

Media Viability in Southern Africa : An Exploratory Study



A REPORT BY:



Disclaimer

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Key Terms

Viability- Viability entails the ability by an entity to survive and thrive in certain conditions, making the most of its strengths and minimising damages arising from weaknesses. In the media environment, viability denotes the ability by a media institution to thrive and service its constituents through utilising resources and strengths at its disposal (Weibull 2002).

Media Sustainability- this is (i) financial, (ii) social and (iii) environmental. Media sustainability goes beyond visibility (survival).

¹

Media Value Chains- Media value chains refer to the various stages and processes involved in the creation, production, distribution, and consumption of media content. These chains encompass the entire lifecycle of media products, from ideation and creation to audience engagement.

Media Markets- A market consists of sellers that provide the same good or service, or closely substitutable goods or services, to the same group of consumers. The media operates in two markets and these are audience (services) and advertisers (sales) markets

Media Capture- the influence of actors outside of the media. These are state, corporate and political forces seeking control of media operations, output and sentiment

Media Income- sources of revenue generated by the media. This can be advertorial, licences, airtime, sales, grants and donations.

Regulatory Relief- Regulatory Relief which explains how government can enhance media viability through relaxing conditions for media houses

¹ These incorporate a. the economic landscape and structure of the media market b. sources of revenue for media organizations c. resources and structures of media organizations

Foreword



Farisai Chaniwa

Director - Media Monitors Zimbabwe

The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed an unprecedented global crisis, disrupting societies, economies, and the very fabric of our daily lives. As we grapple with the profound impact of this pandemic, it is crucial to examine how the media landscape in Southern Africa has been affected and to explore the viability of media in the aftermath of COVID-19. It is within this context that the report titled “Media Viability in Southern Africa Post COVID-19: An Exploratory Study” emerges as a timely and significant contribution to the broader understanding of the region’s media ecosystem.

The pandemic presented extraordinary challenges to media organizations, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and reshaping the dynamics of media viability. This comprehensive study delves into the complex aftermath of the pandemic, exploring the multifaceted dimensions that have influenced the resilience, sustainability, and adaptability of media in Southern Africa.

Authored by a team of diligent researchers, this report showcases a commendable commitment to unraveling the post-COVID-19 media landscape in Southern Africa. Drawing upon a diverse range of methodologies, including rigorous data analysis, case studies, interviews, and comparative assessments, it provides an in-depth and evidence-based understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by media organizations in the wake of the pandemic.

One of the report’s notable strengths lies in its comprehensive scope, examining the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of media viability. From disruptions in revenue streams and advertising models to shifts in media consumption patterns and the rise of disinformation.

Furthermore, this report highlights the crucial role played by the media in emergency situations, as well as the resilience and innovation demonstrated by journalists and media practitioners in adapting to the new normal. It explores the transformative potential of digital technologies, the evolving role of social media platforms, and the significance of accurate and reliable information in combating information disorders and fostering public trust.

As we navigate the complex aftermath of the pandemic, understanding the viability of media in Southern Africa becomes paramount for rebuilding societies, promoting democratic values, and ensuring informed decision-making. This report serves as an invaluable resource for policymakers, media practitioners, researchers, and stakeholders who seek to shape a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable media ecosystem in Southern Africa post-COVID-19.

I commend the project team for their rigorous research, meticulous analysis, and actionable recommendations. Their dedication and insights provide a solid foundation for informed discussions, evidence-based interventions, and forward-looking strategies. I trust that this report will serve as a catalyst for constructive dialogue, transformative initiatives, and long-term resilience in the media sector in Southern Africa and beyond.

Foreword



Nisha

Regional Director and UNESCO Representative to Southern Africa

This report, *Media Viability Challenges in the Southern African Region: An Exploratory Study*, looks at media across Southern Africa, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic context that is marked by misinformation across social media and other digital platforms.

The report highlights economic, social, and political factors that shape the viability of the media in Southern Africa. Media's role in making information and analysis accessible to the whole-of-population, from urban centres to remote rural communities, and promoting democratic principles is well known. Yet, many obstacles often threaten the sustainability of media institutions and programmes. These include but are not limited to economic downturns, and regulatory constraints to emerging digital technologies and highly competitive digital platforms.

UNESCO believes that the sustainability of media cannot be ensured with a one-size-fits-all solution. This is because the media's independence and sustainability are heavily impacted by the unique national context in which it exists and the dynamics of complex issues and responsibilities that the media must shoulder, regulations and governance, and media reception, effects and consumption among readers/listeners/viewers. For this report, the study explored the challenges media businesses in Southern Africa face and the strategies they use to overcome those challenges and remain viable.

Drawing upon UNESCO's Media Development Indicators (MDI), to gather data, the study used indicators such as the presence of a supportive economic and business environment, the structure and scope of the media economy, the vitality of the media labour market, and the financial health of media operations. The indicator on financial health also included a study of the role that the advertising capital and organisational structures play as well as the contribution of media to the national economy.

My colleagues and I would like to present this report as a contemporary reference on media viability in Southern Africa. We hope that it will inform policymakers, media managers and all media stakeholders and motivate them to contribute towards building sustainable and inclusive media ecosystems that empower voices, foster dialogue, and help media remain a voice of change and societal progress.

This report is made possible by the labour of love of my colleagues working on media and UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). Between 1980 and 2024, the IPDC has dedicated over \$115 million to media development, through more than 2,200 projects, in at least 140 countries. Media Development support from IPDC is even more critical to date because of the decrease in funding for the media industries, which is estimated to have stagnated at roughly 0.3% of all Overseas Development Aid (ODA).

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented journalism with a mixed bag of challenges and opportunities. On one hand, news consumption soared as people closely followed the unfolding crisis, highlighting the value of accurate and timely information. Trustworthy journalism became a matter of life and death, with studies showing that those who relied on traditional media for news were more likely to get vaccinated. However, the news media industry has been grappling with troubles for some time. Changing news environments have forced many outlets to shut down, while others have experienced a decline in circulation and advertising revenue. Local news outlets have been particularly affected, leading to layoffs and reduced production. Paradoxically, the pandemic emphasized the importance of public interest journalism and the value of news as a public good.

This raises questions about the accelerated challenges faced by the media sector in Southern Africa and the strategies employed to maintain viability in a changing landscape. Mainstream news remains indispensable, and understanding the challenges and potential solutions that newsrooms have adopted has become more crucial than ever. To explore these issues, Media Monitors conducted interviews with managers from six news outlets in six countries across Southern Africa. The study revealed that media viability challenges in the region stem from insufficient funding due to declining advertising and audience markets. The shift in audience consumption towards digital platforms severely impacted the financial sustainability of media houses. With advertisers following suit and staffing levels dwindling due to limited funding, media convergence and the rise of social media advertising and citizen journalism further threatened the viability of traditional outlets. However, media organizations strategically responded to these threats by diversifying revenue streams and adopting technologies like e-papers and paywalls, albeit with limited success. The human capital base of media houses also faced challenges, with high staff turnover as employees sought opportunities in the corporate world and beyond national borders, leading to gaps in the quality of media training.

Acronyms

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BOCRA	Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority
Btv	Botswana Television
CRAN	Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia
IPDC	International Program for Development Communication
MACRA	Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MDI	Media Development Index
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
NBC	Namibia Broadcasting Corporation
NMH	Namibia Media Holdings
RBM	Reserve Bank of Malawi
RBV	Resource Based View
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SMA	Social Media Advertising
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization
VOA	Voice of America
ZACRAS	Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

1.0 Introduction

This report provides a snapshot of media viability issues in the Southern African region highlighting the challenges faced by media houses as well as strategies being employed in sustaining their operations after the Covid 19 pandemic.

Media viability is a product of various economic, social and political factors. The environment has to be supportive. Due to varying national issues, viability differs and can be determined using a variety of factors.

UNESCO in their Media Development Index (MDI) have outlined several aspects which determine media viability globally. UNESCO (2014:3) asserts that the viability indicators cover:

Presence of a supportive economic and business environment ,structure and scope of the media economy,the media labour market, the financial health of media operations, including advertising capital environment for media operations, organisational structures and resources support financial and market sustainability, contribution to national economy’.

The global impact of Covid-19 on the media has been monumental and platforms in Southern Africa have not been spared. The region had already been reeling from economic strife in the region which had hit their bottom-line as a result of low newspaper sales, audience migration to digital platforms, limited advertising and legal frameworks that constrict enterprise in community radio stations².

The report examines how selected media organizations in six Southern African countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe) are adapting to these challenges and identify best practices for increasing their viability in the digital age.

UNESCO has been at the forefront of efforts to promote media development and address media viability issues in the Southern African region. The project explores media viability issues across Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The report focuses on sustainability issues affecting the operations of media houses from the six countries surveyed. By examining media organizations in different countries and across different media types, the report aims at providing a comprehensive overview of media viability issues in the SADC region. The report will also identify best practices and strategies that can be adopted by media organizations to increase their viability and adapt to the changing media landscape.

Methodology

Media Monitors adopted a triangulated research methodology which incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods as elaborated below.

To evaluate the economic impact of Covid-19 on the news media industry within the SADC region, Media Monitors conducted an analysis based on data collected from 2022 to 2023. The study aimed to address the following questions:

- What was the economic impact of Covid-19 on the news media industry in SADC?
- How did the newsmedia adjust to the varying impact of Covid-19 across different countries in SADC?
- What alternative funding mechanisms, such as government subsidies, philanthropy, and investment, are available to news media organizations?

To comprehensively examine the pandemic’s influence on media viability, six countries within the SADC region were selected as case studies: Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho, and Namibia. In order to ensure the validity of the research approach and identify reliable data sources, Media Monitors engaged six leading researchers specializing in media viability from each of these countries. These researchers conducted in-depth analysis and collected datasets on media viability trends based on six key indicators under the IPDC. Additionally, a seventh indicator, which contributed to the national economy, was explored through desktop research and interviews with media managers and editors from various platforms, including print, broadcast, online, and community media, in each country.

² <https://gga.org/challenges-and-hope-for-africas-media-sustainability/>

Methodology

The study included a media set drawn from both private and public ownership and across print, broadcast, and online media to provide a comprehensive overview of media viability issues in the SADC region

Key Informant Interviews

The research employed key informant interviews to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from 36 editors and managers of media houses in six selected Southern African nations.

Questionnaires – Questionnaires were used to understand from the various media houses in Southern Africa, what the major issues are in relation to media sustainability. Each questionnaire was specifically designed to elicit nuances on how the different groups are impacted by the political economy of the selected media houses. The questionnaires were in the form of google forms in which respondents will enter quantitative and qualitative responses

In-depth interviews - To gain further information and clarification on the replies provided in the questionnaires, in-depth interviews with media stakeholders and managers were held. The participants that were interviewed were chosen using a purposive sampling method.

References

- (1) UNESCO (2014), Media Viability Indicators, available at http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/IPDC/ipdc59_Media_viability_indicators.pdf
- (2) Good Governance Africa (2020), Challenges and Hope for Africa's Media Sustainability, available at <https://gga.org/challenges-and-hope-for-africas-media-sustainability/>

2.0 Media viability indicators

The media sector's conventional business models and financial sustainability are currently confronted with significant hurdles, primarily due to the emergence of internet and digital media corporations, audience shifts and uncertainties in the operating environment³. Within this framework, the significance of media viability was acknowledged in the Windhoek + 30 Declaration on Information as a Public Good⁴. The report draws its conceptualization of viability from the media viability indicator as proffered by the International Program for Development Communication (IPDC)⁵. These are elaborated below:

A. Presence of a supportive economic and business environment: In some countries, media organizations face legal and regulatory barriers that limit their ability to operate freely. For example, in countries where the government controls the media, independent media outlets may face restrictions on their ability to report on certain topics or to criticize the government. In such situations, media viability may be compromised due to lack of freedom and competition.

B. Structure and scope of the media economy: In some countries, the media industry is dominated by a few large conglomerates, which can limit the diversity of voices and perspectives in the media. This can be detrimental to media viability in the long term, as audiences may become disenchanted with a lack of diversity and turn to alternative sources of information.

C. The media labor market: Many media professionals work in precarious conditions, with low pay and little job security. This can make it difficult for media organizations to attract and retain talented and or seasoned professionals, which can have a negative impact on the quality of content.

D. The financial health of media operations, including advertising: In recent years, many media organizations have struggled to generate sufficient revenue to cover their costs. This has led to layoffs, closures, and a sense of instability in the industry. Media organizations that are able to diversify their revenue streams and adapt to changing market conditions are more likely to be financially sustainable in the long term.

E. Capital environment for media operations: Access to capital is essential for media organizations to invest in new technologies and expand their operations. However, many media organizations struggle to secure financing due to a lack of collateral or the perceived riskiness of the industry.

F. Organizational structures and resources support financial and market sustainability: Media organizations that invest in their internal structures and resources are more likely to be financially sustainable in the long term. For example, organizations that have strong management systems and governance structures are better equipped to weather economic downturns and adapt to changing market conditions.

G. Contribution to national economy: The media industry can be a significant contributor to national economies, both in terms of job creation and revenue generation. For example, in some countries, the media industry is a major source of foreign exchange earnings. However, in order to maximize their contribution to the national economy, media organizations must be financially sustainable and able to adapt to changing market conditions.

References

(3) MISA (2022), The State of Media Freedom in Southern Africa Report, available on <https://zimbabwe.misa.org/2023/05/11/the-state-of-press-freedom-in-southern-africa-2022-now-available/>

(4) UNESCO (2021) 30th Anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, available on: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/30th-anniversary-windhoek-declaration>

(5) UNESCO (2022) Media Viability Indicators, available on: https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/04/ipdc59_Media_viability_indicators.pdf

3 MISA (2022), The State of Media Freedom in Southern Africa Report, available on <https://zimbabwe.misa.org/2023/05/11/the-state-of-press-freedom-in-southern-africa-2022-now-available/>

4 <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/30th-anniversary-windhoek-declaration>

5 https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/04/ipdc59_Media_viability_indicators.pdf

3.0 Overview of Media Viability in Southern Africa

This section explores the media viability challenges in Southern Africa in two parts: Overview of findings and Trends per Country

3.1 Sustainability challenges encountered by the media in Southern Africa

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, most media outlets have struggled to keep their operations viable due to a number of cross-cutting factors that seem to be common throughout the region.

Key challenges affecting the media in Southern Africa

- Media capture
- Restrictive media laws that inhibit press freedom
- Lack of human resources to sustain operations
- Diminishing sources of income for media houses
- Safety and security of journalists compromised

Media capture

In the SADC region, media capture has had a tremendous impact on the sustainability of media operations. The majority of media houses in the region are run or controlled by the state or individuals with close links to the government. The influence of these groups is reflected in their output as media captured by the executive⁶ and interests which align with foreign governments⁷ as the case with South Africa⁸. Editorial Independence is the first hostage of media capture, as journalists and editors are steered by an invisible hand that often disregards the principles of journalism as the case with Zimbabwe's privately owned print media⁹. These platforms find it difficult to compete with other platforms that are serving their audiences with objective, fair and accurate news as opposed to propaganda and half-truths that passively props up the interests and policy positions of the platforms' handlers¹⁰. In Malawi media capture was a threat to the viability of online newsrooms¹¹.

Restrictive media environment

The performance of the media has been hampered by the hostile operating environment. Journalists have to work in these environments which limit freedom of the media and freedom of expression¹². In the interaction with journalists in the region, reporters working for the privately owned media houses complained about being targeted when they expose corruption or hold public authorities accountable¹³. There have been instances where reporters have been restricted from covering public events by state and law enforcement agents^{14,15}. In Lesotho, Tsenolo FM, Harvest FM and Mo Africa FM are some of the stations that have been cut off air on allegations of [violating licencing rules](#)¹⁶. The licencing conditions for radio and TV stations are restrictive and operating stations have found it difficult to stay afloat. Licencing and renewal fees are very exorbitant and in such situations, only corporations linked to the government find it easier^{17,18}. Community radio stations have struggled to sustain operations

6 1. Rumney R. Media Capture, the Mirror of State Capture. In: Buthelezi M, Vale P, eds. State Capture in South Africa: How and Why It Happened. Wits University Press; 2023:151-172

7 <https://journalism.co.za/can-editorial-policies-prevent-media-capture/>

8 <https://towardfreedom.org/story/archives/africa-archives/hiding-in-plain-sight-the-capture-of-south-african-independent-media-by-the-u-s-state-and-big-capital/>

9 <https://africanarguments.org/2023/04/in-zimbabwe-a-struggling-media-is-a-target-for-capture/>

10 Interview with Senior Manager Malawi Broadcasting Corporation

11 In Malawi, Gregory Gondwe, a journalist was targeted by the police and military in 2022 over an investigative news article.

12 <https://data.misa.org/api/files/1883794544953d4rgdzlsfg.pdf>

13 Interview responses with journalists: Lesotho

14 <https://cpj.org/2021/12/lesotho-police-arrest-a-radio-presenter-suspend-one-stations-license-and-raid-another/>

15 <https://www.thezimbabwean.co/2023/01/police-bar-zimbabwean-journalists-from-covering-opposition-activists-at-court/>

16 <https://www.maserumetro.com/news/comments/the-power-of-radio>

17 <https://cpj.org/2021/12/lesotho-police-arrest-a-radio-presenter-suspend-one-stations-license-and-raid-another/>

18 Licencing demands in Zimbabwe for instance favour institutions connected to the government - https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341353089_Redefining_Community_Community_Radio_Licencing_in_Zimbabwe_at_Crossroads

because the terms of their licenses restrict them from revenue generating activities¹⁹. The high prices of licenses, government interference, import taxes on broadcasting equipment, and the overall increase in the cost of living have all impacted the purchasing power of media outlets. In the case of Zambia the government was also threatening private owned radio stations for reporting on the President²⁰.

Lack of human resources to sustain operations

After the Covid-19 pandemic most media outlets in Southern Africa have had challenges retaining their staff because of low salaries. The surveyed editors indicated that one of the major impediments to attaining sustainability is their inability to retain seasoned staffers they would have invested training resources in²¹. Seasoned staffers leave these organisations to seek greener pastures in international news agencies or starting their own news platforms or migrating as care workers in the United Kingdom, Canada^{22,23}. These platforms are not able to compete with the salaries offered by the well-resourced platforms they are corresponding for; Associated Press, AFP, BBC and Reuters among others. Whilst news platforms from other regions have enlisted the help of specialists to report on technical subjects such as climate change, economic development, public resource management and technological development, media outlets in Southern Africa lack the resources to ensure professional development to competently report on specialist areas. Most community radio stations depend on volunteer contributors because they cannot afford to hire professional broadcasting or marketing personnel²⁴.

Diminishing sources of income for media houses

Media outlets in SADC have had to revisit their sustainability models in the wake of the economic downturn. After the Covid-19 pandemic income generating approaches that used to work for media outlets were no longer effective. Some platforms had to retrench 50% of their staff and operate with a skeletal staff²⁵. While advertising has been considered the lifeblood of the media, advertising budgets have been cut with some newspapers downsizing from their traditional 32 pages to 16 pages. Broadcasters had to put filler programs and music where necessary to cover the gaps²⁶.

Another secondary effect of dwindling economic conditions is that most platforms do not have the capital to purchase broadcasting equipment that would allow them to expand their reach and improve the quality of their transmission²⁷. Relying on subscriptions, donations and sponsorships has not been sustainable for community radio stations since these sources of revenue are largely functional in thriving economic conditions. Donors and sponsors have been accused of deviating from the mandate of the community radio stations by pushing their own developmental agenda which may not necessarily be aligned to the information needs of the communities. In protest, the few consistent community subscribers have stopped supporting the stations²⁸. Some states have resorted to setting up laws that centralise the collection of donations and re-distribute to the radio stations thus, controlling the content. The costs for setting up a new or expanding an already existing media house have increased exponentially making it difficult for media start-ups to grow into household names without a strong capital investment.

Safety and Security of journalists

¹⁹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373341946_A_New_Era_or_Error_Community_Radio_Licensing_in_Zimbabwe_Issues_Dynamics_and_Sustainability_Challenges

²⁰ In December 2023, UPND senior official threatened a radio station with threats to ransack the premises over reportage of the government

²¹ Interview with Editors at newspapers (Botswana; Zimbabwe; Zambia)

²² Field Interview with Editors and Managers reported that this was a common trend in Malawi, Lesotho, Zambia

²³ As the case with Zimbabwe's broadcasting sector

²⁴ Interview with Editors at community media (Malawi, Lesotho)

²⁵ Field data, responses from the editors and managers

²⁶ Field data, from analysis of programming content

²⁷ Interview with media managers (Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia)

²⁸ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (across all states)

The volatility of the operating environment for the media in Southern Africa has been one of the major impediments to sustainability. The harsh working conditions have deterred many journalists or media houses from fully applying themselves. Journalists have been victimised for exposing social ills implicating politicians and public officials. Restrictive laws have been used to gag the media²⁹ particularly in situations where sensitive information is published or broadcast³⁰. Media regulators have also been accused of unfairly penalizing media houses and the punitive measures threaten the viability of the newsrooms.

3.2 What are media houses doing to overcome sustainability challenges?

While most platforms have been struggling to sustain their operations, they have devised numerous strategies to keep their platforms operational and profitable. These strategies are summarised below:

Overcoming sustainability challenges

Strategy	What is being done?
Review of operational strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Based View (RBV) funding through internally generated income and available lines of credit • Diversifying product offerings and digitizing operations. • Revision of editorial policies making them inclusive and conscious of the operating environment
Human Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating on the job training for journalists to enhance their skills in financial and business reporting • Staff reduction and looking for alternative revenue streams • Revamping the marketing department to employ more creative and energetic personnel
Technical support from government and development partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships (technical and financial) with media support organisations • Seeking funding and technical support from regulatory bodies for private and community radio stations. • Media support organisations have facilitated capacity building initiatives to boost sustainability
Resource mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using available funds in the procurement of new or second-hand equipment to ensure that the quality of media content and productions appeals to target audiences • Advocacy for progressive policy making and enactment of conducive legal frameworks for the media • Engaging prospective investment partners
Innovation new distribution platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of newspaper circulation through digital means (ePaper subscriptions and digital paywall platforms) • Development of promotional material for broadcast media to engage local businesses for advertisement of their products and services • Diversifying operations to include outdoor broadcasting, podcasting and events management e.g. The Renewable Energy Conference • Embracing WhatsApp to engage target audiences
Customer satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packaging investigative, public interest and accountability journalism relevant to the target audiences • Emphasis on marketing and satisfying the needs of listeners by compiling well researched information or messages. • Amplifying community voices to mainstream their interests and concerns

²⁹ In Zambia, the constitution expressly provides for freedom of expression, Section 69 of the Penal Code unjustifiably limits this right.

³⁰ In Lesotho, an online editor highlighted the impact of the Communication Regulations enacted in May 2021 which obligate the registration of online gadgets with the Lesotho Communications Authority as a threat to safety and privacy of journalists

Table 2: Overcoming sustainability challenges, Source: Field Data

3.3 Progression in media operations

Over the past few years, the surveyed platforms have demonstrated their resilience in the face of many challenges by adapting to changes in the environment. News platforms are no longer sticking to their conventional mandate, they now operate as multi-media platforms leveraging on the benefits of media convergence³¹.

However there have been struggles to fully monetize these platforms due to reluctance by advertisers to move online³². Some platforms have expanded their reach by partnering with satellite service providers like DSTV which has given them an edge to compete at an international level and to also reach audiences living in the remote parts of the country³³.

Social media has helped expand the reach of media content. Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, Tiktok and now WhatsApp have been used as platforms for re-sharing content published or broadcast in the print, online and electronic news platforms³⁴, targeting younger audiences. Some platforms have taken advantage of social media capabilities with some broadcasting entirely on Facebook and YouTube³⁵.

There has been a notable increase in the reputation of the surveyed media platforms. Some started as blogs and have earned recognition and respect from their audiences after consistently producing public interest stories that expose corruption³⁶, abuse of office³⁷ and human rights violations³⁸. This has in-turn helped them to increase their website and social media reach.

In terms of marketing and distribution, most of the newspapers have arrangements with with reputable retail stores³⁹ which has allowed them to capitalize on the consumer traffic in addition to actively expanding the subscriptions base from corporates. Media Monitors in analysis noted that the post Covid-19 pandemic situation has accelerated the 'deprinting' of the physical copy by two years. This means that a pre Covid 19 readership of 11 copies per 100 declined rapidly to 6.8 per 100 post 2021⁴⁰.

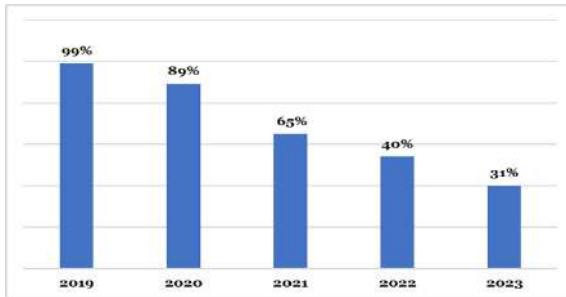


Figure 1: Decline in the hard copy revenues in the six SADC countries, Source: Field data

31 In interviews all managers and editors revealed that there was cross cutting convergence uptake(radio using visual footage through online platforms, print was also converging to online

32 Interviews with Editor (Botswana), Manager (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia)

33 NBC, ZBC,Btv, LesothoTV, MBC and ZNBC have maintained their presence on satellite television

34 All respondents expressed that WhatSapp offers immediacy and direct communication with the audiences

35 Interview insights from Zambia, Lesotho

36 Interviews in Malawi

37 Interviews in Namibia, Lesotho

38 Interviews in Zimbabwe

39 Interviews with media managers in the six countries

40 Averaging circulation trends of print media respondents in the six countries

However ongoing partnerships with civil society organisations like MISA, ZACRAS, WAN-IFRA⁴¹ and international news platforms like Voice of America and BBC aim to enhance specialized reporting and to strengthen African media international news components.

Whilst most organisations have maintained their original structure there have been notable changes recently to adapt to the prevailing operating conditions. Some organisations have downsized to core staff, enlisting the help of correspondents and contributors by 50%⁴². The leaner teams have been loaded with greater responsibilities to ensure media output meets their audience's expectations. There have been varying results for community radio stations, in some countries they have relied on volunteer broadcasters⁴³ whilst some have hired paid professionals⁴⁴.

3.4 Revenue generation

Whilst most platforms have struggled to meet the bottom-line, they have emphasised the need for diverse revenue streams to sustain their operations. Traditionally, advertising has been the primary revenue source for the media ahead of subscription fees, donations and grants, copy sales, sponsored content and events.

Revenue sources for the media

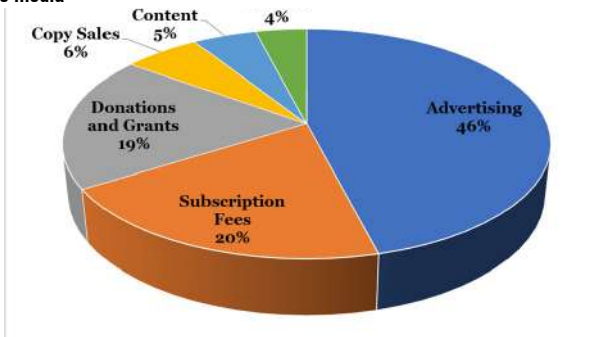


Figure 2: Media income sources, Source: Field work⁴⁵

Advertising

Contributing 46% advertising is the lifeblood of media income in the investigated countries. This remains the mainstream media's main source of revenue. While all commercial platforms have competitive rate cards, the pricing has mostly been negotiated⁴⁶ since most corporations have cut their advertising budgets. Another threat is being posed by Social Media Advertising (SMA) from non news players such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Google.

Subscription Fees

Twenty-percent (20%) of the respondents indicated that they use the subscription method to generate income. This revenue source was common in the newspapers⁴⁷, and some digital platforms⁴⁸. Post Covid 19 media outlets have struggled to maintain consistent subscribers with newsrooms adopting subscriptions for their e-copies and in some instances paywalls for premium

41 MISA, BBC, ZACRAS, WAN-IFRA are supporting media houses to navigate the ever changing news audience market

42 Interviews with editors and managers and desktop research

43 In Zimbabwe, community radio stations licenced in 2020-2021 rely on volunteers

44 In Lesotho the stations were able to pay a wage/salary

45 Field Data from interviews with editors and managers

46 A common concurrence in interview with the 36 media managers across six countries

47 All mainstream and community newspapers had a form of subscription model

48 While some digital platforms in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, had paywalls managers highlighted that this was slow in uptake

content on news websites.

Public broadcasters collected licence fees, which were however depleted⁴⁹. For community radio stations, subscriptions from community members, while forthcoming, were limited. However the degree of membership fees varied per country, with an average of USD1 -USD 5 as annual membership fees.

Donations and Grants

The third highest revenue is generated by donations and grants (19%). Community radio stations and government-controlled platforms have been beneficiaries of donations and grants from government, civil society organisations, religious groups and individual well-wishers. Donations have mostly been in the form of broadcasting equipment.

Copy Sales

For print media newspaper sales (6%) has been a regular revenue stream which has however been in decline since the Covid 19 pandemic. Print runs have reportedly declined whilst pages have dwindled with varying degrees⁵⁰. As a result media houses have resorted to the electronic paper- (e-paper). The Nation in Malawi shares the e-paper, with Zambia's Daily Mail also sharing copies in e-paper.

ROLLING THE E-PAPER

NEWSPAPER	PRINT	ONLINE	MOBILE
NewsDay	20000,000	20000,000	20000,000
ZimbabweIndependent	20000,000	20000,000	20000,000
TheStandard	20000,000	20000,000	20000,000
Compass	20000,000	20000,000	20000,000

NEWSPAPER	PRICE	MOBILE	ONLINE	MOBILE	ONLINE
NewsDay	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000
ZimbabweIndependent	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000
TheStandard	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000
Compass	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000	10000,000

NATION ON SUNDAY

Sign Up

PAYMENTS

NBS Bank, Standard Bank, eAirtel

Weekend NATION

BEHIND FUEL DEALS MIX-UP

Figure 3: E-paper in Zimbabwe, Malawi

In Namibia New Era newspaper is now shared on e-paper⁵¹. The Post in Lesotho was also producing the e-paper.

⁴⁹ Public service broadcasters could not provide exact data on license revenues, but expressed that Covid-19 and post pandemic had slowed down remittances

⁵⁰ In interviews, managers expressed that 32 paggers had declined to 16-18 pages

⁵¹ <https://epaper.neweralive.na/>



Figure 4: E-paper in Lesotho (Sunday Express) and Namibia (New Era)

Lesotho Times was offering the Sunday Express as a free e-paper whereas New Era placed an online paywall to access content. However, managers revealed that the strict policy for selling the e-paper was negatively impacted by the sharing nature of social media platforms⁵². Some had responded by watermarking the e-paper to discourage sharing and also limit downloads through exclusive reading portals.

Sponsored Content

Radio and TV stations have utilised sponsored programmes to boost income (5%). The surveyed stations have partnered with corporates and civil society organisations who offer financial support for programmes that align with their interests such as commemorative events and awareness campaigns⁵³. Programmes with the most listenership or viewership also attract sponsorship e.g. magazine programmes like sports reviews, hitlists, and current affairs programmes amongst others. Sponsored columns are also part of community print media's survival strategies⁵⁴, ensuring that there is a steady income of revenue mainly from non-profit organisations promoting issues such as governance, accountability, resource management and human rights.

Events management

Outside news reporting and broadcasting some media outlets have diversified their operations to include events management particularly in the area of promoting publicity (4%⁵⁵). Due to the large social media following that most media outlets have monetized their livestreaming services on Facebook and on X (formerly Twitter). Some news platforms have developed flagship events to supplement income by hosting events that promote conversations around economic drivers such as banking, business, energy infrastructure and tourism⁵⁶. Some broadcasters have generated revenue from live broadcasts of events facilitated by CSOs and business entities.

3.4 Impact of Covid-19 on revenue generation

During the peak of Covid-19, in 2020 and 2021 the media sector suffered losses because of clogged revenue streams⁵⁷. Advertisers trimmed disposable cash for advertising, social media offered a wider reach for target audiences at a low cost⁵⁸.

⁵² Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)

⁵³ Interviews with all managers revealed that the partnerships business model was emerging as a key revenue source, as partnerships offer flexibility unlike cast in stone rate cards

⁵⁴ Community print media managers highlighted that this was a key revenue source as the sponsored page caters for mutually beneficial ends

⁵⁵ Editors and managers revealed that events such as conferences, symposiums were an avenue to attract more corporate partners

⁵⁶ Field Interview with the Media Managers (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Malawi)

⁵⁷ Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)

⁵⁸ Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)

Some of the consistent advertisers found it difficult to make their payments on time⁵⁹. For some publications, the reduction in advertisement revenue meant some publications could not meet the costs of publishing, thus running a loss⁶⁰. There was also a significant decline in newspaper copy sales across all platforms.

Some television programmes had to be stopped or repeated because the movement of people was limited during the lockdowns imposed to curb Covid-19 spread during this period⁶¹. This meant that revenue from sponsored programmes was adversely affected.

The decline in revenue for media houses had a devastating impact on the operations of the platforms forcing them to downsize by laying off staff and relocating the business to cheaper spaces of operation. 68% of the surveyed platforms retrenched staff during the pandemic resulting in loss of institutional memory and technical expertise⁶². Most platforms had to cut down salaries since their personnel were not working fulltime, those working from home were given internet data subsidies so that they could work remotely⁶³. The salary reduction was a detriment to experienced staff members forcing them to seek greener pastures.

The research found that a decline in physical copy sales coincided with an increase in online news streams and engagement⁶⁴. This showed that as people were operating from home, they still had an appetite for news. Some news platforms with websites began to experiment with paywalls in an attempt to generate revenue from online traffic⁶⁵.

3.5 Gender related sustainability challenges

41% of the surveyed media platforms indicated that they faced challenges sustaining gender balance at their institutions post Covid 19⁶⁶.

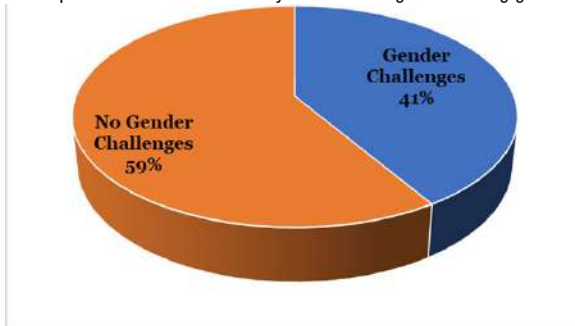


Figure 5: Sustaining gender balance

There have however been deliberate steps to promote gender equality and balance in the industry, these include:

Deliberate programmes to empower women to assume leadership positions through leadership training and mentorship programmes commissioned by civil society organisations such as WAN IFRA-WIN and Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF)⁶⁷.

⁵⁹ Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)

⁶⁰ Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)

⁶¹ Field Interview with the Television Media Managers (across all states)

⁶² Field Interview with the Media Managers

⁶³ Field Interview with the Media Managers

⁶⁴ Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)

⁶⁵ Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers

⁶⁶ Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers

⁶⁷ Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Lesotho)

These initiatives are designed to facilitate equal participation from both men and women in senior positions.

The most sustainable measure to ensure gender inclusivity has been development and institutionalization of gender parity policies to create a culture of inclusion within the media platforms⁶⁸. Workplace gender sensitization policies have also been developed to create a safe working environment for both women and men.

Some organisations have taken an affirmative action and quota systems approach to recruit and promote more women into media programming in an attempt to boost their confidence as content producers and media managers⁶⁹. This could have the net effect of increasing diversity in the workforce and increasing citizens' confidence in media output because it is relatable.

23% of the organisations have set up quota systems at executive level, a certain number of board members have to be women⁷⁰ whilst chairing the board alternates between men and women. This places women at the center of decision making within the media institutions.

3.6 Reporting sensitive issues

One of the biggest lessons drawn from the Covid 19 pandemic is the need for media houses to critically reflect on the impact of news they disseminate to the audiences, in particular public accountability. The integrity and reputation of a media house relies heavily on their capacity to factually and fairly relay sensitive news without doing harm by inciting violence, discrimination or perpetuating negative social stereotypes.

At editorial policy level, media houses are explicit about their commitment to ensuring ethical coverage of sensitive issues⁷¹. Journalists are encouraged to be objective and impartial in their coverage of issues. Policies are clear about protecting the dignity and rights of victims of crime, conflict, social injustice and human rights violations. Ideally these values are supposed to be reflected in the surveyed platforms' coverage of sensitive issues.

Interestingly, while most platforms strive for objectivity and impartiality in handling reports on sensitive issues such as human rights, social justice, health and public finances, 73% did not want to antagonize the government of the day or big business in their reportage⁷². This has led to media polarisation and capture by state and business actors.

While social media has helped set the agenda for mainstream platforms, most platforms have resolved to verifying social media claims first before amplifying them as news on their platforms⁷³.

In environments plagued with censorship and gatekeeping, media outlets find themselves having to protect sources of sensitive news especially if commentary from the source exposes corruption⁷⁴, abuse of office or any illicit activity that may lead to victimization.

3.7 Dealing with fake news

Covid-19 amplified the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation around various aspects of the disease and this has spilled over into the post-Covid 19 era. The mainstream and online news media has been a buffer to minimize the spread of fake news by upholding journalistic standards of accuracy, balance and fairness. The surveyed platforms have set up systems and mechanisms to ensure they do not contribute to the spread of fake news⁷⁵.

68 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Malawi)

69 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers

70 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers

71 Interview with editors in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia.

72 Data gathered from interviews with 36 managers and editors

73 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers

74 Much of these fears were noted in Botswana, Lesotho

75 Interviews with editors who expressed both external and internal consciousness to fact checking

A lot of emphasis has been placed on fact checking considering some of the 'reliable sources' may make incredible claims. This triangulation has become a standard measure for credibility in sourcing. As a tactic to prevent 'he said, she said', some organisations require that all stories are backed by evidence in the form of data and audio quotes from reliable and traceable sources⁷⁶. In instances where media houses could have gotten their facts wrong, most platforms issue retractions and clarifications to share the correct position with their publics. Where claims are made in contentious issues, media houses activate the right of reply so that perspectives of both parties are given prominence. This promotes social sustainability of media houses.

Some CSOs like PANOS, ZimFact and Africa Check have offered capacity building initiatives to strengthen media houses' fact checking systems through training and mentorship. Journalists have reached out to these organisations to verify claims on their behalf⁷⁷. There have been plans by some media houses to set up inhouse fact checking desks to receive and verify claims before their platforms disseminate news to the public. For most platforms this plan has been stalled by lack of financial resources to fund a fact checking desk and the technical tools that come with it.

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- (18) Alfandika, L and Muchetwa, S.K (2020) Redefining Community: Community Radio Licencing in Zimbabwe at Crossroads available on: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341353089_Redefining_Community_Community_Radio_Licencing_in_Zimbabwe_at_Crossroads
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- (22) Field Interview with Editors and Managers (Malawi, Lesotho, Zambia)
- (23) Field Interview with Editors and Managers in Zambia
- (24) Field Interview with Broadcast Editors at community media (Malawi, Lesotho)
- (25) Field data, responses from the editors and managers

⁷⁶ Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers

⁷⁷ Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers, emphasizing the importance of fact checking

- (26) Field data, from analysis of programming content
- (27) Field Interview with media managers (Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia)
- (28) Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (across all states)
- (29) MISA (2022) State of the Media Report Southern Africa
- (30) Filed Interview with Editor (Lesotho), citing the Computer Crime and Cyber Security Bill (2021)
- (31) Field Interview with Managers and Editors (across all states) on the impact of media convergence
- (32) Field Interviews with Editor (Botswana), Managers (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia)
- (33) Interviews with Editors at NBC, ZBC,Btv, LesothoTV, MBC and ZNBC who have maintained their presence on satellite television
- (34) Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (across all states)
- (35) Filed Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia, Lesotho)
- (36) Field Interviews with Editors (Malawi)
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- (38) Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)
- (39) Field Interviews with Media Managers (across the six states)
- (40) Field Data analysis of trends in printing of newspapers (across all states)
- (41) Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (across all states)
- (42) Field Interviews with editors and managers (across all states) and desktop research
- (43) Interview with community radio editors and managers in Zimbabwe and Lesotho
- (44) Interview with community radio editors and managers in Zimbabwe and Lesotho
- (45) Field Data from interviews with editors and managers
- (46) Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)
- (47) Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)
- (48) Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)
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- (60) Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)
- (61) Field Interview with the Television Media Managers (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia)
- (62) Field Interview with the Media Managers
- (63) Field Interview with the Media Managers
- (64) Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)
- (65) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (66) Field Interview with the Media Managers (across all states)
- (67) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (68) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (69) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (70) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (71) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (72) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (73) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers, emphasizing the importance of fact checking

- (74) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana, Lesotho)
- (75) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers
- (76) Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers, emphasizing the importance of fact checking

4.0 Media sustainability in Southern Africa – In country analysis

This section delves in-depth into the specific realities and experiences of each of the six countries under the study

4.1 Botswana: Positive steps in embracing digital media convergence

Home to 2.5 million people, the Botswana media is not spared from viability issues



Figure 6: Map of Botswana, Source: AfriGIS

Media Environment

NAME	ESTABLISHED	TYPE	OWNERSHIP
Mmegi	1984	Print	Private
Btv	2000	Television	Public
GABZ FM	1999	Radio	Private
Botswana Guardian	1982	Print	Private
Midweek Sun	1982	Print	Private
Daily News	1972	Print	Public

The six media houses surveyed in Botswana

All the media houses were badly affected by Covid 19 except the national broadcaster BTW⁷⁸, the affected media experienced retrenchments which incapacitated them resulting in the proliferation of fake news.

⁷⁸ Despite the adoption of a moral high ground of avoiding retrenchments, private owned media houses ended up the retrenchment route

State owned media is controlled through policies formulated by the government. The privately owned broadcast media are supervised by the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA). The allocation of advertising is also managed by the government and is used to exert political pressure on privately owned media outlets⁷⁹.

Lack of advertising has become a major challenge for the private media. The decline in advertising revenue as a result of the pandemic has fueled self-censorship by media outlets seeking to retain advertisers⁸⁰. Some opposition parties have accused some privately owned media houses of being in the pay of the government, which allocated them advertising space⁸¹. Press freedom is under threat as evidenced by the arbitrary arrest of media personnel, a case in point is the arrest of Mmegi editor and a senior journalist by the Directorate of Intelligence and Security Services⁸². Strong reforms are necessary in order to ensure the country's public media can operate free of government and political interference, in accordance with international freedom of expression standards guaranteeing the public's right to receive diverse and independent news and information.

Viability Issues

Development of the media is limited by the small size of the advertising market, which is dominated by public procurement notices⁸³. Advertising is not allocated equitably which might force media houses to toe the government line. The decline in advertising revenue as a result of the pandemic has fueled self-censorship by media outlets seeking to retain advertisers⁸⁴. All print media publish in English with the exception of the state-owned Daily News which has some sections in Setswana.

It has been a challenging assignment for the media to transition from print to digital publishing. The digital space is a novel area for most media institutions, they are still trying to get the hang of producing content for a digital audience, marketing online and monetizing the platform⁸⁵. The majority of Botswana citizens earn an average of USD 230 which is higher than other nations. However the World Bank⁸⁶ noted that poverty and inequality remain prevalent.

Radio transmission is an expensive venture which is capital intensive. It has been adversely affected by the decline in advertising and sponsorship⁸⁷. Power outages have disrupted transmission, frustrating advertisers and listeners at the same time. It has also been difficult for some platforms to raise funds to upgrade their broadcasting equipment to match the transmission quality of their competition⁸⁸.

The gaps in the existing media landscape prevents the media from executing their journalistic privilege. The absence of an access to information law which should stand as a buffer for journalists' safety and security, this hinders the execution of the watchdog role of the profession. Journalists are prone to arbitrary arrest and or detention by the authorities.

The harsh economic conditions have demotivated media personnel since their employers are not in a position to pay them competitively as they transition from the limitations brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Legal Framework, Safety and Security of Journalists

After an alarming decline in press freedom under President Ian Khama, the situation has improved⁸⁹ markedly since Mokgweetsi Masisi became president in 2018. While journalists are rarely detained or arrested, they are sometimes the victims of police violence, especially during protests, and the intelligence services use spyware to monitor their communications⁹⁰. Journalists are also often subjected to social media smear campaigns. Journalists' equipment, including mobile phones, cameras and

79 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

80 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

81 <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/press-freedom-in-botswana-2022.pdf>

82 <https://www.mmegi.lw/news/misa-botswana-shocked-at-diss-arrests-of-mmegi-journalists/news>

83 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

84 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

85 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

86 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/poverty-back-pre-covid-levels-globally-not-low-income-countries>

87 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

88 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

89 <https://irst.org/en/country/botswana>

90 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana)

laptops, are often seized without judicial justification or a warrant⁹¹.

The 2008 Media Practitioners Act was repealed (revoked) in 2022 in order to better protect media freedom and independence. However the law on Access to Information is yet to be enacted after legislation was reinforced in response to the Covid 19 pandemic⁹².

Gender and Media

An interesting and significant progress in the media landscape is the 2023 emergence of The Argus Online, an online news platform spearheaded by a trio of talented women journalists. There is also a huge gender gap in media leadership. Only two of Botswana's 13 newspapers are run by women – The Botswana Gazette and The Voice Newspapers⁹³. The scourge of sexual harassment continues to rear its head as it goes unreported.

Emerging Dilemmas

There has been a notable rise in strategic lawsuits against the media, commonly referred to as “SLAPPs,” as highlighted by editors and journalists⁹⁴. The objective behind these malicious lawsuits is to exhaust the limited resources of independent media organizations. Such legal actions serve as a means to punish and suppress critical journalism, consequently undermining the fundamental tenets of press freedom.

In addition to SLAPPs, another pressing concern affecting the media landscape is the proliferation of fake news. This scourge has resulted in the manipulation and distortion of information disseminated to the public, eroding trust and sowing confusion. Furthermore, the journalists expressed worry about capture of independent press by political parties and the state security arms⁹⁵.

Solutions to Viability Issues

Despite the environmental challenges faced by the sector, media personnel have become resilient by adopting remote work and abiding by the journalistic code of ethics. As a survival strategy, all media platforms have embraced digital media and social media advertising⁹⁶. There are no community owned media in Botswana, thus limiting viability issues to state and privately owned media. Botswana's internet penetration rate standing at 61% has given room for an increased online media space,

4.2 Lesotho: High hopes to turn the corner

There are high expectations that Lesotho's media landscape attains a measure of viability in the aftermath of the political transitions in the form of the 2022 parliamentary elections and 2023 local government elections



91 <https://cpj.org/2023/07/botswana-intelligence-agents-detain-2-journalists-overnight/>

92 Field Interview with the Editors and Media Managers (Botswana), who highlighted that the law Public Health (Prohibition of Entry into Botswana) Order 2020, article 2, was curbing the spread of 'falshoods' about the pandemic

93 Field Data from interviews with Editors and Managers

94 Field Data from interviews with Editors and Managers

95 Field Data from interviews with Editors and Managers

96 Field Data from interviews with Editors and Managers

Figure 7: Map of Lesotho, Source: AfriGIS

Media Environment

NAME	ESTABLISHED	TYPE	OWNERSHIP
Lentsoe la Basotho (The Voice of Basotho)	1963	Print	Public
Public Eye	1997	Print	Private
Mafeteng Community Radio	2012	Radio	Community
Lesotho Television	1986	Television	Public
Harvest FM	2003	Radio	Community
Informative	2006	Online	Private

The six media houses surveyed in Lesotho

The media houses examined included Lesotho Today and Lesotho TV (both public owned); Mafeteng Community Radio (community); Harvest FM (private owned radio); Informative (online news platform) and Public Eye (privately owned newspaper). The media houses evolved some from the colonial time while others came into existence during the Lesotho military rule and others after the return to democratic rule⁹⁷. Most of the media houses came into existence in the wake of the Windhoek Declaration that came as a catalyst that encouraged press freedom, independence, and pluralism in Africa and in other parts of the world⁹⁸. Reliance on Facebook for live broadcasting and advertising and using X, Tik Tok, Instagram and YouTube is also prevalent⁹⁹.

Viability Issues

Lesotho has an internet penetration rate of 53% as of 2023 while the average national monthly income is USD57¹⁰⁰. Despite these achievements, media houses in the region have not been immune to challenges. Respondents to the survey noted several challenges, including financial constraints, political pressures, and limited access to resources that remain persistent hurdles for media houses in Lesotho¹⁰¹. However, media organizations continue to muddle through and have displayed resilience by diversifying revenue streams and fostering a culture of innovation.

Media houses have failed to retain knowledgeable and professional staff, they are forced to depend on early career journalism entrants who are engaged as volunteers. It has become a norm to see a press briefing where matters of national importance are spoken about filled with intern-journalists who are ill equipped to interrogate issues. Media houses have to face constant political pressure and legal hurdles that include being cut off air for radio stations, being threatened with lawsuits¹⁰² among other challenges.

An average 53%¹⁰³ decline in advertising revenue has also been noted as a key challenge that media houses faced, with much part of the advertising coming from the government and dependent on kowtowing towards government desired narratives in reporting.

⁹⁷ <https://www.gov.ls/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/REVISED-MEDIA-SECTOR-REFORMS-REPORT.pdf>

⁹⁸ Interviews with Editors and Managers (Lesotho)

⁹⁹ Interviews with Editors and Managers (Lesotho)

¹⁰⁰ [https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-lesotho#:~:text=There%20were%2011%20million%20internet%20users%20in%20Lesotho%20in%20January,percent\)%%20between%202022%20and%202023](https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-lesotho#:~:text=There%20were%2011%20million%20internet%20users%20in%20Lesotho%20in%20January,percent)%%20between%202022%20and%202023)

¹⁰¹ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Lesotho)

¹⁰² <https://african.business/2023/02/apo-newsfeed/lesotho-commemorates-world-radio-day>

¹⁰³ Aggregated from the interviews with newsroom managers in Lesotho

Legal Framework, Safety and Security of Journalists

Tsenolo FM, Harvest FM, MoAfrika FM are among some of the radio stations that have been cut off air, for months for exposing wrongdoing by government or politicians with accusations that radio stations were a threat to national security¹⁰⁴. Reasons that are given for such actions implicate the Radio stations as threats to national security. The radio stations in some instances have been denied a right to expand their frequencies based on claims that privately owned radio stations conflict with the state-run radio stations' frequency.

Use of security agencies agents and or functionaries to crackdown on media practitioners has continuously been the norm in Lesotho with the case of attempted murder¹⁰⁵ on the life of Lloyd Mutungamiri, Editor of Lesotho Times and Sunday Express newspapers. echoing the need for press freedom to be strengthened. Latest case of crackdown on journalists include alleged demands for revelation of sources by security agencies.

Gender and Media

Among the six respondents, two believed that women face more barriers to enter the media industry than men in Lesotho while the majority (four) said there are no barriers to entry. Among the barriers that were raised included the realities that women have family commitments like bearing children and that stops their career advancement. Furthermore, the men owned media houses prefer to put men in charge and doubt women in leadership positions. The Lesotho media landscape continues to have gender disparity based on pay amid both men and women doing similar tasks and delivering at equal capacities in the workplace.

Emerging Dilemmas

Media houses approaches towards reporting on sensitive issues such as politics, human rights, and social justice have varied but common approaches have included strict adherence to editorial policies. Pursuit of journalistic values like ensuring stories are balanced and investigating allegations and fact checking claims thoroughly before broadcasting or publishing are other ways to handle sensitive issues in Lesotho and ensuring coverage does not result in crackdown on media.

Respondents said fighting against the spread of disinformation and misinformation through fact checking content using open sources and authoritative sources has been a way to survive. One media house said they have a clear policy not to cover any sensitive issues but focus on business and promoting the development agenda of government agencies, departments, and ministries.

For the state-run media houses, reporting on politics is limited to issues that must be balanced. Government is given an opportunity to respond to allegations before publication. The government and ruling party or ruling parties' coalition use the conventional media as their own propaganda machinery and or mouthpiece.

Dangers and difficulties faced by privately owned, community and online newsrooms in Lesotho have been resolved either through much open and robust debates among peers in the newsrooms and editors or program managers in radio stations.

The rise of Artificial Intelligence has brought to the fore issues of originality and fact checking While there is no specialized fact-checking entity in Lesotho, media houses said they make live interviews and make follow-ups, fact check any claims and prioritize use of authoritative sources for information¹⁰⁶.

Solutions to Viability Issues

Much of the media houses' problems of political clamp down on dissenting voices continues to be ongoing albeit latent and only displayed through denial of business or advertising¹⁰⁷. Media houses have concentrated their resilience efforts at training journalists and dig into reserves to keep afloat as they went without resources to continue their work.

One key informant said

104 Interview with Senior Manager, Lesotho

105 <https://www.maserumetro.com/news/news/new-dates-for-editor-attempted-murder-trial/>

106 Interviews with media editors and managers

107 Interview responses from 4 editors in Lesotho

“Maintaining editorial independence while facing economic constraints has been a constant challenge. However, our commitment to quality journalism has been our guiding light”¹⁰⁸.

Radio stations that had been shut down had to improvise and use shorter frequencies while waiting the set three months period to lapse before they re-open. Media houses have now adopted the use of online broadcasting and using social media to broadcast their content. Facebook live broadcast of content has become dominant.

Lesotho’s Television stations’ hopes are pinned on a national reforms program that includes calls for the corporatization of the state-run media entities. The reforms have provisions that turn the television stations into public service broadcasters to ensure their sustainability and resilience over time.

In terms of advertising, media houses had embraced social media advertising, using the flexibility of partnerships over rate cards and offering packages which stimulate advertisers’ interests.

Media practitioners in Lesotho even suggested that there should be proactive public funding for media through a revolving facility and impose quotas on numbers between men and women in leadership positions within media houses as a legal prerequisite to be licensed. These quotas, emphasis was that it should be accompanied by management training opportunities for women in the media.

4.3 Malawi : Dashed viability prospects amid regulatory drawbacks

Malawi received USD \$45 million funding from the African Development Bank to combat Covid 19¹⁰⁹. This included health and business support. Malawi’s government indicated commitment to fund media businesses, and later did not honour the promise, resultant in dashed hope and an uncertain future for media houses in the country.



Figure 8: Map of Malawi, Source: Nations Online

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Editor, Lesotho

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/malawi-receive-4507-million-national-covid-19-emergency-response-african-development-bank-38987>

Media Environment

NAME	ESTABLISHED	TYPE	OWNERSHIP
Times News	1895	Print	Private
Dzimwe Community Radio	1998	Radio	Community
MIJFM	1999	Radio	Campus
Zodiak Broadcasting Station	1995	Television	Private
Capitol FM	2005	Radio	Private
Maravi Post	2010	Online	Online (Private)

The six media houses surveyed in Malawi

The research surveyed six media firms — Capital Radio (privately-owned radio station), Dzimwe Community Radio (community media), Maravi Post (online news portal), MIJ FM (a private radio station whose trustees are faculty members of a public university), The Times Group (newspaper firm) and Zodiak Broadcasting Station (private television station).

Over the years, the media landscape in Malawi witnessed a significant transformation as media firms shifted from a single platform publishing to multimedia institutions, in order to keep up with emerging trends¹¹⁰. While some have experienced growth in their viewership and readership, others have redirected their attention towards specific audience segments, particularly the youth, recognising the demographic advantage they offer.

Viability Issues

Prohibitive costs of financing: broadcasting media firms have to contend with high costs of financing broadcasting equipment such as transmitters, professional sound consoles, vehicles, recorders and computers, in addition to recurrent expenditures¹¹¹. Broadcasters pay license fees in foreign currency, which impacts of their profitability¹¹². Moreover, broadcasters often incur penalties for violations of license provisions¹¹³.

Malawi has over 50 radio and over 20 television stations, all competing for the same resources in a market with monthly average income of USD58¹¹⁴. Media firms frequently experienced staff turnover as employees often transition to other organisations within the industry or beyond¹¹⁵. Advertisers and subscribers are facing a decline in their purchasing power due to the high cost of living. Social media advertising has emerged as the alternative and is following audiences online with estimates that it will be worth USD 5 million by the end of 2024¹¹⁶. Advertising remains the lifeline of the media industry. For sources of revenues, all media firms listed advertising as the major source of revenue, with subscription fees and grants also cited as alternative means of advertising. Curiously, some media firms¹¹⁷ experienced a surge in revenue during the Covid 19 pandemic years compared to the period before and after the catastrophe. The online platform also reported positive revenue inflows due to the advantages of convergence and reach beyond borders by attracting a wider readership base.

Media companies in Malawi are under constant pressure from political entities, such as politicians, government ministries, and departments, who aim to exert control or influence over the news agenda in return for advertising. This has created a culture of

¹¹⁰ Interview with Editors and Senior Managers across the six media houses, Malawi

¹¹¹ 2 of the interviewed six media outlets in Malawi reported that they took a loan to service their obligations to MACRA

¹¹² In 2022, government proceeded to shut down broadcasters who failed to pay high licencing fees required by the regulator, MACRA

¹¹³ Concern over the revocation of broadcasting licences in Malawi <https://misa.org/blog/concern-over-the-revocation-of-broadcasting-licences-in-malawi/>

¹¹⁴ The devaluation of the Malawian Kwacha in 2023, made it more expensive to secure licences, Senior Manager Zodiak

¹¹⁵ Interview with Senior Manager, The Times Group

¹¹⁶ Interview with Senior Manager, Capitol Radio

¹¹⁷ Television and privately owned radio expressed that revenue had grown by attracting new advertisers

patronage where ‘advertising is a currency exchanged in return for positive coverage’¹¹⁸ It is worth noting that the government remains the largest source of advertising.

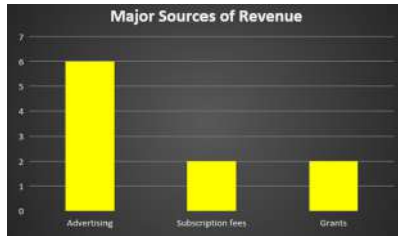


Figure 9: Sources of income for Malawian media firms

To supplement the revenues generated from traditional advertising and subscription models, media firms are expanding into alternative investments¹¹⁹. Community news platforms extended their revenue lines to owning and operating maize mills, privately owned media houses ventured into the real estate market, and established vehicle rental services, to diversify their portfolio.



Figure 10: E-paper from Times Media

Print media houses adopted subscription-based short codes for delivering breaking news, implementing cross-platform marketing techniques, and promoting the visibility of digital products such as e-editions.

Legal Framework, Safety and Security of Journalists

The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) has been utilized as a tool to promote political agendas and discredit political adversaries. Key respondents suggested that the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) unfairly applied the law, targeting critical voices and aligning itself with the government¹²⁰. Consequently, publicly owned media outlets enjoyed preferential treatment, while online and privately owned players faced hardships. Editors argued that MACRA failed to support media development and viability, instead favoring the government by imposing unreasonable licensing fees on broadcasters without considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic¹²¹. Journalists faced significant risks to their safety due to multiple factors, including police raids and threats originating from the military.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Editor, Malawi

¹¹⁹ Television station Zodiak, in the post pandemic also reverted back to its original offering of a radio station which now operates online

¹²⁰ Interviews with Editors in Malawi

¹²¹ Additionally, concerns were raised about MACRA’s compromised relationship with advertisers, leading to allegations of collusion aimed at punishing mainstream and online platforms

Gender and Media

The media sector in Malawi has encountered several gender-related obstacles, including greater barriers to entry for women compared to men. Moreover, women remain underrepresented in the media industry, particularly in leadership roles¹²². While the field of journalism has witnessed a positive development with an increase in the number of women practicing this profession, it is concerning that media institutions continue to hire more men than women, resulting in a higher number of unemployed women journalists compared to their male counterparts.

Emerging Dilemmas

Some radio stations were motivated to practice self-censorship due to fear of retribution from the regulator, Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA)¹²³. Consequently, these media organisations engaged in self-censorship by refraining from covering topics such as politics, human rights, and social justice, reporting cautiously.

Media houses have faced more challenges due to lack of foreign currency following the devaluation of the Kwacha in 2023¹²⁴. As a result media houses have to await allocation from the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) as and when funds are available.

During the pandemic, the widespread dissemination of false information was a matter of great concern. This had a negative impact on the journalists' effectiveness¹²⁵. However, by diligently relying on factual information provided by experts, the journalists were able to rectify the situation in the majority of instances.

Solutions to Viability Issues

Media organisations adopted turnaround strategies to monetize content, with limited success that involve monetising them as a product and selling their attention to advertisers¹²⁶. Print media reduced the hard copy circulation from around 30 000 copies to 6000, while aggressively marketing the e-paper and advertising packages or combos¹²⁷.

Broadcasters utilized converged media platforms which enabled them to attract fresh audiences and generate additional revenue streams¹²⁸. Community media adopted close engagement with strategic audiences in order to come up with issue-based participatory programming¹²⁹.

Community media have come up with strategies to tap into a significant Malawian diaspora to donate to the station building, while also following up on membership subscriptions¹³⁰.

4 of the 6 media organizations formulated gender-friendly workplace policies that enable women to assume managerial and editorial roles¹³¹.

¹²² Gender bias poses a significant challenge when it comes to sharing technical work, as certain supervisors hold the misguided belief that women are incapable of performing certain tasks as effectively as men.

¹²³ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Malawi)

¹²⁴ <https://malawi.misa.org/2023/12/31/2023-just-another-year-of-persistent-unwarranted-hostility-towards-journalists-in-malawi/>

¹²⁵ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Malawi)

¹²⁶ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Malawi)

¹²⁷ Field Analysis and Interviews with Editors and Managers (Malawi)

¹²⁸ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Malawi)

¹²⁹ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Malawi)

¹³⁰ Field Interviews with Editors, Dzimwe Community Radio (Malawi)

¹³¹ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Malawi)

4.4 Namibia : Innovation within the human capital dilemma



Figure 11: Map of Namibia, Source: WorldAtlas

Media Environment

The current challenges facing media houses in Namibia were compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic which drastically cut revenue and led to massive changes in most newsrooms. Respondents explained during interviews that during Covid 19, a number of practitioners were let go, distribution number sank to an all-time low from an average 74 000 copies to 18 000 for instance at The Namibian¹³² and revenue from advertising drastically declined to an extent that even today, it has not fully recovered.

NAME	ESTABLISHED	TYPE	OWNERSHIP
The Namibian	1986	Print	Private
NMH	1992	Print	Private
Eagle FM	2019	Radio	Community
NBCTV	1991	Television	Public
The Namibian Economist	1991	Online	Private
Future Media Group	2019	Online	Private

The six media houses surveyed in Namibia

The respondents were from The Namibian (2), Future Media Group (2), NBC TV (2), One Africa TV (1), The Namibian Economist (1), NMH (2), and Eagle FM (1). Apart from The Namibian, which was established 33 years ago, the rest of the publications were established post the new millennium.

While most respondents concurred that they were established to play a 4th estate/ watchdog role in Namibia, some also highlighted that their establishment was propelled by business and the subsequent creation of job opportunities for media

¹³² Interview with Senior Managers, NMH and The Namibian Economist

practitioners. A journalist at NBC expressed that they were established through an Act of Parliament as a merit to keep the nation informed¹³³.

Viability Issues

Over the years, the media houses highlighted numerous significant changes in the Namibian media landscape some of which threatened and still threaten their existence while other changes have been a welcome relief. Understandably, the onslaught of digital media technologies on the print media was highlighted as a key change that has forced media houses to adapt or face closure. An editor with The Namibian noted that this change brought in the challenge of the publication losing its exclusive content to social media which would have citizen journalists publishing news faster than the media house¹³⁴.

He further expressed that the quality of journalists that he has seen in the newsroom over the years has become less interested in sourcing articles and thus the quality of stories has dwindled to some extent. Beyond this, a key challenge as alluded to by a marketing executive at NMH is falling revenue from advertising. The birth of new and cheaper forms of advertising such as google ads for corporates meant that corporates cut their budgets to mainstream media so that they can also accommodate and pursue digital techniques which have a greater audience reach and far more affordable¹³⁵.

Almost all of the interviewed media houses mentioned Covid 19 as one of the key challenges that have been widely felt in recent memory. For this pandemic, it has not been so much about what was felt at the time of lockdowns but what has been and continue to be felt post Covid 19¹³⁶. All of the media houses interviewed said that they derive the bulk of their revenue from advertising which makes up to 90% of the income with street sales (newspapers) and subscriptions making up the rest¹³⁷. The Namibian however mentioned that they have affiliated to various organisations that also provide donations to support their activities.

Legal Framework, Safety and Security of Journalists

The safety and protection of journalists, as well as the viability of media outlets, are pressing issues in Namibia. Journalists in the country face challenges such as low pay, legal repression, and retribution for their work. In May 2022, a radio journalist from the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was wounded by a stray rubber bullet fired by the police while covering a protest in Windhoek¹³⁸. Such incidents of violence against journalists are carried out by various actors, including both state and non-state entities. Particularly concerning is the increasing prevalence of such attacks on social media platforms¹³⁹.

One major concern is the issue of underpayment for journalists. Many media organizations struggle with financial constraints, leading to inadequate compensation for journalists. This not only affects their livelihoods but also has implications for the quality and sustainability of journalism in Namibia.

Editors and managers across print, broadcast, online and community expressed deep concerns about the survival of quality journalism focused on public interest. These media play a crucial¹⁴⁰ role in upholding press freedom by providing in-depth reporting and holding power to account. The sustainability of such journalism is essential for a well-informed society and a robust democracy.

133 Interview with Senior Manager, The Namibian

134 Interview with Senior Manager, The Namibian

135 The Thursday edition of Namibian Sun used to have nearly 100 pages, laden with advertising, currently the English edition of Namibian Sun in most times carries on 8 pages in total.

136 Interview with Editor, Namibian Economist, who decried impact of digital advertising

137 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

138 Field Interview with Managers, NBC (Namibia)

139 <https://rstf.org/en/country/namibia>

140 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

Gender and Media

The majority of respondents also expressed that very minimal gender related challenges had been experienced within their newsrooms as the industry has been a merit-based industry which is equal in its approach towards practitioners¹⁴¹. While this is so, women still occupy only the lower-level positions while males are dominant in leadership positions. Quizzed around this, the one respondent suggested that this could have everything to do with the demanding nature of the industry which is littered with events and an excessive risk in breaking sourced news pieces. Echoing this, a senior manager at NMH said that women face more obstacles in their journey as compared to their male counterparts¹⁴².

Emerging Dilemmas

Covid 19 also cut through the broadcasting fraternity albeit at a lower scale than print media with multiple lay-offs and revenue dipped due to budget cuts on the part of advertisers¹⁴³. Several media houses in Namibia have recognized the detrimental effects of fake news on their revenue and credibility, and as a result, they have taken proactive measures to address this issue.

During interviews, it was also established that none of the media houses except for NBC TV which is government owned received any assistance in form of a grant or a loan from the government¹⁴⁴. A senior manager at NBC said that they received their annual subsidy, but it was reduced as Covid-19 also affected government revenue and widened national budget deficits in the medium term¹⁴⁵. However all public owned media houses benefit from a 2015 informal policy which ring fenced the bulk of government advertising to state media newsrooms.

One of the ways media houses are tackling fake news is by conducting literacy campaigns¹⁴⁶. These campaigns aim to educate the public about the importance of verifying information before sharing or believing it. This approach helps to build trust in the media industry and encourages consumers to rely on reputable sources for news. Additionally, the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) was focusing on implementing policies to combat fake news¹⁴⁷. These policies aim to regulate the dissemination of false information through various media platforms. This not only helps to maintain the credibility of the media industry but also protects consumers from being misled by fake news.

Solutions to Viability Issues

To remain competitive, the publications in this sample have all adopted digital media as an additional source of income and a way to keep their audiences engaged¹⁴⁸. The Namibian has gone further and acquired a radio frequency license to establish a radio station, Desert FM¹⁴⁹. While this is so, most of the media establishments also alluded to bundling their platforms to create packages to extend the audience base so that they are able to lure more cash-injecting clients. NBC said that they now have a package that includes giving prospective clients not just advertising space on prime TV, but also appearances on their prime shows such as Good Morning Namibia and doing live reads on their different vernacular radio stations¹⁵⁰.

Eagle FM noted that they have a package that allows radio advertisers to get a generic advertisement in their digital newspaper, The Villager. NMH also said that they now have a package where a single advertiser can have their advert appear in all of

¹⁴¹ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

¹⁴² Interview with a Senior Manager (a woman) who noted that women in the media sector were at a patriarchal disadvantage to men, due to the gendered nature of the profession.

¹⁴³ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

¹⁴⁴ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

¹⁴⁵ Field Interviews with Senior Manager, NBC (Namibia)

¹⁴⁶ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

¹⁴⁷ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

¹⁴⁸ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Namibia)

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.desertradio.fm/>

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Senior Manager, NBC

their three newspapers on the same day. The same goes for One Africa TV which now offers clients additional advertising on their radio station 99FM. All these packages are designed with a component of social media and the website to further entice potential advertisers in a bid for sustainability and survival¹⁵¹. Interviewed journalists noted that information resources have actually multiplied over the years and their work is getting much easier by the day. With the progression of time, better tools for journalism have been released making the work easier. Sources of information have become cooperative and Ministers now respond to interviews on WhatsApp, said one Journalist from NMH. To augment the shortcomings of inexperienced journalists and to maintain quality of the output, media houses have resorted to hiring qualified sub-editors who can clean and enhance the news copy. This has managed to maintain some level of professionalism and integrity while keeping litigation away. Other publications like NMH now have flagship events¹⁵² to supplement income and have cut down on expenditure through owning their printing and distribution logistics.

4.5 Zambia: Plurality, Diversity and the dwindling revenue space



Figure 12: Map of Zambia, Source: MapsAtlas

Media Environment

NAME	ESTABLISHED	TYPE	OWNERSHIP
Times of Zambia	1965	Print	Public
Daily Nation	2011	Print	Private
Chikuni Radio	2000	Radio	Community
Kanele FM	2021	Radio	Community
Zambian Business Times	2017	Online	Private
Prime TV	2013	Television	Private

The six media houses surveyed in Zambia

Zambia has a fairly diverse media space including 120 privately owned radio stations, 42 television stations, and print media which are public owned and privately owned¹⁵³. The respondents were from Times of Zambia, Daily Nation, Zambian Business Times, Hot FM, Kanele FM, Chikuni Community Radio and Prime Television. This constituted three newspapers which are also on digital platforms, three radio stations and one TV station and covered both government and privately owned media.

¹⁵¹ The NBC has rolled out customized packages with a slightly higher price, but clients were finding it worth it especially when they are running a campaign. – Senior Manager, NBC TV.

¹⁵² The NMH hosted the Tourism Expo which has become one of the top exhibitions in Namibia as a platform to generate more revenue while contributing to the growth of Namibia's tourism sector. – Senior Manager, NMH

¹⁵³ https://zambia.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/images/publication/State_of_Media_Report_Oct_1.pdf

While some respondents pointed out that they were established to fill the gap for an independent carrier of unbiased and well researched content and also out of passion to provide content to the underserved population¹⁵⁴ Others responded that they were established as an empowerment tool of sensitization and information to the community, to contribute to the social, economic and political development of the country¹⁵⁵ and to provide financial and business news, analysis and information to the general public.

Viability Issues

The research participants brought attention to several challenges that have persisted over time. These encompassed difficulties in accessing affordable capital for expansion as the case with Prime Television¹⁵⁶, challenges in generating revenue both during and after the Covid 19 period, interference from political¹⁵⁷, social, and economic factors, elevated costs associated with broadcasting equipment, and the considerable expenses tied to transmission. Noteworthy issues included the quest for quality, unbiased information, delays in the payment of advertisements, particularly those from the government, and the complexities of securing advertisements in a fiercely competitive market. Contributed growth of social media advertising had a negative impact of the revenue of media houses, this manifesting in poor salaries for journalists and media houses 'living from hand to mouth'¹⁵⁸.

All of the media organizations interviewed emphasized that the majority of their revenue, up to 95%, is derived from advertising, while sales (newspapers) and subscriptions contribute to the remaining percentage¹⁵⁹. This is a challenge though because the average monthly income in Zambia is USD 122¹⁶⁰.

Legal Framework, Safety and Security of Journalists

Zambia repealed the Penal Code which criminalised defamation in 2022. Zambia does not have an access to information law. Media houses however had operational guarantees during and post the Covid-19 period¹⁶¹.

Gender and Media

Most respondents conveyed that they had encountered very few gender-related challenges within their newsrooms¹⁶². They highlighted that the industry operated on a merit-based system, ensuring equality in its approach toward practitioners. Despite this, respondents acknowledged that women encounter more obstacles when entering the media industry compared to men¹⁶³. However, they noted that women were not underrepresented in the media industry, especially in leadership positions.

In terms of experiencing or witnessing gender-based violence in the media industry, the majority of the respondents (87.5%) said they had not while the remaining (12.5%) responded to the affirmative¹⁶⁴. The respondents further indicated that perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and biases about gender in the Zambia media was nothing of concern as the majority (75%) responded that they did not think it existed while (25%) felt it did exist¹⁶⁵.

154 Interviews with editors from Kanele FM, Business Times

155 Interview with Senior Manager, Times of Zambia

156 The key informant also highlighted that the station tried without success to secure a loan from local financial institutions

157 Daily Nation encountered pressures of political interference during the PF era and UPND

158 Interview with Senior Manager, Business Times

159 Interview with Senior Managers (Zambia)

160 <https://www.zamstats.gov.zm/2022-census/>

161 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

162 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

163 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

164 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

165 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

Emerging Dilemmas

The challenges brought about by the Covid-19 Pandemic extended across various sectors, and the media industry was not exempt. According to all respondents, the pandemic had a detrimental impact on their revenue streams. Sales dwindled, advertising activities slowed down, and there were delays in receiving payments for services rendered. Chukuni Community Radio specifically noted that radio programs suffered a decline because people couldn't access the studio due to the lockdown measures imposed during Covid 19¹⁶⁶. This led to programs being halted, resulting in a significant loss of income. In terms of loss of human capital during the pandemic, 85.7% of the respondents confirmed that they suffered lay-offs due to the effects of Covid 19¹⁶⁷. Media houses had to scale down on staff headcount, resulting in loss of accumulated organisation learnings, loss of clients and contributors. There was reduced news production and because there were less journalists, news coverage was not as vast.

While 14.3% of the respondents confirmed to have received government support during the pandemic, the majority (85.7%) said they had not received any funding¹⁶⁸. In response to the change in content strategy during the pandemic, the majority (71.4%) said they had changed while the remaining 28.6% did not¹⁶⁹. 85.7% of the respondents experienced challenges with sourcing news and information during the pandemic while 14.3% did not¹⁷⁰.

The Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) has issued a cautionary statement urging the public to refrain from sharing unverified information on popular social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp¹⁷¹. In an effort to promote media literacy, ZICTA launched a campaign emphasizing the importance of verifying the accuracy of information before sharing it.

Solutions to Viability Issues

Prime Television additionally highlighted that they diversify their revenue streams by generating income through sponsored content productions and leasing out Outside Broadcasting Equipment (OBE).

In terms of diversification of revenue streams beyond traditional advertising and subscription models, some respondents pointed out the introduction of online or paywall for e-paper newspaper sales and the shift to digital and social media to gain more subscribers while others said that they have tried to apply for donor aid to improve operations.¹⁷² Times of Zambia being a government owned newspaper company that distributes countrywide indicated that they have gone into courier services to improve their revenue¹⁷³.

The Zambian Business Times revealed that they invested in online equipment and data packages for staff to conduct remote and online interviews and engagements¹⁷⁴. According to the respondents, the future of the media industry in Southern Africa post Covid 19 is seen to be recovering but more on digital and online spaces. They pointed out that the situation is rebounding but finding the right and most sustainable business model remained under work in progress. Noteworthy was the fact that most of them felt that it was likely to pick up and remain vibrant, however, The Daily Nation Newspaper pointed out the importance of immediate and effective financial support¹⁷⁵. They pointed out that many houses were hit badly while others closed or are running on uncertainty of tomorrow.

¹⁶⁶ Interviews with Editors and Managers, Chikuni (Zambia)

¹⁶⁷ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

¹⁶⁸ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

¹⁶⁹ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

¹⁷⁰ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

¹⁷¹ <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2024/02/14/zicta-warns-against-fake-news/>

¹⁷² Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

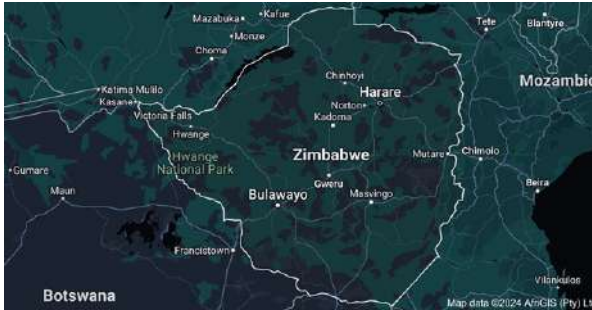
¹⁷³ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

¹⁷⁴ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers, The Zambian Business Times (Zambia)

¹⁷⁵ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zambia)

On lessons learned from navigating through the Covid 19 pandemic, the media houses said that they had learnt to be adaptive, innovative and be open to new ways to survive. Most of them gravitated towards embracing digital transformation, being dynamic and ready to make hard decisions.

4.6 Zimbabwe: Seeking media value chains in an economic jungle



Map of Zimbabwe, Source: AfriGIS

Media Environment

NAME	ESTABLISHED	TYPE	OWNERSHIP
ZBCTV	1980	Television	Public
AMH	1997	Print	Private
Midlands Observer	1954	Print	Community
VeMuganga FM	2021	Radio	Community
Newshawks	2020	Online	Private
ZIFM	2012	Radio	Private

The six media houses surveyed in Zimbabwe

Data was gathered from 6 media houses from Zimbabwe as above. The respondents noted that the Covid 19 pandemic has had significant effects on the media landscape in Zimbabwe¹⁷⁶. Like many countries, Zimbabwe implemented various measures to contain the spread of Covid 19, including lockdowns and restrictions on movement. These measures disrupted media operations, leading to challenges in gathering news, conducting interviews, and producing content¹⁷⁷. However, the media was exempt from the restrictions in movement but the challenges were mainly centered on sourcing. Media outlets had to adapt to remote work arrangements and find innovative ways to continue reporting while adhering to health and safety protocols.

Viability Issues

The majority of Zimbabweans earn an average of less than USD 70 per month¹⁷⁸. As a result of the pandemic, the purchasing power of the media’s target market declined whilst corporates also sacrificed their advertising budgets which forced most media platforms to downsize operating at 50% capacity in some instances¹⁷⁹. Newspaper copy was trimmed from 32 pages to 16

¹⁷⁶ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

¹⁷⁷ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

¹⁷⁸ According to ZIMSTAT (2023) study on the National Labour Force

¹⁷⁹ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

pages. As a cost cutting measure, they had to review their distribution routes by focusing on convenient locations¹⁸⁰.

The pandemic added to Zimbabwe's economic turmoil, exacerbating the financial constraints already faced by media organizations. Declining advertising revenues, reduced circulation of print publications, and limited access to resources affected the sustainability of media outlets¹⁸¹. Some media organizations had to downsize their operations, reduce staff, or suspend operations temporarily. Public owned Zimbabwe Newspapers (Zimpapers), Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) retrenched in 2022 staff citing depressed revenues¹⁸². Privately owned publisher Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) staff placed a notice of incapacitation due to depressed wages early in 2023, reflecting challenges in viability¹⁸³. Community radio stations faced funding challenges as they commenced operations at the peak of the pandemic.

VeMuganga experienced a similar challenge of depressed revenues¹⁸⁴. At the time of compiling this research VeMuganga Community Radio noted that some community radio stations had a limited transmission radius of 10Km instead of the 40km radius they applied for which will see the stations fully execute their licensed mandate. Community radio stations rely on volunteers who are most likely to be demotivated by non payment¹⁸⁵. The station did not have adequate basic broadcasting equipment which includes recorders and cameras.

Legal Framework, Safety and Security of Journalists

There are however some instances where there have been lapses in judgement on the part of the media houses, these issues are handled by the Zimbabwe Media Commission or the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe already faced press freedom challenges before the pandemic, and the situation was further complicated by Covid19. Some journalists faced restrictions, intimidation, or harassment when reporting on the government's response to the pandemic. The enforcement of regulations related to misinformation also raised concerns about potential limitations on freedom of expression and the media.

Gender and Media

The survey showed that there is gender imbalance in the news room particularly in the assignment of leadership roles. This includes roles such as; editors-in-chief, CEOs, and board members. The lack of gender diversity at the top hinders the influence and decision-making power of women in shaping media organizations' strategies, policies, and content. There was a perception by one of the respondents that,

*'it is difficult to hire female investigative journalists because many feel the job is too difficult and they turn down most of the offers'*¹⁸⁶.

This presents an urgent need to research the underlying factors that force women to shy away from certain news reporting beats and to capacitate them to fully apply themselves. Zimbabwean newsrooms have been recorded as hostile to women through sexual harassment which was prominent in 2023¹⁸⁷. This was also attributed to be a factor driving women away from mainstream journalism to other communication disciplines such as Public Relations¹⁸⁸.

Emerging Dilemmas

Before Covid 19 hit most media platforms said they were operating smoothly but the pandemic left the media poorly resourced as most revenue streams dried up, whilst operating expenses doubled and the cost of printing resources tripled since they had

¹⁸⁰ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

¹⁸¹ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

¹⁸² <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/zbc-management-insensitive-greedy/?pr=181138&lang=en>

¹⁸³ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers, AMH (Zimbabwe)

¹⁸⁴ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers, VeMuganga CR (Zimbabwe)

¹⁸⁵ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers, VeMuganga CR (Zimbabwe)

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Editor, Zimbabwe

¹⁸⁷ <https://zimfact.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ZIMFACT-BULLETIN-7-3.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

to be imported¹⁸⁹. Travel restrictions made it difficult to cover the rural communities.

The Covid 19 pandemic brought about an “infodemic” – an overwhelming amount of information, including misinformation and disinformation¹⁹⁰. Zimbabwe was not immune to this phenomenon, with false claims, rumors, and conspiracy theories circulating on social media and other platforms. Media outlets faced the challenge of combating misinformation and disseminating accurate, reliable information to the public¹⁹¹.

The pandemic witnessed a rise in citizen journalism and the use of social media platforms to share information. Zimbabweans turned to social media to discuss and share news about Covid 19, raising awareness, and expressing their concerns. However, the spread of misinformation on these platforms also posed challenges, necessitating media literacy efforts to help citizens navigate the information landscape effectively.

Solutions to Viability Issues

The government through the SI 120 of 2023 allowed a maximum of four minutes of advertising per hour on community radio, specifically for businesses operating within the local community¹⁹². This change aims to support local businesses and promote economic growth at the community level. However as highlighted by VeMuganga, the revenue generated is not enough. The pandemic accelerated the shift to digital platforms, and media houses should continue to embrace digital transformation. This includes expanding their online presence, optimizing their websites and mobile apps, and investing in digital advertising technologies.

The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of Zimbabwe’s media landscape. With physical distancing measures in place, online platforms became crucial for news consumption and engagement. Online platforms such as Newshawks launched in 2020, were thriving on the back of providing public interest journalism such as exposing corruption and fostering public accountability and good governance¹⁹³. Media outlets expanded their digital presence, focusing on online news platforms, social media, and streaming services. This shift highlighted the importance of digital skills and infrastructure, with media organizations investing in digital technologies such as applications to reach their audiences.

The focus on Covid-19 often led to a reduced coverage of other important issues in Zimbabwe. Media outlets dedicated significant resources to reporting on the pandemic, which sometimes resulted in less coverage of other topics such as politics, social issues, and the economy. This imbalance highlighted the need for maintaining a diverse and comprehensive news agenda.

To avert the challenges mentioned above local media platforms have embraced the innovative appeal of E-papers as a distribution model to address the limitation posed by the target audience’s limited mobility and diminishing purchasing power¹⁹⁴. Zimpapers also adopted a courier service to add to revenue streams as it has a wider distribution network for its newspapers. The interviewees also revealed that print media houses also partnered in distribution of newspapers to lower transport costs. AMH platforms have upgraded their websites by activating pay-wall plug-ins which have helped them to monetize premium content. Alpha Media Holdings has been experimenting with this innovation with varied success¹⁹⁵.

The gazettement of Statutory Instrument 120 of 2023 which removed advertising restrictions for community and campus radio stations which opened up opportunities for revenue generation¹⁹⁶. The onus is now on the broadcasters to strengthen their marketing and business strategies to keep their platforms viable. Commercial radio station ZIFM was utilising the AB Communication 360 Advertising Combo, to attract advertisers with wide ranging publicity packages which include its sister stations Hevo FM, 98.4FM and e-paper, Business Times. It was notable that Business Times, launched in 2018, had actually

189 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

190 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

191 Field Interviews with Editors and Managers (Zimbabwe)

192 [https://www.jsc.org.zw/upload/Gazette/SI%20120%20of%202023%20Broadcasting%20Services%20\(Community%20and%20Campus%20Radio%20nom.pdf](https://www.jsc.org.zw/upload/Gazette/SI%20120%20of%202023%20Broadcasting%20Services%20(Community%20and%20Campus%20Radio%20nom.pdf)

193 Interview with Senior Manager, Newshawks

194 <https://www.newsday.co.zw/technology/article/200015639/amh-epaper-free-access-point>

195 Interview with Editor, AMH

196 Interview with Editor, VeMuganga CR (Zimbabwe)

transformed into a fully e-paper, post the Covid-19 pandemic.

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5.0 Trends in media viability

The findings from the previous chapter revealed that there are challenges to the media viability and sustainability. This section captures and concludes the major issues arising from the findings and establishes trends in media viability across the SADC region.



The major issues identified include money, markets, machinery and human capital

A. Presence of a supportive economic and business environment

The researchers noted a trend of concentrated ownership in print and broadcast media, while online and community media were relatively free from ownership pressures. Concentrated ownership often occurred in blocks influenced by potential party affiliation, ethnicity, military involvement, and similar donor funding. There was diversity in terms of media languages, with a concentration on English in all countries, followed by two or three prominent vernacular languages. However, community media served a dual market with English (print) and vernacular (broadcast) content. Notably, there was a tendency to commercialize media content, which contributed to the use of English.

In 28 out of 36 responses, the managers noted that audience ratings were not adequately available or updated in their countries in the past year. As a result, they relied on estimates or self-promotion to attract advertisers and revenue sources. The lack of reliable audience data could pose challenges for media planning and decision-making processes.

In all countries, the lack of funding lines and external sources posed a threat to viability. Non-state media outlets relied on donor funding, which could lead to donor-driven journalism, while community media lacked access to credit lines. Currency instability was also cited as a challenge in countries like Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi.

B. Structure and scope of the media economy

The media economy varied across the countries, showing indications of a diverse range of media platforms or sectors. However, plurality did not necessarily translate to diversity. A recurring issue in all states was the influence of governments in the sector, both as players and referees, creating inequality. State-led and co-regulatory media regulatory frameworks were not conducive to growth in some states. The media market, audience, and advertisers were weak, with newspapers averaging a print run of only 5,000 copies

per day in most nations, while the pre-COVID average was around 40,000 copies. Media houses faced challenges in monetizing online content, although commendable efforts were made towards the adoption of e-paper solutions

The researchers noted the trend of concentrated ownership across print and broadcast while online nan community were free for the ownership pressures. concentrated ownership was in blocks of political party affiliation ethnicity, military involvement, business interest and similar donor funding. there was diversity in terms of media languages. with a concentration on English in all the countries followed by two or three prominent vernacular languages. community media however served a dual English (print) and vernacular (broadcast) market. however notable was the tendency to commercialize media content hence the use of English. the managers in 28 of the 36 responses noted that audience ratings were not adequately available or updated i their countries in the past year, hence they relied on estimates or 'hyping own self'

C.The media labour market

In the majority of countries, the implication of COVID-19 was a significant exodus of media workers to Britain and other destinations. Other attractive industries, such as the corporate sector and communications/public relations, were cited as contributing factors as media workers averaged USD100 in salaries. As a result, newsrooms had to reduce their staff by more than 50% due to economic constraints. Media training also suffered limitations due to COVID-19, and young journalists lacked the experience offered by their more seasoned counterparts, despite being the primary content producers.

The wages paid to journalists in the discussed countries were below minimum standards, resulting in many journalists living in poverty. Prior to COVID-19, print media employed more journalists, but this was reduced due to lack of funding and the increased digitization of media, which led to a surge in online audiences and citizen journalism. The researchers found that there was diversity in terms of skill sets among media workers, including media, journalism, marketing, business administration, and management. However, this diversity was more prevalent in international media, public-owned media, print, and broadcasting. In contrast, community media often relied on qualified individuals in leadership positions, while student interns, volunteers, and citizen journalists made up the core staff, reflecting the vulnerabilities of community media. Online media typically employed young interns and graduates with skills in video editing, design, and website management, although they often received limited or no remuneration for their work.

D.The financial health of media operations, including advertising

Advertising revenues declined by 60% across the 6 states on average. Publicly owned broadcasters relied on licensing fees for insulation, but inadequate and erratic funding from the treasury pushed them to seek alternative funding in the declining advertiser market. Publicly owned print media, on the other hand, benefited from state funding and had better sales revenue compared to privately owned and community newspapers. For instance, in Botswana, the public-owned Daily News is distributed for free with substantial government support to sustain its operations. In other countries there is a difference, with Daily Times in Malawi, enjoying a larger market share which generates significant revenue

Online media outlets were increasingly leaning towards public funding to support their work, often through the concept of supporting independent journalism. They implemented "click-to-pay" buttons on their websites, allowing audiences to donate any amount they preferred. However, four out of six online managers highlighted limitations due to the lack of properly contextualized payment platforms, reduced audience incomes, and a general lack of understanding of online payment platforms to sustain journalism.

The researchers also observed that media across all countries were becoming vulnerably dependent on a small core group of regular advertisers from sectors such as telecommunications, financial services, fast food, and health insurance. Additionally, some community media outlets sought the route of memberships to secure a committed funding base, although this approach did not immediately translate into financial viability.

In four of the countries, there was no independent body overseeing government involvement in the media sector. The exception was Zimbabwe and Zambia, where "independent" media commissions were established to disburse funds to the media, although

the actual implementation of these funds was yet to materialize.

E. Capital environment for media operations

Media houses in the discussed countries did not have easy access to capital markets. Lending from banks was limited, and when available, it often came with high-interest rates and short-term repayment terms. In some countries like Namibia and Lesotho, access to capital was influenced by political connections, which goes against the principles of a free media. Non-commercial media outlets heavily relied on funding from development partners to sustain their operations. This reliance on external funding sources can potentially impact the independence and autonomy of media organizations. Online startups were struggling to purchase reliable internet and data plans while funding for commencing operations was not easily available as they do not possess collateral.

F. Organisational structures and resources support financial and market sustainability

Most organisations had business plans, most of which were developed from inception, and 20 out of 36 media houses had documented their strategies post-COVID-19. However, many media houses were operating in a very uncertain environment, living from hand to mouth without a stable financial situation. A notable trend was the presence of personnel dedicated to revenue generation in public and private broadcasters, with 4 out of 6 public broadcasters and all 6 private broadcasters having dedicated personnel for this purpose. In community media, however, the station manager usually doubled up as the fundraising and advertising partnership representative in 5 out of 6 community media outlets, indicating a lack of dedicated resources for revenue generation.

In privately owned print and online media, there was a similar organizational structure aimed at improving revenue through different approaches. The circulation department became part of marketing and sales, while online media operated as sole traders or “one-man bands,” placing more pressure on a single figurehead to generate revenue.

Regarding currencies, 5 out of the 6 countries used domestic currencies, while Zimbabwe predominantly used non-convertible state dollars. Interestingly, in Zimbabwe, post-COVID-19, media houses charged in USD rate cards, but negotiations were common, with 33 out of 36 media outlets stating that they usually had to settle for the client’s preferred amount/charge.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, print media adapted by establishing new business units such as digital armlets and developing digital strategies to penetrate and secure market share. Print media also ventured into live streaming and other over-the-top revenue generation, including in-house advertising agencies. Broadcasters focused on outside broadcasting, content creation, and partnering with local content producers to reduce costs associated with securing foreign content. Community media also began setting up structures, albeit at a slower pace and lower level. Publicly owned print media and broadcasters had the advantage of larger economies of scale and government support, while private owners struggled to secure affordable working capital. Governments in the six states did not provide relief funds to media in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community media suffered from depleted funding within their communities. In contrast, progressive legislation in countries like Namibia allowed community broadcasters to seek funding from diverse sources. However, newly licensed stations in Zimbabwe, delayed by COVID-19, are not permitted to seek external funding. Across all six countries, there was a common theme of applying the resource-based view model to maximize available internal resources and structures. For instance, due to ownership trends, vertical and horizontal concentration were important resources, enabling media houses with print and broadcast units to leverage the strengths and resources of each other. This trend was observed in Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Zambia, and even Zimbabwe.

G. Contribution of media to the national economy

A common trend across all the 6 countries was that the media was not contributing to national economy. Media houses were not making significant contributions to the national economy in a structured manner. Managers highlighted that governments did not prioritize policies for media growth or the creation of value chains. As a result, the media sector operated just like any other business, without specific efforts to integrate them into the broader economy. Although there were some initial movements in

Zambia, they did not materialize into concrete actions. Consequently, there was no specific budgetary support for the media industry, nor a platform to quantify the sector's contribution, apart from acknowledging the taxes paid by newsrooms.

6.0 Recommendations

Recommendations to Improve Viability of Media Houses in Southern Africa:

Media Houses

- Diversify revenue streams by exploring alternative funding models such as subscriptions, memberships, and crowdfunding.
- Embrace digital transformation and invest in online platforms to reach wider audiences and generate additional revenue through digital advertising and sponsored content.
- Foster collaboration and partnerships with other media houses to share resources, reduce costs, and enhance content distribution.
- Prioritize audience engagement and tailor content to meet their evolving needs and preferences

Media Owners

- Ensure editorial independence and support investigative journalism to maintain public trust and credibility.
- Invest in quality journalism by providing adequate resources, training, and professional development opportunities for journalists.
- Foster a culture of innovation and adaptability within media organizations to respond to changing market dynamics.

Advertisers

- Recognize the importance of independent media and support diverse media outlets through advertising investments.
- Encourage responsible advertising practices that promote ethical standards and avoid funding platforms that disseminate false or harmful information.

Governments

- Enact and enforce legislation that promotes media freedom, protects journalists, and ensures a conducive environment for independent journalism to thrive.
- Provide financial support and incentives to media organizations, especially those operating in underserved areas or focusing on public interest journalism.
- Establish transparent and accountable mechanisms for the allocation of government advertising, ensuring fair distribution across media outlets.

SADC

- Foster regional collaboration and knowledge sharing among media organizations to address common challenges and promote best practices.
- Develop regional policies and initiatives that support media viability and freedom of expression.
- Facilitate cross-border media initiatives and partnerships to enhance regional media coverage and promote cultural exchange.
- Media Support Organizations
- Provide financial and technical support to media organizations, particularly smaller and

independent outlets, to improve their viability and sustainability.

- Offer training programs and capacity-building initiatives to enhance media professionalism, digital skills, and business management capabilities.

Citizens (as Media Audiences)

- Support independent and credible media outlets by consuming their content, subscribing, and sharing reliable information.
- Engage in media literacy programs to develop critical thinking skills and discern trustworthy sources of news.
- Advocate for press freedom and the importance of a vibrant and independent media sector in democratic societies.

Media Training Institutions

- Update curricula to include digital journalism skills, data journalism, and entrepreneurial journalism to prepare students for the evolving media landscape.
- Foster industry-academic partnerships to provide students with practical experience and exposure to real-world media challenges.

Regional Development Funding Institutions

- Allocate resources to support media development projects and initiatives that promote media viability, innovation, and sustainability in the region.
- Provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to media organizations and initiatives that focus on public interest journalism and serve marginalized communities.

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ANNEXURE 1 - In Country Researchers

Lesotho



Billy Ntaote is a dedicated journalist, founder of the MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism, and a prominent figure in Lesotho's media landscape. With a strong commitment to exposing corruption, holding power accountable, and promoting human rights, he established the MNN Centre as a non-profit independent journalism project. Previously, Ntaote worked as a Senior Political Reporter for Africa Media Holdings, gaining recognition for his exceptional reporting during the Lesotho general elections in 2012 and 2015. Throughout his career, he has pursued professional development opportunities, including a fellowship with the amaBhungane, reporting for the Mail and Guardian on stories in Lesotho, eSwatini, and South Africa. As a Mandela Washington Fellow, he participated in

the United States Department of State's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) program. Billy Ntaote's passion for investigative journalism, commitment to ethical reporting, and dedication to promoting transparency and accountability make him a respected figure in Lesotho's media landscape.

Zimbabwe



Ruvimbo Muskwe is a dedicated media researcher who is passionately committed to human rights, media professionalism, and advocating for the equal representation of women in all areas. She has gained valuable experience during her significant tenure at Transparency International Zimbabwe, where she served as a Programmes Assistant in the Research and Advocacy department. Ruvimbo has a solid educational background, holding a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Zimbabwe and a Journalism diploma from Harare Polytechnic. She is continuously expanding her knowledge by pursuing studies in Monitoring and Evaluation at Lupane State University. Driven by a strong belief in the transformative power of transparent and ethical journalism, Ruvimbo strives to uphold the principles of democracy and good governance. Her advocacy serves as a catalyst for change, emphasizing the

importance of integrity in media and the empowerment of women to build a fair and inclusive society.

Botswana



Yvonne Mooka is an acclaimed journalist from Botswana, currently working as a correspondent for The BBC Africa, The New York Times, and Reporters Without Borders, representing Botswana. Previously, she held positions at The Midweek Sun and The Botswana Guardian newspapers, where she served as a senior reporter and Special Projects coordinator between 2010 and 2020. During her tenure, Mooka displayed a unique ability to blend her journalism work with human rights advocacy. Her impactful activism and advocacy journalism led to significant achievements, including government policy reviews, Botswana's adherence to the SADC Gender Protocol Mooka's dedication to gender parity and women's empowerment extends beyond her journalistic endeavors. She served as a

national mentor for female journalism students at Limkokwing University as part of WAN-IFRA/Women In News (WIN). She is also involved in public speaking, media advising, consulting, and research, collaborating with various local and international organizations.

Malawi



Arnold Chachacha Munthali is a writer and journalist with about 18 years' experience working in, and with, the media in Malawi. He has previously worked as Deputy Editor of the investigative newspaper, the *'Weekend Nation'* as well as Editor of The Sunday Times and The Weekend Times. He holds an MA in Journalism and Mass Communication India's Amity University and a Bachelor of Arts (Humanities) degree from the University of Malawi. His professional interests lie in data journalism, new media and the discursive impact of fake news on the media.

Namibia



Prof. Admire Mare is an Associate Professor and Head of Department: Communication and Media Studies at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. His research interests include analyzing the intersection between technology and society, digital journalism, social media and politics, media and democracy, political communication, digital disinformation campaigns, digital surveillance, digital diplomacy, platformization of news work, media and conflict, artificial intelligence, and media start-ups and newsroom innovations. He currently leads the international research project 'Social Media, Misinformation and Elections in Kenya and Zimbabwe' (SoMeKeZi) funded by the Social Science Research Council (2019-2023). He is the co-author of 'Participatory Journalism in Africa Digital News Engagement and User

Agency in the South' (London: Routledge, 2021 with Hayes Mawindi Mabweazara). He is the co-author of 'Digital Surveillance in Southern Africa: Policies, Politics and Practices' (Cham: Springer, 2022 with Allen Munoriyarwa)

Zambia



Lailah Lungu is an experienced Journalist and Marketer with excellent working knowledge and first hand-experience in advertising, business campaigns and public relations, corporate events management. She has an advanced Diploma in Journalism and Public Relations and worked in the media for over 5 years, she later acquired a Bachelors and a Master's Degree in Business Administration. A Marketer and Communications Specialist by profession with post qualifying experience in Business Development, Corporate Relationship Management and Stakeholder Engagement strategy, and Marketing strategy development and implementation with remarkable high proven performance record in FMCG and Exhibitions.

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