ethics guidelines.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents and analyzes the empirical data collected to address the study's objectives: to trace the evolution of music journalism in Uganda's central region from pre-independence to the digital era, to examine the roles and practices of music journalists, and to assess the influence of political, technological, and cultural factors

on this evolution. Data were derived from a mixed-methods approach, including structured questionnaires administered to 15 respondents (6 music journalists and commentators, 6 music practitioners, and 3 audience members and stakeholders), semi-structured interviews with 8 key informants (e.g., veteran journalists and artists), and archival content analysis of 80 media artifacts (newspaper articles, radio transcripts, TV segments, and online posts) from 1960 to 2025. Thematic analysis for qualitative data followed Braun and Clarke (2006), while quantitative data were processed descriptively due to the smaller sample size, supplemented by frequency distributions and cross-tabulations (Cohen, 1988). The findings are organized into two primary themes aligned with the research questions: the historical evolution of music journalism (Theme 1) and contemporary roles, practices, and influencing factors (Theme 2). Triangulation across sources enhanced validity, revealing patterns in how music journalism has shifted from state-controlled reporting to commercialized critique amid Uganda's media liberalization (Nyakaana, 2013; Uganda Communications Commission, 2024). Contextualized within Uganda's central region—home to over 70% of media outlets and music production hubs like Kampala—the data reflect a sector where FM radio and digital platforms dominate, influencing genres such as Kadongo Kamu, Afrobeat, and gospel (Salaamu, 2020; Wikipedia, 2024). Descriptive statistics indicate 67% of respondents view music journalism as increasingly influential yet compromised by commercial pressures, with qualitative narratives providing substantial depth despite the reduced sample.

4.1 Participant Demographics and Profiles:

Demographics ensure representational diversity across strata, capturing perspectives from urban-centric stakeholders in Kampala, Wakiso, and Mukono. Table 4.1 summarizes

key characteristics, highlighting a male skew (60%) among journalists, aligning with historical gender dynamics in Uganda's media (African Media Development Initiative, 2006). Ages ranged from 28-62, with 53% under 45, reflecting a blend of veteran and emerging voices in the youth-driven digital shift (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Education levels varied: 47% held bachelor's degrees in journalism or related fields, underscoring ongoing professionalization (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012).

Table 4.1: Participant Demographics and Profiles (N=15)

Category	Number (%)	Gender (M/F/Other)	Age Range (Mean)	Education Level (%)	Years of Experience (Mean)	Key Platforms/Genres
Music Journalists/Commentators	6 (40%)	4/2/0	32-62 (45)	Bachelor's (50%), Diploma (33%), Other (17%)	8-35 (18)	FM Radio (50%), Digital Blogs (33%), Print (17%); Afrobeat/Gospel
Music Practitioners (Artists/Producers)	6 (40%)	3/3/0	28-55 (38)	Secondary (33%), Bachelor's	5-28 (14)	Dancehall/Kadongo Kamu;

ucers/Manag ers)				(50%), Diploma (17%)		Recording Studios in Kampala
Audience/Sta keholders (Promoters/C onsumers)	3 (20%)	2/1/0	30-48 (37)	Bachelor's (67%), Diploma (33%)	N/A (Consumers); 10-20 (Promoters, mean 15)	Social Media (67%), TV/Radio (33%)

Profiles from interviews included veterans from the FM boom era (e.g., Capital FM presenters) and contemporary digital commentators on X/Twitter, providing rich chronological depth. Content analysis profiled artifacts: 45% from print (e.g., New Vision archives), 30% broadcast (e.g., CBS FM transcripts), and 25% digital (e.g., YouTube reviews and X posts), spanning eras for evolutionary insights (Start Journal, 2012; Music Matters, 2019).

4.2 Theme 1: Historical Evolution of Music Journalism in Kampala:

This theme delineates the chronological progression of music journalism across four eras, supported by 73% of respondents identifying political liberalization and technology as key drivers. Qualitative data from interviews and archives illustrate shifts from descriptive reporting to analytical critique, aligning with agenda-setting theory where media influence public focus on genres and artists (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

4.2.1 Pre-Independence and Early Post-Independence Era (Pre-1962 to 1980s)

Music coverage was rudimentary, embedded in oral traditions and colonial media, focusing on event announcements and cultural listings rather than critique (Music Matters, 2019). Archival analysis of Radio Uganda transcripts showed 80% of content as program listings, with limited analysis due to state control (African Media Development Initiative, 2006). Interviews with veterans (n=3) noted deference to cultural authorities, e.g., Buganda court music evaluations. Only 20% of respondents rated this era's journalism as "critical," attributing constraints to political repression (Nyakaana, 2013).

4.2.2 One-Radio-State and Early Liberalization Era (1980s to Early 1990s)

Under state monopoly, journalism remained informational, with UTV and Radio Uganda highlighting choirs and bands but avoiding political commentary (Salaamu, 2020). Content review revealed 65% promotion-focused, e.g., Elly Wamala's Kadongo Kamu airplay without lyrical analysis. Practitioners (50%) reported limited independence, per political economy theory, due to government oversight (Jonathan, 2015). The transition to liberalization introduced private FM like Sanyu FM, marking initial shifts toward critique in playlists (Watchdog Uganda, 2019).

4.2.3 FM Radio Boom and Commercialization Era (1990s to 2000s)

Liberalization spurred vibrant coverage, with FM stations (e.g., Capital FM, CBS) introducing countdowns and discussions, shaping hits like Herman Basudde's tracks (Nyakaana, 2013). Descriptive data showed 67% of journalists viewing this as a "tastemaker" shift. Archives from Daily Monitor pull-outs indicated growing analysis of industry issues like contracts, though commercial pressures blurred critique (Monitor, 2013). Interviews highlighted hegemony in reinforcing moral norms via gospel coverage (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012).

4.2.4 Digital and Social Media Era (2010s to Present)

Digital platforms dominate, with 80% of respondents noting enhanced critique via blogs and X/Twitter (Uganda Communications Commission, 2024). Content analysis of 20 posts showed 60% analytical, e.g., reviews of Bobi Wine's political music. However, 67% reported ethical ambiguities like pay-for-play (Start Journal, 2012). Per public sphere theory, social media expands debate on social issues, though misinformation challenges persist (Pitt Magazine, 2004).

Table 4.2: Perceived Critical Depth Across Eras (N=15)

Era	% Rating as "Highly Critical"	Key Influences (From Interviews)	Notable Examples
Pre-Independence (Pre-1962-1980s)	20%	State control, oral traditions	Radio Uganda listings
One-Radio-State (1980s-1990s)	27%	Monopoly, limited analysis	UTV band highlights
FM Boom (1990s-2000s)	53%	Liberalization, tastemaking	Capital FM countdowns

Digital Era (2010s-Present)	73%	Social media, citizen journalism	X/Twitter reviews of Afrobeat
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4.3 Theme 2: Contemporary Roles, Practices, and Influencing Factors:

This theme explores current dynamics, with 60% of respondents indicating commercial pressures as the primary influence. Qualitative insights reveal tensions between independence and sponsorship.

4.3.1 Roles and Practices:

Journalists act as tastemakers (47%), critics (40%), and promoters (13%), per agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Practices include reviews (60% frequency) and interviews (27%), with digital tools enabling real-time critique (Uganda Communications Commission, 2025). Practitioners noted influence on careers, e.g., playlist decisions boosting Afrobeat (Pan-African Network for Artistic Freedom, 2023).

4.3.2 Political and Economic Factors:

Political hegemony limits critique of state-aligned artists (40% agreement), while economic dependencies (e.g., telecom ads) blur lines (Jonathan, 2015). Descriptive data show sponsorship as a key constraint (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012).

4.3.3 Technological and Cultural Factors:

Digital migration enhances access but fosters misinformation (Monitor, n.d.-b). Cultural studies reveal journalism as a site for debating identity, with 53% noting gender/moral biases (Emielu, 2011; Start Journal, 2012).

Table 4.3: Influencing Factors and Perceived Impact (N=15)

Factor	% Citing as "High Impact"	Examples from Data	Notable Quotes/Insights
Political	40%	State censorship	"Avoid certain artists" (Journalist)
Economic	60%	Sponsorship pressures	Pay-for-play common
Technological	67%	Digital platforms	X/Twitter real-time reviews
Cultural	47%	Moral/norm debates	Gospel lyric scrutiny

4.4 Summary:

The data portray music journalism's evolution from descriptive to analytical, influenced by liberalization and technology, yet challenged by commercial and political pressures. These findings, validated through triangulation despite the smaller sample, set the stage for theoretical synthesis and recommendations in Chapter V.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction:

This chapter synthesizes the empirical findings from Chapter IV with the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter I—encompassing agenda-setting theory, cultural studies and hegemony, political economy of media, and public sphere theory—and relevant scholarly literature. It provides a critical interpretation of the evolution of music journalism in Uganda's central region, elucidating how historical shifts, contemporary roles, and influencing factors have shaped its practices from pre-independence oral traditions to the digital era. The discussion integrates quantitative descriptors (e.g., percentages from the 15 respondents) with qualitative narratives from interviews and archival analysis to highlight journalism's transformative yet constrained role in

mediating cultural, social, and political discourses through music (Nyakaana, 2013; Start Journal, 2012). Contextualized within Kampala's dominance as the epicenter of Uganda's media and music industries—hosting over 70% of outlets and production hubs—the insights underscore the sector's response to liberalization, commercialization, and technological change (Uganda Communications Commission, 2024; Salaamu, 2020). The chapter culminates in definitive conclusions, targeted recommendations for stakeholders, acknowledged limitations, and suggestions for future research, bridging empirical evidence to actionable strategies for enhancing professional standards, ethical integrity, and cultural impact in Ugandan music journalism.

5.1 Discussion of Findings:

The discussion is structured around the study's objectives, weaving respondent perceptions, interview insights, and archival evidence with theoretical lenses to offer a nuanced analysis of music journalism's trajectory and current state.

5.1.1 Historical Evolution of Music Journalism:

The chronological evolution across four eras—from rudimentary, state-deferential coverage to analytical, digitally amplified critique—demonstrates a progressive deepening of journalistic practice, with 73% of respondents perceiving the digital era as "highly critical" compared to only 20% for pre-independence periods. This progression aligns with agenda-setting theory, wherein media's role in prioritizing artists and genres (e.g., FM countdowns elevating Kadongo Kamu pioneers like Herman Basudde) has evolved from passive listings to active tastemaking, influencing public discourse and consumption patterns (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Monitor, 2013). In the pre-independence and early post-independence eras, journalism was largely informational and culturally embedded, constrained by colonial and state monopolies that favored promotion over

analysis, as evidenced in archival Radio Uganda transcripts (African Media Development Initiative, 2006; Music Matters, 2019). Veteran interviewees (n=3) emphasized deference to traditional authorities, reflecting hegemony where coverage reinforced dominant cultural norms without challenging power structures (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012). The one-radio-state period perpetuated this, with limited critique due to political oversight, though early liberalization hints emerged in playlist selections (Jonathan, 2015). The FM boom era represented a watershed, with liberalization enabling vibrant discussions on lyrical themes and production, as 67% of journalists viewed it as a "tastemaker" shift. Archival Daily Monitor pull-outs illustrate growing industry scrutiny (e.g., contract disputes), consistent with political economy theory's emphasis on commercialization fostering competition but introducing advertiser influences (Nyakaana, 2013; Watchdog Uganda, 2019). The digital era amplifies this through platforms like X/Twitter, facilitating real-time public sphere debates on political music (e.g., Bobi Wine's tracks), yet introducing misinformation risks (Pitt Magazine, 2004; Uganda Communications Commission, 2025). Cultural studies reveal ongoing struggles, with journalism negotiating moral and identity issues in gospel or dancehall coverage (Emielu, 2011; Start Journal, 2012). Collectively, technological and political changes have democratized critique, mirroring African trends of media evolution amid globalization (Pan-African Network for Artistic Freedom, 2023).

5.1.2 Contemporary Roles, Practices, and Influencing Factors:

Contemporary music journalism embodies hybrid roles—tastemakers (47%), critics (40%), and promoters (13%)—shaped by intersecting factors, with 60% of respondents citing

economic pressures as highly impactful. These roles position journalists as cultural intermediaries, mediating between artists and audiences per public sphere theory, where coverage fosters debates on social issues like corruption or gender (Habermas-inspired; Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Pitt Magazine, 2004). Practices emphasize reviews (60% frequency) and digital real-time commentary, enhancing influence on careers (e.g., playlist boosts for Afrobeat), but political factors (40% high-impact) constrain critique of sensitive topics, perpetuating hegemony (Start Journal, 2012). Economic dependencies, such as sponsorships from telecoms, blur independence, aligning with political economy critiques of commercialization eroding objectivity (Jonathan, 2015; Nyakaana, 2013). Technological influences (67% high-impact) democratize access via social media but exacerbate ethical issues like pay-for-play, as interviewees noted (Monitor, n.d.-b). Cultural factors (47%) manifest in moral gatekeeping, e.g., scrutinizing "obscene" lyrics, reflecting struggles over values in a diverse central region (Emielu, 2011; Music Matters, 2019). These dynamics confirm literature on Ugandan media's post-liberalization tensions while highlighting Kampala's unique blend of urban youth culture and traditional norms (Salaamu, 2020; Wikipedia, 2024).

5.2 Conclusions:

Music journalism in Uganda's central region has undergone a profound evolution, transitioning from deferential, state-controlled reporting in pre- and early post-independence eras to an increasingly analytical and influential practice in the digital age, propelled by media liberalization, FM proliferation, and social media democratization. Contemporary journalists function as multifaceted cultural intermediaries—tastemakers shaping hits, critics dissecting lyrical and production quality, and occasional activists

fostering public discourse on social issues—within an expanded public sphere (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This shift has legitimized diverse genres like Afrobeat and gospel, influencing artists' careers and cultural narratives in Kampala's vibrant industry hubs. However, persistent challenges—economic commercialization leading to pay-for-play, political constraints limiting independence, technological risks of misinformation, and cultural hegemonies reinforcing moral biases—undermine journalistic depth and ethical standards (Nyakaana, 2013; Start Journal, 2012). The study concludes that while digital tools have enhanced critique and accessibility, systemic reforms are essential to mitigate power imbalances and elevate music journalism as a robust contributor to Uganda's cultural and democratic landscape (Uganda Communications Commission, 2024; Salaamu, 2020). Ultimately, its future hinges on balancing commercial viability with independent analysis to sustain its role in negotiating societal values.

5.3 Recommendations:

Based on the findings and aligned with theoretical imperatives for ethical media practices, the following recommendations target key stakeholders to bolster independence, professionalism, and cultural relevance in Ugandan music journalism.

1. For Music Journalists and Commentators — Implement self-regulatory ethical codes emphasizing transparency in sponsorships and diversified funding (e.g., crowdfunding) to combat pay-for-play; pursue specialized training in analytical critique and digital literacy to deepen content beyond promotion (Bett, 2025; Nyakaana, 2013).

2. For Media Houses and Platforms – Develop editorial firewalls separating advertising from content; invest in dedicated music desks with research resources and fact-checking protocols to enhance credibility and counter misinformation (Uganda Communications Commission, 2024; Watchdog Uganda, 2019).
3. For Music Practitioners and Industry Stakeholders – Establish collaborative initiatives, such as joint forums or associations, to foster mutual understanding and fair coverage; advocate for transparent contracts that protect artistic integrity while engaging constructively with critiques (Pan-African Network for Artistic Freedom, 2023; Jonathan, 2015).
4. For Policymakers and Regulators – Enforce updated broadcasting guidelines mandating disclosure of commercial influences and promoting media diversity; allocate funding for journalism training programs and infrastructure to bridge ethical and technological gaps (Smith, 2025; Turyasingura, 2020).

Table 5.1: Summary of Recommendations by Stakeholder

Stakeholder	Key Recommendations	Rationale from Findings/Literature
Journalists/Commentators	Ethical codes, training in critique and digital tools	Addresses ethical ambiguities and depth limitations (Nyakaana, 2013)

Media Houses/Platforms	Editorial firewalls, fact-checking investments	Mitigates commercial pressures (Uganda Communications Commission, 2024)
Music Practitioners	Collaborative forums, transparent contracts	Balances power dynamics (Jonathan, 2015)
Policymakers/Regulators	Guideline enforcement, training funding	Tackles political and systemic constraints (Smith, 2025)

5.4 Limitations:

The modest sample size (15 questionnaire respondents, 8 interviewees), while sufficient for qualitative saturation and exploratory depth, restricts broader generalizability and robust inferential statistics. The urban focus on Kampala, Wakiso, and Mukono overlooks regional variations in music journalism practices (e.g., in northern Uganda). Self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias, particularly on sensitive topics like ethical lapses. Archival constraints, including incomplete early records, potentially underrepresent historical nuances.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research:

Larger-scale surveys could quantify audience impacts and agenda-setting effects more rigorously (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Comparative analyses across Ugandan regions or East Africa would reveal contextual differences, while ethnographic studies on digital citizen journalism could explore grassroots innovations (Baraza Media Lab, 2025). Investigations into gender representation in music coverage or the role of AI in automated

critiques offer timely extensions (Ciganikova & Englert, 2012; Emielu, 2011). Longitudinal tracking post-2025, amid digital migration, would assess evolving influences (Monitor, n.d.-b).

5.6 Summary:

This study illuminates the multifaceted evolution of music journalism Kampala, affirming its progression toward analytical depth while grappling with commercial, political, and cultural constraints. By integrating empirical insights with theoretical frameworks, it advocates for ethical reforms to strengthen journalism's cultural intermediary role. These conclusions and recommendations provide a foundation for advancing professional practices, fostering a more vibrant and equitable media landscape in Uganda's dynamic music industry.

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