



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

FACULTY OF COMPUTING AND INFORMATICS

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATICS, JOURNALISM AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PRINT
MEDIA IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY OF *THE NAMIBIAN*, *CONFIDENTE* AND *NEW ERA***

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER: JOURNALISM
AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGY DEGREE AT THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY

BY

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DECLARATION

I, **Hilary Mare**, declare that the work in this study (Investigating the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of the print media in Namibia: A case study of *The Namibian*, *Confidente* and *New Era*) is my own work and findings, except where it has been stated. As far as I know, there is no other study that is similar to this one and all references have been reported to the best of my ability. I further declare that this work, or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family who have offered me nothing short of support from the beginning of this course until the very end of it. The study is also dedicated to my brother and my late sister, Rosemary Mare, both of whom remain central to my life and are sources of inspiration to me.

ABSTRACT

Using case studies of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers, this study set out to investigate the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of Namibian newspapers, measures being employed by these newspapers to respond to these influences, and whether these measures are helping the three newspapers sustain their operations. To do this, the study draws on the theory of structuration and the concept of media sustainability. Informed by the interpretivist paradigm, this study applied a qualitative methodology and purposefully sampled 21 participants which included an editor, marketing manager and distribution manager, as well four journalists from each of the three newspapers. In-depth interviews were conducted with the participants by the researcher. The study found that Covid-19 has adversely impacted the operations of the newspapers studied, with declining advertising, copy sales, job losses and reconfiguration of news work in both production and distribution. This has prompted the newspapers to respond by adopting a myriad of measures which include retrenchments, salary cuts, reduced employee benefits, salary payment date changes, and reducing both print runs and the number of pages. They have also resorted to expanding their operational scope by bidding for printing jobs, as well as to write Annual Reports for corporates. Apart from attempting to deepen stories to escape online competition, newspapers are also now using digital platforms to generate interest for their print editions by sharing snippets of articles on social media prior to publication of fuller articles in the print edition. Further, the study also observed that the newspapers have resorted to giving clients advertising discounts in order to keep them engaged with their print editions. All the three newspapers have developed packages that include digital platforms to further lure clients amid Covid-19. Lastly, the study revealed that journalists are responding to slimmer staff complements, induced by Covid-19, through up-skilling. While the acknowledgement that newspapers will cease to exist at one point is unanimous, the study notes that this can be either delayed or derailed by Namibian newspapers in changing the way stories are told, deepening coverage of community stories and seeking cost-cutting interventions from the government, among others. In summation, the study concludes that despite the pressures presented by Covid-19 in Namibia, the printed newspaper remains resilient, owing to specific market dynamics unique to Namibia.

Keywords: Sustainability, Covid-19, implications, newspapers, response, resilience

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC - Audit Bureau of Circulations

IPPR - Institute for Public Policy Research

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

MICT - Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

NUST - Namibia University of Science and Technology

PPE - Personal Protective Equipment

SANEF - South African National Editors' Forum

UNAM - University of Namibia

USA - United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study and discusses key elements such as the statement of the problem, the research questions, objectives, significance, and the limitations and delimitations, of the study. The chapter also defines the key terms of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

The devastating effects of Covid-19 have been felt across the globe, causing severe socio-economic changes that have adversely affected various industries with the media fraternity not having been spared (Camus, 2020). Its onslaught, as Casero-Ripollés (2020) puts it, has been transformational to journalism, changing not only the way it has been practised, but also its business plan. What is to be acknowledged, is that the scourge of Covid-19 came at a time when the media industry, print media in particular, has been grappling for survival owing to other external forces, chief among them, the influx of digital media technologies (Chikova, 2016). As Barkan (2017) argues, since the early 2000s, at least 50% of the jobs in America's news industry have vanished, owing to the increasing use of digital media technologies in the provision and consumption of news. In affirmation, Otieno (2009) also contends that digital media technologies have disrupted the print media industry, in particular the newspaper sector, to the extent that media practitioners, namely journalists and media managers, are now required to adapt their processes for storytelling, and rethink business strategies, if they are to survive and remain viable in the publication of news. These digital media technologies are explained by Amobi (2011) as interactive digital mediums, computerised or networked information and communication technologies, such as the internet, which now run parallel to traditional media such as print and television.

While these digital media technologies have been adopted on a global scale, activities within the Namibian newspaper space suggest that the industry has also been reeling from the effects of these technologies and has started to formulate measures that can help insulate it against unforeseen operational changes (Breitenbach, 2018).

Closer home, data from South Africa's Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) as cited by Breitenbach (2018), reveals that daily newspaper circulation fell from 1 332 320 in the first quarter of 2016 to 1 211 887 in the first quarter of 2017. Weekend papers fared worse, shedding around 190 000 copies. This trend has continued into 2018, 2019 and 2020, where print runs have continued to decline as newspapers adjust to industry changes and declining revenue (Posetti, Bell and Brown, 2020). The bureau, which also audits Namibian newspapers, highlights migration to digital platforms by print newspapers as a contributor to this decline (Breitenbach, 2018). The onslaught on traditional print media by digital media has not left out Namibian newspapers, as they are also feeling the effects of digital media - both on their readership figures and advertising revenues, subsequently affecting their operations (Breitenbach, 2018). Remmert (2019) affirms this, noting that although there are other factors affecting Namibia's local media houses, the industry is indeed beginning to feel the effects of digital disruption.

For instance, Kahuirika and Ngutjinazo (2019) reveal that 40 journalists in the Namibian newspaper sector have lost their jobs since 2016 as local media houses restructured in the face of dwindling advertising revenue and the onslaught from the internet. Also, Titus (2019), cited in Kahuirika and Ngutjinazo (2019), argues that digital media has significantly disrupted and eroded long-established sources of income for media houses in Namibia. This is because audiences now get most of their information online for free, making the internet even more attractive (Kahuirika & Ngutjinazo, 2019).

While the newspaper industry has been in freefall, Covid-19 has further exacerbated the rapid decline of the newspaper industry, painting a gloomy picture of its future (Pago, 2020). Radcliffe (2020) notes that since the outbreak of the pandemic, 36 000 journalists in the USA were laid off in the first six months of the pandemic, or had taken a pay cut, or at the very least, were furloughed. At the same time, Mayhew and Turvill (2020) opine that over 200 newsrooms have been forced by Covid-19 to put in place measures, including cutting print runs and staff, to cope with the financial implications of Covid-19.

To broaden this discourse, a study by Piechota (2020) highlights that Covid-19 has accelerated the long-standing financial burdens that the newspaper industry has been grappling with for many years. Using a statistical survey, his study found that between 2008

and 2018, revenue for print media fell by 62% as US\$24 million migrated to digital media platforms. Krause, Freiling, Beets & Brossard (2020) add in analysing that this hefty decline has made Covid-19 an unbearable reality within the newspaper industry which carried with it, the capacity to shut the industry as most newspapers are unable to cope with its ravaging effects.

In their own study which looked closely at Sub-Saharan Africa, Posetti, Bell and Brown (2020) highlight that most of their respondents had knowledge of drastic revenue losses in the Covid-19 period where in some cases, revenue has plummeted by as much as 75 percent owing to the grave implications of Covid-19. This suggests an industry in further free fall which critically faces sustainability challenges.

A closer look at the Southern African region reveals how Covid-19 has brought about serious implications in the print media industry, which has suffered considerably in its ability to operate. Ifex (2020) notes that Associated Media Publishing (AMP) in South Africa which has been operational for 38 years ceased to publish its magazines which include popular magazines, *Cosmopolitan*, *House & Leisure* and *Women on Wheels*. In Zimbabwe, Covid-19 forced Alpha Media Holdings (AMH), which publishes *NewsDay*, *The Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Standard*, to stop printing hard copies and resort to an e-paper only (Ifex, 2020). Ifex (2020) also highlights that the *Botswana Gazette* which had been in circulation for more than 36 years also discontinued its print edition.

While other scholars document drastic revenue losses at newspapers in the region owing to Covid-19, the Namibian situation has been telling. The biggest daily newspaper, *The Namibian* has been forced by the pandemic to lay off 50% of its staff after Covid-19 cut through reserves and revenue, forcing the newspaper to live on overdrafts (Ngatjiheue, 2020). Other newspapers such as the *Windhoek Observer* and *Southern Times* ceased their print editions and resorted to Whatsapp as a distribution medium, a trend that has seemingly grown in the entire region owing to Covid-19 (Posetti, Bell and Brown, 2020). Namibia Media Holdings, which publishes the *Namibian Sun*, *Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Republikein* dailies resorted to cutting employee salaries by 20% and freezing pension fund contributions to cope with Covid-19 implications (Shikongo, 2020).

Withstanding some of the key challenges that have been caused by Covid-19, some scholars are of the belief that sooner or later, newspapers will throw in the towel and cease to exist, at least in the format that they are known today (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). In view of this impending adverse scenario, this study will seek to investigate the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of the print media in Namibia using case studies of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the past few years, the newspaper industry has experienced strain due to the influx of digital media technologies and subsequently, decline in advertising revenue (Breitenbach, 2018). Having been a key tool for the dissemination of information and propelling national development, Kahuirika & Ngutjinazo (2019) opine that Namibia's newspaper sector has been in free fall over the last five years where over 40 journalists have lost their jobs and numerous publications having either shut down or moved online. Essentially, the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has now been regarded by some scholars as the final nail in the coffin of an already ailing newspaper sector as it has already been ravaged by digital media technologies and other issues. Ntibinyane (2020) highlights that in order to sustain post-Covid-19 journalism, African media houses should move towards online publishing and dump the print media which has fast become unsustainable. Covid-19 being a new pandemic that has confronted operations of newspapers in Namibia, no studies in Namibia have been done as to how print media specifically are adapting to its implications to remain sustainable which created a knowledge gap and an opportunity for this study. Against this backdrop, therefore, this study investigates the implications of Covid-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia closely looking at the case of *The Namibian*, *Confidente* and *New Era*.

1.3 Research questions

Given the scenario outlined above, the main question that this study sought to answer is what are the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of the print media in Namibia? In order to understand these implications, the following sub-questions were asked.

1. How has Covid-19 affected the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers in Namibia?

2. What measures have been put in place by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers, to respond to the implications of Covid-19, on their sustainability?
3. In what ways have these measures helped the three newspapers to sustain their operations amid Covid-19?

1.4 Research objectives

1. To investigate how Covid-19 has affected the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers in Namibia.
2. To explore the measures (if any) that have been put in place by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers to respond to the implications of Covid-19 on their sustainability.
3. To investigate how the strategies adopted by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* enable the three newspapers to sustain their operations amid Covid-19.

1.5. An overview of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic was first recorded in Namibia with two cases reported on March 13, 2020 (WHO, 2020). Subsequently, a state of emergency was declared a week later which was the beginning of the pandemic's negative impact on all human activity including the operations of Namibia's entire media fraternity. Just like other Southern African states, Namibia enforced various measures in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus, and these included lockdowns on regions and sometimes the whole country, self-quarantine, movement restrictions, social distancing and compulsory personal protective equipment (PPE) protocols (SADC, 2020). In Namibia, the intensity of these measures was implemented in four stages from a full lockdown in stage one, with the intensity gradually decreased from stage two to stage four. These measures limited the operational abilities of newspapers leading to advertising revenue declines as advertisers themselves were adversely impacted, newspapers sales declined as lockdown disallowed street sales, among other non-essential movement, and also reduced opportunities to source news by media practitioners. Owing to this Olsen, Pickard, and Westlund (2020) that Covid-19 has vehemently disrupted news work

at various levels, and that the business models currently being used by the media are arguably facing an “existential crisis” that has been induced by the ravaging implications of Covid-19 (Olsen, Pickard, and Westlund, 2020: 673).

1.6 Significance of the study

This study informs media managers’ efforts in devising with strategies to cope with Covid-19 for the sustainability of their media organisations. This extends to reviewing policies and enacting reforms that help them deal with the various influences of Covid-19, be they positive or negative. While there are studies that have focused on the impact of Covid-19 on the newspaper industry, this study contributes to literature on the dynamics around the intersection between newspapers and changes that have been brought about by Covid-19. In particular, it looks at the strategies used by traditional media such as newspapers to adapt to the changes spawned by Covid-19.

Furthermore, educational institutions such as NUST and UNAM may possibly use this study in their curriculum development initiatives as they consider the effects of Covid-19 on media, and the responses by the newspaper industry to these effects. It gives academic institutions offering journalism courses the opportunity to incorporate contemporary realities in their course outlines which will equip graduate journalists with better knowledge and skills to deal with issues concerning the influences of Covid-19 in a more effective way.

In addition, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), which is the government’s custodian of the media and digital media technology, can use the recommendations of this study to inform policymaking that speaks to a changing media landscape owing to transformations as a result of Covid-19.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

This study focuses on three national newspapers, *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*. All three are based in Windhoek. Thus, its findings may not be generalised to the entire Namibian media industry because Namibia has at least nine national newspapers. The study was limited to the period between 2019 and 2021 because this is when most print media houses experienced strain induced by Covid-19 (Shikongo, 2020). As Shikongo (2020) attests, this is the period during which the influence of Covid-19 was most felt with key

newspapers enacting drastic measures that have changed the way they operate, while others have been forced cease printing due to Covid-19.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The findings of the study are not generalisable as they focus on only two daily newspapers, *The Namibian* and *New Era*, and one weekly newspaper, *Confidente*. This sample is not fully representative of the Namibian print media industry. Furthermore, because of the competition between newspapers, it is possible that some information may have been kept from the researcher by management or editors to maintain their competitiveness. This may have limited the researcher's assessment of the performance and response of the newspapers in the study to the scourge of Covid-19. While a qualitative research methodology was employed, time constraints limited the number of in-depth interviews with the study's respondents, which subsequently limited the depth of this research. Equally, this study could have triangulated findings with another supplementary method of observation, however, this was not possible for two key reasons. Firstly, the Covid-19 regulations at the time of the study did not permit this method of study while newsrooms also encouraged decongestion and working from home. Secondly, the researcher, as a fully employed individual could not dedicate time to observe all the three newsrooms consistently over time, had this been possible. Despite this method not having been employed however, one on one in-depth interview were sufficient for this study because the key informants provided data from their practical experiences as the active players in Namibia's print media.

1.9 Definition of key terms

Covid-19: This refers to an acute respiratory illness in humans caused by the novel coronavirus, capable of producing severe symptoms and in some cases death, especially in older people and those with underlying health conditions (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Implications: This refers to the outcome or conclusion that can be derived from the relationship between two different elements even though it cannot be explicitly stated (Neese, 2016).

Print media: These are printed publications that can be issued daily or weekly and contain written information about current events grouped in different sections (Lynch & Peer, 2002).

Sustainability: This refers to the ability to keep something in operation and ensure its viability over a long period of time, while at the same time maintaining a certain rate or level (Azzam, 2014).

Media sustainability: The media's ability to remain economically viable to discharge its watchdog role independently and with adequate resources that are crucial for producing high-quality journalism that is independent and worthy of supporting developmental areas of government inclusive of human rights, market growth and a tradition of liberty, among others (Kluempers & Schneider, 2015).

1.10 Summary

Chapter one has introduced the background of the study; it stated the problem, research questions, the relevance or significance of the study, and its limitations. It therefore has provided an overview of the study covering the key elements of this study and the direction it seeks to take. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature and discusses the theories informing the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

The devastating effects of Covid-19, defined by World Health Organisation (2020) as an infectious respiratory disease, have had a significant impact on the lives of people across the world. This impact which has forced changes in the socio-economic status of many, has also been felt in the media, and print journalism in particular (Camus, 2020). In essence, this chapter reviews literature that has already been offered by various scholars who have attempted to understand Covid-19 as a new social reality that has had its presence felt on media operations. Notably, there is limited academic literature on the influences of Covid-19 on the print media in Namibia, a gap which this particular study addresses. This literature review thus, relies more on studies from the global north, and mostly online literature which provides insights into Covid-19 and its implications. With more focus on the global, regional and local implications of Covid-19 in the media and the newspaper sector in particular, this review will first explore how the newspaper industry has already been ailing owing to digital media technologies, before showcasing how Covid-19 has added sustainability pressures on newsrooms, including those in Namibia. Apart from the operational challenges presented by Covid-19 on newsrooms, this review will also look at the impact of Covid-19 on the journalists and assess whether it is the final nail in the print media's coffin, as other scholars have suggested. It will also examine how newspapers and journalists have attempted to deal with the grave implications of Covid-19. The chapter also unpacks the theoretical and conceptual framework informing the study namely, the structuration theory and the concept of media sustainability.

2.1. Print media sustainability

2.1.1. An already ailing print media

According to Chikova (2016), the rise and growth of alternative news providers such as radio and television over the past decades, brought about challenges to print newspapers yet, publishers have always adapted, persevered and found a way to survive. However, as he further explains, digital media is proving to be a far more challenging adversary to the

traditional newspaper model (Chikova, 2016). In affirmation, Otieno (2009) contends that digital media technology has disrupted the print media industry, in particular the newspaper sector, to an extent that media practitioners, namely journalists and media managers, are now required to adapt their processes for storytelling and rethink business strategies if they are to survive and remain viable in the publication of news. These digital media technologies are explained by Amobi (2011) as interactive digital mediums, computerised or networked information and communication technologies, such as the internet, which now run parallel to traditional media such as print and television. Data from South Africa's Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) which is cited by Breitenbach (2018), reveals that daily newspaper circulation fell from 1 332 320 in the first quarter of 2016 to 1 211 887 in the first quarter of 2017. Weekend papers fared worse, shedding around 190 000 copies. The bureau, which also audits Namibian newspapers, highlights migration to digital platforms by print newspapers as a contributor to this decline (Breitenbach, 2018). While these digital media technologies have been adopted on a global scale and subsequently shook up the rethinking of storytelling and business strategies within the newspaper industry as Lister (2016) acknowledges, activities within the Namibian newspaper space suggest that the industry is feeling the effects of these technologies and has started to formulate measures that can insulate it against unforeseen operational changes (Breitenbach, 2018).

In a study conducted by Remmert (2019) on the state of being among media houses in Windhoek, he identified digital media technology as a threat to the future existence of newspapers in Namibia. The study appreciated that digital media technologies, through the process of digitisation, are adversely affecting the Namibian print media landscape (Remmert, 2019). However, this was just a confirmation of growing challenges that have been well documented in the past. In the same study, he notes that there are visible effects of digital media on newspapers. For example, he points out that owing to substantial growth in the *Namibia Economist's* website readers, the newspaper discontinued publishing its print edition at the end of 2016 and moved its publication online, letting go of 12 journalists in the process. He also states that *The Villager* which was once a vibrant weekly newspaper with a wide readership and over 50 000 Facebook followers, soon followed by becoming an online only publication in October 2017. However, in this case, falling circulation and advertising sales prompted the move to go digital.

A senior lecturer in the Journalism department at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), Hugh Ellis who is cited by Remmert (2019) in the same report, also points to the influence of digital media technology and attributes the closure of *The Villager* and *The Namibia Economist's* print editions, at least in part, to the economic pressures arising from digitalisation. He states that for *The Economist* in particular, its content could be accessed through an online platform which meant that its readers were able to access this content and may have decided against buying or supporting the printed edition, leading to its closure (Remmert, 2019). Ellis, in this regard, points to the newspapers' overt reliance on a small, mostly urban, middle- and upper-class readership that would be more likely to access 'free' daily news content online from websites and via social media platforms (Remmert, 2019).

To elaborate this further on a global scale, the effects of digital media technology have been well documented. As Otieno (2009) argues, since the early 2000s at least 50% of the jobs in America's news industry have vanished owing to the rising use of digital media technologies in the provision and consumption of news. While some have observed that online news provision has created employment, it has not been enough to replace the lost newspaper jobs (Barkan, 2017). Research conducted by Sweney (2015) five years before Covid-19 reached our shores, reminded the print media industry how it was approaching an unclear future due to a rapid decline in appetite for printed newspapers as most readers were migrating to online news. This is further supported by Alterman (2008) whose study revealed that newspapers, particularly in America, have been gradually overtaken by other forms of media, taking with them not only their readers, but their primary sources of profit. The competitive advantage of digital media is that these platforms do not have certain expenses, such as print runs, to deal with while disposing their media actions (Mabweazara, 2010).

Furthermore, research performed by Drawbar (2009), found out that the internet's ability to allow users to search for various elements through its diverse search engines, has created new habits among readers. The study asserts that readers now have new habits which allow them to target particular writers or sources of information through targeted computer commands, making buying a newspaper less likely (Drawbar, 2009). This tallies with the

submissions made in a study conducted by Saur (2008), who outlined the power of digital media technology as one that is so vast that even the way information is shared amongst readers has changed over the years, and that publishers are beginning to explore new, rapid ways in which they share information, with real-time updates on various news issues. Due to the use of excessive speed, and the fact that readers do not have to wait to know about something that may interest them, they are resorting to online platforms and neglecting the print newspapers (Saur, 2008). In another view of how digital media technology has already battered the newspaper industry, Saur (2008), in his findings in the same study, noted that colour schemes and formats found online, make the online space a more attractive reality for the reader. He found that the dimensions of newspapers that are found online are now varied and allow organisations to present news in multiple ways that suit different readers. This, he acknowledges, is a very different format from the newspapers printed on paper and the bright screens are capable of displaying multiple colours and different designs for the presentation of information which makes them more lucrative (Saur, 2008).

What has been becoming clearer is that digital communication technology has been a potent force and for a while now, has been forcing industries to adapt to survive, or to sink in the old ways (Lister, 2016). This is exactly what the media industry, particularly the newspaper industry, has been enduring owing to technological advancement. This is a situation that has stretched their resources and made Covid-19 an unbearable reality to handle (Piechota, 2020). Mdlongwa (2009) described the influx of digital media technologies as the 'moment of truth', which prompted for proper analysis and solutions for the survival of newspapers. This assertion is echoed by Otieno (2009), who also acknowledges that digital media technologies have shaken up the newspaper industry such that even journalists are also being forced by these technologies to adapt to new ways of not only sourcing stories, but also the manner in which they choose to tell stories. A study by the Pew Research Centre (2012) revealed that the internet is not only becoming a dominant force in the print media industry, but is also taking over much of the traditional role of newspapers.

In the Namibian context and according to Namibia's veteran journalist, Gwen Lister, who is cited in an article by Thomas (2017), digital media has compelled newspapers to make changes if they are going to survive:

If one looks at the trends in the past few years, Europe and the US were affected negatively by a downturn in print far sooner than Africa's media... however in recent months, in Namibia for example, it appears as though the outlook is becoming more pessimistic and it looks like a 'survival of the fittest' type scenario is developing. (Thomas, 2017, p. 2)

Otieno (2009) shares similar sentiments that the print media industry, to an extent, has been required to adapt its processes for storytelling and rethinking business strategies if they are to remain competitive.

In the face of these trends, it goes without saying that before Covid-19 struck, newspapers were reeling from the onslaught of digital media technology and urgently needed to put in place adaptation mechanisms to survive the onslaught of digital media. With Covid-19 having arrived at arguably the worst time, compounding the sustainability challenges newspapers were already facing, it is how newspapers in Namibia work to remain sustainable amid the Covid-19 pandemic that is the subject of investigation, using case studies of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers.

2.1.2. Covid-19 and its devastating impact on newsrooms

As if the influx of digital media technology was not enough, Covid-19 arrived with more immediate destructive qualities to an already strained media industry. A study by Radcliffe (2020) carried out in the United States of America (USA) demonstrates how Covid-19 has ravaged newsrooms globally. He found that over 36 000 journalists in the USA had been laid off in the first six months of the pandemic, taken a huge pay cut or at the very least, furloughed. This was substantiated by a report by Kristen Hare, a reporter at the journalism institute Poynter who deduced that over 200 newsrooms were forced by Covid-19 to put in place measures including cutting print runs and staff to cope with the financial implications of Covid-19 (Mayhew & Turvill, 2020). Between March and August 2020, the advertising

crisis for journalism began to be mimicked as a flock of black swans as opposed to being a single black swan (Doctor, 2020). By mid-year, retrenchments had already been implemented at the Detroit Metro Times and its six sibling mastheads, with remaining staff told their pay would be cut (Flynn, 2020).

Elsewhere and as the scourge of Covid-19 began to be fully felt with shutdowns as containment measures, Park, Fisher and Lee (2020) highlight that, more than 200 regional and community newspapers across Australia acknowledged failure in keeping their operational efficiency and presses running. In this regard, they also fell prey to a drain in advertising spend, a broken business model and the refusal of digital behemoths to pay for content, as research conducted by (Piechota, 2020) outlines. He also makes mention of the fact that some of the newspapers that threw in the towel include the *Yarram Standard* in Victoria, which first rolled off the press more than 140 years ago.

The implications of Covid-19 were also felt in the United Kingdom where *The Guardian* reported that newspapers were set to lose 57 million pounds and that the Covid-19 implications were being made worse by advertisers who were refusing to advertise saying that it would be inappropriate to do so at a time when many people are dying (Sweney, 2020). This reality pertaining to financial loss has already come to pass. To broaden this discourse, a study by Piechota (2020) highlights that Covid-19 has accelerated the long-standing financial burdens that the newspaper industry had been grappling with for many years. Using a statistical survey, his study found that between 2008 and 2018 revenue for print media fell by 62% as US\$24 million migrated to digital media platforms.

In the Global South and in their own study which looked closely at Sub-Saharan Africa, Posetti, Bell and Brown (2020) highlight that most of their respondents had knowledge of drastic revenue losses in the Covid-19 period where in some cases, revenue had plummeted by as much as 75% for some publications owing to the grave implications of Covid-19.

As Covid-19 swept across the media fraternity in developing countries, in Morocco, the country's National Press Council in a report, revealed that the print media sector had suffered losses of approximately US\$24.3 million in just the first three months of pandemic

(Jooste, 2020). In the same period, *Al-Ahram*, which is the largest newspaper in Egypt, also made stunning revelations that Covid-19 had caused its revenue from advertising to nosedive by at least 75%. This reality was reported to be the same in the newspaper industry in Algeria which saw revenues plummet by above 65% owing to lockdown regulations (Ntibinyane, 2020). According to Ntibinyane (2020), five major news titles in Uganda ceased printing and distribution after having failed to cope with drastic revenue falls due to Covid-19. These titles include *Observer*, which is one of the prime weekly newspapers in Uganda providing analytical content, *Orumuri*, *Etop* and *Rupiny* which are the only vernacular weeklies in the west, east and north of Uganda respectively, and *Kampala Sun*, which is arguably the most popular tabloid in Uganda (Ntibinyane, 2020).

Other affected terrains include, but not limited to, Tunisia, where the Tunisian Journalists Syndicate noted that 190 journalists lost their jobs less than two months after the start of the crisis. In Zimbabwe, Ifex (2020) highlights that in the first six months of the pandemic, Alpha Media Holdings (AMH), which publishes Zimbabwe's prime private newspapers *NewsDay*, *The Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Standard*, ceased to print hardcopies of their editions and opted for PDF versions that were distributed through the WhatsApp platform. This was coupled by an announcement of a 50% salary cut for all its employees, while those who did not have a direct hand in the production of the e-paper were temporarily sent home. On the other side of the coin, government mouthpiece, Zimpapers which publishes the country's biggest newspapers in *The Herald*, *Sunday Mail*, *Chronicle* and *Sunday News*, also experienced the wrath of Covid-19, with correspondents and workers who serve in the printing department having been retrenched. Smaller media houses such as AB Communications, the proprietors of *ZiFM* and *Business Times*, also found the going tough and sent home 30% of their workforce (Ifex, 2020).

The same report by Ifex (2020) also lays bare Covid-19's challenges in Botswana's print media where News Company Botswana announced that owing to Covid-19, the *Botswana Gazette*, which has been operational for more than 36 years, would cease printing and go online. Despite having developed its online products since 2014, News Company Botswana acknowledged that Covid-19 had accelerated the decision for the company to take its products online and abandon the printed copy. In the same country, *Business Weekly* and

Echo, announced a halt to their printed papers, remaining only on digital platforms, while the *Telegraph* has gone mute since the start of Covid-19-induced lockdowns (Ifex, 2020).

Closer to home, Nevill (2020) notes that the South African print media was hit hard by Covid-19 with the Associated Media Publishing ceasing to publish its magazines *Cosmopolitan*, *House & Leisure* and *Women on Wheels*. These household magazines had been in existence for over half a century. This was also subsequent to what Jooste (2020) explains as the first and most visible casualty of Covid-19 in South Africa in which two magazine publishers shut down, resulting in a total of nearly 350 jobs being lost at the two publishing houses.

In a study by Nevill (2020), the big four of South African publishers - Caxton, Independent Media, Media24 and Times Media Group - were also not spared from the devastating implications of Covid-19 and saw their advertising revenue decline by at least 40%. He adds that the advent of lockdowns also took away key revenue obtained from hosting events which acted as supplementary revenue for newspapers that had already started to respond to the challenges presented by digital media. Caxton, which for a long time has been a dominant force in the print media, shut its magazine division and 10 of the division's 12 titles, with only one of the remaining two titles, *Farmer's Weekly* retained. This according to Nevill (2020) this cost the print media industry a further 250 to 300 editorial staff. Similarly, Media24 in responding to Covid-19 decided to cut the print runs of its popular tabloid *Daily Sun* to four provinces: Gauteng, Limpopo, North West and Mpumalanga only (Nevill, 2020).

In the midst of the storm, salary cuts have been the norm in the print media industry. At the *Citizen* daily newspaper, publisher Caxton announced in mid-April 2020 that revenue cuts owing to Covid-19 meant that its practitioners would have to endure salary cuts which were calculated at a maximum 33% for those in the R35 000 - R45 000 salary bracket and a maximum cut of 10% for those who earned between R9 000 and R19 999 (Silverman, 2020). At the *Mail & Guardian* the salary cuts were set at a maximum of 40% for top salary earners while the rest also got a 10% cut, with the Chief Executive Officer having taken a 100% cut for the months of June, July and August 2020. At Arena Holdings, a 30% salary cut was enforced on all staff members except those earning under R10 000 a month (Silverman, 2020).

These effects, which have seemingly changed the face of journalism globally and regionally, have not spared the Namibian newspaper industry which has had its fair share of anguish. Ngatjiheue (2020) reported that Namibia's biggest newspaper, *The Namibian*, carried out massive retrenchments and also embarked on a drive to renegotiate the benefits of employees in a bid to contain costs and streamline the business. She highlighted that Covid-19 cut through reserves and revenue, forcing the newspaper to live on overdrafts. With voluntary retirement as an added survival strategy, the newspaper laid off up to 50% of its staff (Ngatjiheue, 2020). Elsewhere in Namibia, newspapers such as the *Windhoek Observer* and *Southern Times* ceased their print editions owing to Covid-19 and Namibia Media Holdings which publishes the *Namibian Sun*, *Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Republikein* dailies resorted to cutting employee salaries by 20% and further gave them an option of freezing their contributions to the pension fund and realign their medical aid and social security contributions accordingly, in order to cope with the ravaging effect of Covid-19, (Shikongo, 2020). While there are reports of lay-offs in the Namibian newspaper industry, very little research has been carried out the actual extent of job losses, the changes Covid-19 has brought to newsrooms, the pandemic's impact on the quality of journalism and news production cycles, which present the research gap that this study seeks to explore. In light of this, Piechota (2020) acknowledges that the press faces an existential crisis which requires immediate and collective action. The actions which the Namibian newspaper sector seeks to employ, or are already implementing, is also subject of this study.

While studies by scholars like Posetti, Bell and Brown (2020) leaned on quantitative surveys that sought to understand financial gain or loss owing to Covid-19, the same scholars also recommend that a qualitative approach that interrogates the implications from the perspective of the actors, may provide better insights into the role of Covid-19 on a much-changed media landscape. Santos and Mare (2021) in their study that looked at the reconfiguration of news work in Southern Africa underscored the fact that the pandemic escalated the already simmering problems associated with the business of the media industry recommending further studies to explore this new reality. This study responds to this recommendation by taking a qualitative path that seeks to interrogate the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of Namibian newspapers as they play out at *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidante* from the lenses of the players in this specific sector.

2.1.3. The Covid-19 burden on journalists

Indeed, the implications of Covid-19 have also been felt by the media practitioners, journalists in particular. A study conducted by Evan (2020) highlights that owing to Covid-19, newsrooms have had fewer journalists involved in the process of gathering, assessing, creating and presenting the news, taking a toll on the available journalists in their endeavours to produce quality output. This, he says, has led to reduced readership as readers feel short-changed in purchasing thinner hardcopies with lower quality articles. The declining effectiveness of journalists is further mirrored in a survey that was carried out by Posetti, Bell and Brown (2020) which presents a negative picture of burnt-out journalists who, due to Covid-19, are now living in the constant fear of losing their jobs as those that have been laid off wait impatiently for another chance to work in a newsroom. The survey also notes that journalists are working in a severely pressured financial, physical and psychological environment during the pandemic. Also sharing the same outcome, a study by Casero-Ripollés (2020) notes that unless these gaps in support of journalists are addressed, the impacts on journalists - mentally, physically, professionally and socially - are likely to worsen.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Radcliffe (2020), he found that journalists, particularly those in the developing countries, were heavily challenged by the unreliability of the internet at home, as well as the unanticipated costs associated with remote working, when they were forced to work from home during lockdown periods. He notes that respondents complained that these internet costs were presented to them soon after they endured salary cuts and faced a reduced range of opportunities. For those that were afforded the opportunity to work as essential services, a survey conducted by the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) and the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism at Columbia University reveals that at least 30% of journalists that were asked about their working conditions, said their news organisations had not supplied them with any personal protective equipment when undertaking field assignments, which presented a real threat to their health (Radcliffe, 2020).

Whether this is true in the Namibian context, and the extent to which the pandemic has taken its toll on journalists as they try to navigate a terrain laced with an invisible enemy,

Covid-19, is unknown. This study will thus explore this area and investigate the implications of Covid-19 on journalists at *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*, and how these implications apply to the sustainability of these entities. Without a doubt however, studies that show cases of journalists experiencing high levels of stress point to the need for broader safety and operational measures at the organisational level of news outlets (Mayhew & Turvill, 2020; Hivos, 2020). This thus suggests that if Namibian print media journalists are experiencing the same stressors, newspapers may have employed mechanisms to respond to these consequences of Covid-19, which are the subject of this study.

As further consequence of Covid-19 on journalists and their ability to produce quality news that would allow their organisations to remain sustainable by providing mainstream verified news, studies show that the advent of Covid-19 and the social distance protocols have posed huge challenges to existing norms in the practice of journalism in which fieldwork and direct engagement is an integral part of quality journalism. Ilagan (2020) found that Covid-19 has caused limited access to information as journalists have been forced to resort to more remote ways of sourcing news. His paper argues that virtual press briefings meant that journalists do not have greater access to ask probing questions and gain deeper knowledge in their quest for better articles. For instance, Camus (2020) writes that under the guise of Covid-19 some of the questions that were posed by journalists were met with muted responses, especially from public office bearers. Ilagan (2020) also found that in order to address the barriers in online press briefings, journalists had to re-organise themselves and attempt to get answers via media groups and platforms such as WhatsApp that belong to government enterprises or ministries. In a study by Santos and Mare (2021) focusing on Southern African media, owing to Covid-19, some daily newspapers found themselves drifting away from hard news to long form and opinion type stories. At the same time, weekly newspapers moved away from long form investigative type stories to event-based stories, thereby affecting their quality in the face of competing online media.

In the Namibian context, Ngatjiheue (2020) reports that journalists were irked by not being allowed to attend Covid-19 press briefings by President Hage Geingob at State House, contending that this had put a dent on Namibia's record of press freedom. This is because

journalists were not able to ask their questions in line with the address that had been given, and even in some cases, they were asked to send their questions via the Presidency WhatsApp platform, where pertinent and challenging questions would be ignored (Ngatjiheue, 2020). Declining opportunities of fieldwork under the banner of Covid-19 has, according to Evan (2020) also seen journalists only being able to interview their sources through telephone calls and attending webinars with experts to gain valuable knowledge in the endeavour to complete tasks. This has thus increased the need to fact-check information gathered using these methods as it is different from information that is sourced on a face-to-face basis (Evans, 2020). How limited access to public officials and fieldwork could have influenced print media journalism in Namibia is an area which research has yet to explore and thus attracts inquiry from this study.

2.1.4. The sustainability question and mechanisms to deal with Covid-19

With some level of certainty, research shows that the sustainability of newspapers is indeed in trouble with affirmation that the traditional way in which newspapers conducted their operations – obtaining revenue from only advertisers and readers - is no longer viable and is now threatening both the quality of journalism and media's ability to produce optimally (Harris, 2020; Lewis, 2020; Nelson, 2020; Allisop, 2020; Benton, 2020; Grau, 2020; Santos and Mare, 2021). Bird (2020) underscores that owing to the severe implications of Covid-19, the sustainability of newspapers has taken a huge knock at a time when business models that support the sustainability of newspapers appear to be vast across the media fraternity.

Lewis (2020) contends that the future of news organisation appears to be bleak even if they survive Covid-19 in the interim, further highlighting that newspapers face the prospect of closure if they continue to operate as they have done before. This also partially so because while the operational models of news organisations have been ravaged and affected by the pandemic, the work of the practitioners within the field has been reconfigured, signalling a new media direction which media organisations should adapt to or perish (World Economic Forum, 2020).

An observation made by Casero-Ripollés (2020) highlights that Covid-19 has been transformational to journalism, changing not only its practice but also its business. In

essence, the pandemic has in its enforcement of restrictions prompted journalists and the media industry as a whole to use digital media technologies in the quest to gather and present news (Santos and Mare, 2021). However, these authors highlight that media organisations that have laid down adequate digital infrastructure were able to cope in this direction, while those that did not, including those in Namibia, lacked technical and financial resources to cope with the resultant disruptions. In some instances, newspapers which relied on digital media thrived at a time when Covid-19 was ravaging the media (Santos and Mare, 2021). Whether Namibian newspapers coped with this reality was subject of this study. On the other hand, the study by Pago (2020) observes that Covid-19 has been chiefly blamed for further exposing journalists and their audiences to the scourge of fake news, misinformation and disinformation that became more widespread under Covid-19. Notwithstanding some of the key challenges that have been caused by Covid-19, some scholars are of the belief that sooner or later, newspapers will throw in the towel and cease to exist, at least in the format that they are known today (Casero-Ripollés, 2020).

In her study, Ntibinyane (2020) highlights that in order to sustain post-Covid-19 journalism, African media houses should move towards online publishing and dump the print media and the practice of printing hardcopies. This reality appears to already taking shape as Santos and Mare (2021) attest noting that with regards distribution, some print media organizations in Southern Africa were forced to either abandon the print version altogether or drastically reduce their print run. In essence, despite the need to make difficult decisions, authorities in the newspaper business had to be practical, invest some money in the digital revolution to save their products and up-skill their staff with the emerging digital skills that would increase overall creativity and delivery of journalistic work (Ntibinyane, 2020). One of the key questions in the Namibian media space was to probe whether this is a viable avenue for newspapers.

In affirmation, Silverman (2020) opines that in the time of Covid-19, the print media faces what has been termed by other scholars as a “media extinction event”, which has the capacity to affect the industry in way that is great than in the impact of the 2008 global recession. Silverman (2020) however also contends that despite the ravaging impact of Covid-19, the print media still has a long way to go. He makes reference to Cook and Bakker

(2019) who in their study discovered that every online reader of newspapers in 2019 was outnumbered by 4.5 readers of the printed copy, suggesting that the printed paper may be favoured by some readers for the foreseeable future. This reality has given media owners the impetus to draw on innovative ways that seek to aid newspapers to remain sustainable for the foreseeable future (Hess & Waller, 2021).

In neighbouring South Africa during the Covid-19 crisis, South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) initiated a relief fund for the media which was partially successful in ensuring that the media is not completely overrun by the implications of Covid-19 (Bird, 2020). This initiative came subsequent to the one that was launched by the International Federation of Journalists in consultations with trade unions. This initiative, which was borne out of the drastic revenue declines being experienced in various media fraternities, sought to assist the media by calling on governments to “impose taxes on international technology and publishing companies and to allocate a percentage of tax revenues to support the independent press sector within transparent standards and conditions that guarantee the independence of the media and the respect of the rights of its workers” (Newman, 2021, p. 14).

To escape the scourge of Covid-19, Glaser (2020) opines that media outlets, particularly newspapers, should take a multi-pronged approach if they are to make it and this approach involves amongst others, speaking to their audiences about their importance and what role they play in the national developmental agenda. The same author notes that this should be done while the newspapers are appealing to their audience to donate money towards good and important journalism, or alternatively, setting up crowdfunding as a mechanism to raise much-needed revenue (Glaser, 2020). In affirmation, Nelson (2020) contends that newspapers must take a leading role in securing subscribers while at the same time asking advertisers to be more involved. This is, for example, done through asking advertisers to sponsor the removal pay walls for important articles that may have a bearing on the livelihoods of the readership. Various innovative reforms within the revenue-seeking structures of newspapers have been successful and there has been an increase in the number of revenue-generating models such as donors, members, pay walls and niche areas of reporting (The Economist, 2020).

Harris (2020), who in his own submission of how newspapers must deal with implications imposed by Covid-19, highlights that media should push for corporates to obtain subscriptions of each and every one of its employees. This means that employees will become more informed and knowledgeable, while at the same time this support of the media could be regarded as a public good with its own beneficial merits (Harris, 2020).

In Namibia, and while Shikongo (2020) reports that newspapers such as the *Windhoek Observer* and *Southern Times* have gone the route of many newspapers in the region, resorting to WhatsApp as a distribution channel to save and stay afloat, Adel (2020) says that the possible way forward for newspapers is perhaps to push for reduced tariffs for the internet, telecommunications, electricity, water and paper, which would reduce Covid-19-induced burdens. Apart from reduced tariffs and to survive Covid-19, Hess and Waller (2021) argue that society must take the communal news work route where the actors channel funds into the publishing of news based on the value it creates in the host society and not on the cost-benefit analysis done in view of advertising. In essence, communal news work supports the idea and the new realities emerging that have been posited by many scholars who have advised the media to put together various elements of multiple revenue streams which encompass things such as membership, some advertising, donations, government support, and other revenue streams from events, partnerships, crowdfunding initiatives etc., (Cook & Bakker 2019; Kurpius, Metzgar, and Rowley, 2010; Olsena, Pickard and Westlunda, 2020; Santos and Mare, 2021).

Further, Mayhew and Turvill (2020) advise that publishers may have to turn to other streams of income since declining newspaper sales will not be able to sustain them, adding that this may mean introducing paid-for products that supplement newspaper revenue. This advice may be relevant for the Namibian newspaper industry in its attempt to cope with transformations wrought by Covid-19. An investigation into how they are already (or not) doing this is useful to understanding Namibian print media's operational dynamics in the context of Covid-19. In essence therefore, this study undertook to probe this issue and from an interpretivist paradigm standpoint, gain an understanding of the strategies that are currently being put in place to save Namibian newspapers.

2.2. THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1. Structuration theory

While there are other theories that could have been used for this study such as the neo institutional theory and the critical political theory, this study drew from the structuration theory as the most appropriate theory which unlike others, is not deterministic in nature but allows for better understanding of the relationship between media/ media influencing structures and the actors within this sector. Therefore, to understand the macro implications of Covid-19 on the media, this study drew from this theory coined by Anthony Giddens (1979-1984), a theoretical framework that has over time has been widely adopted for the analysis of media operations (Dany, 2013, p. 41). According to Jarzabkowski (2008), this theory revolves around the 'duality of structure' proposition - that while structures are products of human action they are also shaped by the same.

This useful theory in the context of the interaction of Covid-19 and the media, establishes connections between terms and concepts and is based on the analysis of both structure and agents (without giving primacy to either). In essence, Kort and Gharbi (2013) attempt to explain this proposition saying that several sociologists have explained the relationship between humans and the social environment as one in which human actions are not constrained by social forces however, in contrast, the proposition by Giddens (1979) rejects these assertions and affirms that human actions and social forces cannot be separated but are deeply intertwined in what he coined 'duality of structure'.

While social forces represent the structures in society and human actions are referred by Giddens (1991) as the agency, he highlights in this theory that agency or agents are bound in social structures, while at the same time these agents are able to influence change in these structures that have bearing on their very existence (Dany, 2013). In simpler terms, Craib (1992) in view of the structuration theory, posits that there are social structures with their properties which influence the status of any given society, but these properties can be changed by the actors when, for example, they reproduce these properties differently. Thus, Orlikowski (2000), affirms that human actors remain central figures that are able to catalyse the creation of societal structure by various means, including invented values and norms. Yet, at the same time, the same human actors are constrained by our social

structure (Orlikowski, 2000). In view of the human actors or agents, Giddens (1979) further acknowledges that agents in the duality of structure must have the power to make a difference (thereby reproducing structural resources), and must have the knowledgeability to use their powers in meaningful, normative ways. This implies that by their involvement in the various tasks that they partake in to produce newspapers daily or weekly, and in their respective specific contexts, media managers and journalists reproduce their practice. By partaking in this, they affirm their practice as one that is not stagnant by being responsive to various conditions that are imposed by the environment within which these media organisations operate. This duality of structure is explained by Giddens (1984, p. 26) as “always the main grounding of continuities in social reproduction across time-space”.

According to Prior (2007), the media too are characterised by duality of structure where they are marred by various structures that enable and constrain journalistic work. He further highlights that while this is so, media managers have had the capacity to influence change in some of these structures. Feldman (2004) also notes that the media system exists within a social and natural context in which the natural context consists of factors of geography and topography, while the social context contains many criteria about the society like religion, values and norms, education, economy, and many others. In this regard, Feldman (2004) contends that all those elements may have an impact on the media system, as well as other systems, for example, the political system. By way of an example, he highlights the law as a structure that has both enabling and constraining qualities on the media system in that several restrictions by law limit media freedom in authoritarian regimes, while a democracy rather enables journalists’ autonomy.

It is critical therefore, in the context of this study, to understand that the theory of structuration is essential for the identification of media houses, their practitioners and the social forces that are acting around these media institutions. Giddens’ theory of structuration attempts to bring about some level of balance between the role that media practitioners play within the confines of the limited sphere they reside in, and the social structures they now find themselves in owing to the implications wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is also against the backdrop of the narrative that these media practitioners do not have entire preference of their actions and their knowledge is restricted;

nonetheless, they are the elements that recreate the social structure and produce social change (Craib, 1992, p. 33).

In this study, Covid-19 is viewed as a new phenomenon that has induced immediate implications (enabling and constraining) on various structures that directly impact the sustainability of the print media such as the economy, readership preferences, supply chains in distribution, and others. However, as Giddens (1984) points out, agents, which in this case are media managers and journalists, are seen as able to respond to these structural changes in the media as they are knowledgeable and resourceful social actors.

In a more elaborate way, Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration was critical in inferring structural and responsive changes in Namibia's print media landscape to gain nuanced understanding of how these changes have ignited other changes that either will see the print media unsustainable or able to ride out the Covid-19 wave and remain viable for the foreseeable future. To explain this, scholars have put forward the view that Covid-19 has been adversely impactful to print media globally by affecting various structures the print media operates in, as well as structures that are linked to those in which the same operates. These influences mirror the structural elements presented by Giddens (1984) which have a deterministic force towards the future of print media in Namibia and beyond. However, it can also be argued from Giddens' agency dimension that the media managers and journalists are not just watching these transformations unfold while they twiddle their thumbs. They are resourceful professionals who are responding to the changes emerging in the structures within which they operate and adjusting their operations to speak to the conditions on the ground.

This theory was thus beneficial in understanding the changes enforced by Covid-19 in the sustainability linked structures of the media and what the agents are doing (if they are) to respond to these structural changes which is the central aspect of this study.

2.2.2. The concept of media sustainability

To broaden the scope of analysis of this study, it also used the concept of media sustainability as presented by Kluempers and Schneider (2015), who together with other scholars, see it as the media's ability to remain economically viable to discharge its

watchdog role independently, and with adequate resources (Kluempers & Schneider 2015; Matschke, 2015, IREX 2010; CIMA, 2021; Bird, 2020). According to Kluempers and Schneider (2015) media sustainability transcends beyond survival, and also entails the media having adequate resources that are crucial for producing high-quality journalism that is independent and worthy of supporting developmental areas of government, inclusive of human rights, market growth and a tradition of liberty, among others.

This concept, as Matschke (2015) puts it, was conceived in the early 1990s in developing countries when hyper competition appeared - in which the influx of media organisations created a situation where there were a lot of newspapers competing against each other, cutting into each other's revenue and creating sustainability gaps. With the emergence of digital media technology, the importance of media sustainability as a concept has grown exponentially (Matschke, 2015).

To be sustainable, CIMA (2021) contends that the media have to be able effectively function in conditions that allow for enabling conditions of a political, legal and economic nature. This entails that in an environment that propels a sustainable media, journalists too must operate in a manner in which they operate without any fears and are adequately compensated, which also encourages integrity from media practitioners. Furthermore, the structures that own the sector must be those that allow for multiple views that can harness the trust of citizens in the media that is it there to represent society fully and provide adequate, trustworthy information, particularly to those that are generally lacking access to information (CIMA, 2021).

To elaborate this tenet of media sustainability, Kluempers and Schneider (2015) highlight that for media sustainability to be a viable and realistic, the economy itself must allow the media to amplify or strengthen their ability to remain sustainable. These scholars further note that this means that those who advertise must have the capacity to place advertisements that allow for the media to be sustainable in the short and long term. On the flipside, sustainability is also about the media itself being able to attract these advertisers.

While this may be so, Matschke (2015) opines that while he acknowledges that the media can survive on minimum budgets and resources, the ideal situation should always about sustaining quality media which he says is one that promotes transparency, provides a platform on which governments can exchange information with its citizens, supports human rights and one that enables economic growth. In the context of a strained media, Matschke (2015) highlights the importance of diversifying revenue streams and investing in quality journalism as an imperative of media sustainability, which he says requires a lot of resources, expertise and training.

Kluempers and Schneider (2015) reinforce this by highlighting that for media sustainability to be realised, media organisations must harness different sources of revenue. For example, instead of just depending on advertising revenue, media organisation can also enter the events space and host news-related events that generate supplementary income. The authors add that that in the event that there are state and non-state subsidies in the media fraternity, there should be fairness, transparency and no hold on editorial independence when these are distributed. These attributes, as Bird (2020) put it, allow for greater chances for a sustainable media as all subsidies are shared with fairness and equality.

Furthermore, sustainability in the media can only be achieved if and when media organisations have structures in place that are geared toward propelling media sustainability (Kluempers and Schneider, 2015). This means that the media organisation is financially positioned to provide readers with good and optimum quality news. The authors highlight this also entails the media organisation's ability to employ quality journalists and retain those who have the capacity to produce high-quality articles that keep audiences engaged, thus playing directly into the sustainability question. This is also achievable when the same media organisations are equipped with sound business practices that are realistic and are being implemented at all times (Bird, 2020).

In view of the tenets of media sustainability which have been probed by various scholars, media sustainability is thus determined by the economic environment within which the media operates, the media outlets' revenue sources and the structures in places for the media outlet to remain viable (Kluempers & Schneider, 2015). In simpler terms, CIMA (2021)

affirms these media sustainability determinants by highlighting that media sustainability occurs and requires a functioning framework of three broad elements which are technology (structure), economics (revenue sources), and law and policy (operating environment). In essence therefore, for production and distribution, media needs to have internal structures in place that are effective in view of costs and efficient in view of distributing news to readers. Apart from this, media needs to have a business model and an economic system that is able to foster revenue within the media and one that allows advertisers to both be able to afford adverts and be convinced to advertise. Finally, a legal and policy framework that supports independent and free media is an essential aspect in the quest for media sustainability (CIMA, 2021).

These three broad levels of media sustainability are essential to understanding how Covid-19 has affected the economic environment of Namibia's print media, and, whether in the context of Covid-19, print media have only relied on traditional sources of incomes such as advertising. The structures that have been put in place by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* to respond to the implications of Covid-19 in view of sustainability are also important. These elements encompass the questions which this study seeks to answer.

Thus, both the theoretical and the conceptual framework come together in the sense that they both acknowledge that media institutions operate in a context which is influenced by external forces that have a deterministic force on their sustainability and/or viability. In the context of the present study, these convergences between the theory and concept provide a useful resource to analyse the unique, different and emerging influences of Covid-19 on the sustainability of print media in Namibia.

2.3. Summary

The above review of literature has shown that Covid-19 has had its implications felt in the media industry with the Namibian media fraternity not having been spared. Available literature on this new reality has been predominantly done elsewhere, so very little literature is available on the actual extent of implications and the kinds of changes that Covid-19 has brought to Namibian newspapers. This presents a research gap that this study seeks to explore. As Pickard (2020) acknowledges, understanding the extent and the actual changes that Covid-19 has brought in the media industry, in this case the Namibian

newspaper space, is significant in the quest to understand the future (sustainability) of newspapers that is under stress.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that the researcher used to address the study's objectives. The chapter discusses the study's research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data validation, data presentation and analytical procedures, among other key elements.

3.2. Research philosophy

This study took an interpretivist stance which stems from the ideal that knowledge can be understood from a wide array of dimensions, and that a single issue can have multiple interpretations (Hammersley, 2013). In essence, interpretivism is originally rooted in the philosophy that understanding knowledge in social sciences is far different from the physical sciences due to the fact that human action is based on how human beings interpret elements in their world (Hammersley, 2013), and that this interpretation is multi-faceted and theory-laden, depending on the various worldviews that people possess.

Since this study examined the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers, and possibly how they are, or are seeking to, respond to these implications, the interpretivist paradigm critically allowed the researcher to understand the elements of the study as this philosophy acknowledges that a single element or occurrence such as the influence of Covid-19 on the news media industry can be understood in many different ways, based on different experiences and contexts of the three newspapers under study (Hammersley, 2013). Thus, one could argue that in the Namibian newspaper sector, Covid-19 has been felt by different newspapers in different ways and how the newspapers under study—*The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*—choose to respond to Covid-19 implication is not the same. Each would respond based on how they have interpreted the effects and the individual realities it has presented. These elements made this paradigm a perfect fit for this study in that the researcher aimed not only to assess the realities on the ground in view of the actions of media practitioners

towards Covid-19, but also to deeply understand them in their social context (Hammersley, 2013). Therefore, a qualitative design is useful in exploring the deeper nuances of this phenomenon.

3.3. Research design & approach

Ngure (2013) opines that a research design is essential in ensuring that key elements of a study correspond and sync with each other. In essence, a research design is essential for research, because “it facilitates the smooth sailing of the various research operations” (Kothari, 2004, p. 32). By way of elaboration, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, p. 33) also define a research design as “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings.” In its quest to investigate the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of print media in Namibia, this study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research pertains to investigative methodologies that seek to gain deeper understanding of reasons, motivations and opinions to a particular problem (Cresswell, 2014). This approach was appropriate for this study because in attempting to answer its qualitative research questions, the study required the researcher not only to study elements on the surface level, but also to infer on the status quo and gain a deeper understanding on how Covid-19 has affected *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers.

It is also worth noting that according to Ngure (2013), the qualitative method of research also enables a researcher to explore a complex subject matter where a controlled approach may fail. In addition, the qualitative research method allows a researcher to observe a situation from the point of view of the social actors (Creswell, 2014). In essence and critically so, understanding what is happening in Namibia’s print media industry, with full context of the environment in which it is happening, and from the view of the media actors, was imperative for this study.

Owing to the fact that Covid-19 has brought in uncertainties within the media space, this study was approached using an exploratory qualitative study which Ngure (2013) highlights as a process used to infer a problem whose parameters are not clearly defined and thus undertaken to gain better understanding. In view of this, this study which set out to

investigate the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* presented the researcher with multiple possibilities which needed to be explored fully to bring about clear outcomes. Therefore, the exploratory approach provided room to make inferences about the newspapers' responses on the implications of Covid-19, based on discoveries emanating from the collected data.

3.4 Research strategy

This study opted for the case study strategy within a qualitative framework. A case study creates an opportunity to study real elements in real situations, which creates a better platform for readers to understand ideas more clearly (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The case study strategy was relevant to this study as it allowed a focused analysis of three typical scenarios. On the one hand, *The Namibian* is a privately owned daily newspaper which represents the setup of a daily newspaper in Namibia which relies on private resources, while on the other hand, the *New Era* represents the setup at operations of a publicly owned daily newspaper which is funded by taxpayer money. The *Confidente* represents the setup and operational scenario of a weekly newspaper in Namibia. This means that the three cases provide an adequate lens through which to analyse the dynamics at play regarding implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of Namibia print media, coupled with the mechanisms that the industry is putting in place to deal with the same. Kothari (2004) explains that a suitable design or approach should be flexible, appropriate, efficient and economical. Given these characteristics of a suitable design and approach, the multi case study strategy is suitable for a critical examination of how *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers are responding to pressures exerted by Covid-19, a phenomenon that is complex and whose realities are in a state of flux. Each of these newspapers has a single main newsroom where all the main operations take place and are in Windhoek. This allowed for flexibility and efficiency as the researcher could visit these newsrooms as regularly and for as long as was possible, to obtain the required data for this study.

3.5 Research setting

The study was carried out in the capital city of Namibia, Windhoek, with study participants sourced from *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers. These three newspapers are all based in Windhoek. Despite having bureau offices across the country, all the key participants of this study are stationed in Windhoek. This means that all the managers who were part of this study are based in Windhoek, together with the required journalists included in the study.

3.6. Study population

The population of this study consisted of Namibia's nine national newspapers which are *The Namibian*, *Informante*, *Namibia Economist*, *Namibian Sun*, *New Era*, *Die Republikein*, *The Patriot*, *Windhoek Observer* and *Confidente*. These newspapers have an estimated staff complement of about 108 persons in total. However, because of the expansive nature of this population, it was impossible for the researcher to study all the newspapers in Namibia within the limited period and space available, hence the need to sample. Three of these newspapers have been selected as case studies, which have a total combined staff complement of 32 practitioners.

3.7. Sampling procedures and sample size

Melville and Goddard (2012) define a sample as a subset of a population that is used to represent the entire group. To obtain its representative sample, this study used purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method that is most suitable for qualitative research, and is defined by Melville and Goddard (2012) as intentional selection of research respondents in view of their ability provide relevant information for a particular study. A multi-stage sampling approach was used to select participants. First, out of the nine national newspapers, three newspapers (33.3% of the initial population) were selected as institutions that the case study will focus on. Then in a further purposive sampling exercise, out of the total of 32 media practitioners working for these case-study newspapers, 21 (65.6% of the case study population) were selected for interviews. These three national newspapers have been selected as case studies for key reasons. *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* are currently the biggest private daily, biggest public daily and biggest weekly newspaper respectively, which allows them to give a representative sample suitable for this study as

they operate in the same conditions as other newspapers. Furthermore, these three newspapers except for those under the Namibia Media Holdings stable (*Namibian Sun* and *Die Republikein*) are the only ones that have managed to keep their print runs being printed during the pandemic. Within each of these newspapers, the researcher also used purposive sampling to select respondents. With the three newspapers having 32 practitioners, the researcher's sample included a managing editor, a marketing manager, a distribution manager and four journalists from each newspaper. The total number of participants in this study is thus 21. The researcher used his judgement in terms of the research's data requirements to select these key informants because of their potential to provide relevant information for this study (Ngure, 2013).

From an oversight perspective, managing editors were best positioned to articulate the effects of Covid-19 and response mechanisms put in place at each of the papers under the study. From an advertising perspective, sales managers were better placed to provide information relating to changes in the preferences of advertisers, changes in sales figures and the effect of Covid-19 on the operational ability of the three newspapers. From a readership perspective, distribution managers were better placed to articulate on issues related to print run fluctuations and appetite for printed editions, while journalists themselves were the best respondents in view of the changes wrought by Covid-19 in the ways they gather news and process news amid Covid-19.

Considering that there are 12 journalists and nine managers interviewed for this study, the researcher first sent an invitation to all the participants to take part in the study. This allowed the participants to understand the scope of the study before taking the interview. In view of the Covid-19 environment the respondents were given an option to take the interviews via virtual platforms of their convenience providing video conferencing. Each interview was conducted by the interviewer (the researcher).

3.8. Data collection instruments and procedures

The research relied on primary data sources in which semi-structured interviews were used to collect the primary data. Melville and Goddard (2012) are of the view that primary data is the data observed or collected directly from first-hand experience in the field. In essence, open interviews were carried out in a face-to-face and virtual manner with the 21

respondents in a bid to address the qualitative research questions set for the study. Interviews were chosen for this study because they provided an opportunity to better understand realities on the ground in view of the demands presented by the research questions, while at the same time, it allowed the researcher to explore the research subjects' opinions and experiences on the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*, extensively. To enhance this, open-ended interviews were selected for this study because of their flexibility (Ngure, 2013). They offer the researcher, “the possibility to probe participants to enrich their understanding” (Creswell, 2014 p. 96). Open interviews were appropriate as they also allowed the researcher an opportunity to re-ask or rephrase questions when the respondents did not understand what the questions required. As further affirmed by McNamara (1999), interviews were useful for getting the story behind the participant’s experiences and for the researcher to pursue in-depth information around the objectives of the study. Interview guides were specifically designed for each manager in line with their duties and knowledge areas. The researcher did not just use one interview guide for all the managers. One interview guide was designed for journalists due to the fact that they operate in more or less the same way regardless of the media house they work for. Despite open interviews demanding immediate responses from respondents and giving them less time to research on responses as McNamara (1999) highlights, they were relevant for this study because the questions were not those that required research time but lived experiences of the respondents in their work settings. The researcher set appointments at the convenience of the respondents and also used an interview guide to help guide appropriate questions for each respondent. In view of Covid-19, the researcher took all the necessary protective measures and followed Covid-19 protocols when research was conducted. This entailed wearing mask, social distancing and sanitising hands before and after each interview. The respondents too followed the same procedures to ensure safety from the prevailing pandemic.

3.9. Pilot study

Having developed the research instruments, the researcher found it is useful to test them before administering them to the actual sample. The process of testing is done by means of a pilot study, which entails administering the research tool to a limited number of subjects,

from the same population as that for the study (Ngure, 2013). This study was piloted on five media practitioners including one line editor, one sales executive, one distribution controller and two journalists, one from *The Namibian* and one from *Confidente*. These individuals gave more or less, a fair sample for the pilot and were consistent with the study's population. The pilot study showed that the questions set for the study were relevant and encouraged the respondents to provide more beneficial data for the study. The pilot study also allowed to the researcher to understand the working cycles of different newsrooms which was beneficial in accessing interviewees in actual data collection. The respondents that participated in the pilot study were not included in the actual study.

3.10. Data analysis technique and procedure

Data analysis, as defined by Ngure (2013), is the method of assessing data by utilising critical and consistent reasons to study each component of the data provided. The researcher used thematic data analysis which, according to Ngure (2013), remains one of the most advisable forms of examining qualitative research data.

In this regard, the researcher transcribed the data collected through open interviews. After transcribing the data, the researcher coded the data according to themes as they emerged. According to Creswell, "coding data is aimed at categorising data into smaller clusters of similar content to allow simple analysis of data" (2014, p. 235).

This process was instrumental in assisting the researcher to examine and record patterns within data, in line with study's objectives. Themes are patterns across data that are significant to the description of the phenomenon and are associated with specific questions (Creswell, 2014). Thematic content analysis was therefore employed to analyse the data in that it provided an opportunity to evaluate findings directly responding to study objectives. In essence, this data analysis tool was used to unpack findings and to systematically gain knowledge around the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*, the strategies these three newspapers are using to respond to implications of Covid-19, and whether these strategies are helping the newspapers to cope better.

3.11. Trustworthiness

This study ensured trustworthiness, which is defined by Melville and Goddard (2012) as the level of confidence used in the data, how it has been interpreted, and the methods chosen that safeguard quality outcomes. For credibility, triangulation was applied for verification of consistency in responses and findings (Creswell, 2014). This method amplifies the credibility and validity of qualitative results and cross-checks data from multiple sources to search for (ir)regularities in the research data (Ngure, 2013). The findings were also triangulated against the literature reviewed in chapter two showing transferability. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the conformability and accuracy of the questions that the respondents were asked in the open interviews.

3.12. Ethical considerations

According to Creswell (2014), research ethics pertain to the correctness of the researcher's actions in relation to the rights of the respondents or subjects of the study. In this regard, ethical clearance was sought from the NUST ethics committees both at department and faculty level. Further, an informed consent form was given to participants making them aware of any risks, and of their right to decline participating, or not responding to particular questions that make them uncomfortable. Informed consent is a procedure that allows respondents to fully understand all the elements of the study after which they voluntarily respond to questions (Creswell, 2014).

Information gathered was kept confidential and stored on a laptop only the researcher had access to, which Creswell (2014) says protects the confidentiality of the respondents. The researcher further assured the participants that no confidential/commercial data from the three newspapers will be shared between each other and confidentiality and anonymity will also be applied across the board to all respondents by withholding any names, be they of the participant or newspaper. All respondents were treated with respect and the researcher ensured that any sourced information was attributed correctly (Melville & Goddard, 2012).

3.13. Summary

This chapter discussed and made a case for the research design used to examine the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability Namibian print media using the cases of *The*

Namibian, New Era and *Confidente*. Among other fundamentals, the chapter described the population of the study, the sampling techniques used, the data collection instruments used and how the research instruments were administered. The ethical considerations that guided the researcher were also explained. The next chapter presents the findings from the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings and provides an analysis that is guided by the study's three objectives. As is highlighted by Ntibinyane (2020), in order to sustain post-Covid-19 journalism, African media houses should move towards online publishing and dump the print media which has fast become unsustainable. This assertion stems from the notion presented by various scholars in this study which have regarded Covid-19 as the final nail in the coffin of an already ailing newspaper sector as it has already been ravaged by digital media technologies. This chapter thus, attempts to bring to the fore the effects of Covid-19 on the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers in Namibia, the measures put in place by three newspapers to respond to the implications of Covid-19 on their sustainability, and ways in which these measures helped the three newspapers to sustain their operations amid Covid-19. Based on key themes emerging from the research data, this chapter answers these three primary objectives by sharing key insights presented by editors, marketing managers, distribution managers and journalists into how Covid-19 has impacted print media sustainability, and the strategic thrust towards coping with the pandemic. A discussion and analysis of findings in terms of the theory and conceptual framework informing this study then follows.

4.2 Demographic data on interview participants

The study involved 21 key informants and these were all selected using purposive sampling. The sample is inclusive of a managing editor, a marketing manager, a distribution manager, and four journalists from each newspaper. These participants were chosen on the basis that their responsibilities require them to work with, and respond to, the implications brought by Covid-19 at their newspapers and formulate measures or strategies that would address the implications of the pandemic on the sustainability of the operations of the three newspapers under study. A total 57% of the participants were male and 43% were female. Of the nine managers (editors, marketing managers and distribution managers) five were

male and four were female. Out of the 12 journalists interviewed, seven were male and five, female. The managers were instrumental in responding to questions relating to the strategic orientation of the media houses, while the journalists provided key insights into the influences of Covid-19 in storytelling as well as newsgathering processes.

4.3 Implications of Covid-19 on Namibian newspapers

Respondents from the three newspapers acknowledged that Covid-19 had made negative inroads into their operations while at the same time, also acknowledging some positive implications. In essence, the negative implications point to adverse realities such as advertising revenue declines which threatened the existence of newspapers. On the positive side, Covid-19 has among others, allowed newspapers to gain hidden perspectives of their operational models which allowed the three newspapers to adjust to the new realities. These implications, starting with the negative implications are highlighted below.

4.3.1. Negative implications of Covid-19 on Namibian newspapers

Most of the respondents from the three newspapers, *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* acknowledged that Covid-19 had weighed in heavily on their operations forcing them to change the manner in which they operate in order to remain viable. The editor of *Confidente* noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had massive implications on their newspaper since its outbreak and affected operations in various ways. He explained that the publication's revenue took a nosedive as advertising budgets were cut across the public and private sector while at the same time, vendors could not sell newspapers during hard lockdowns. He further noted that,

Holistically, we faced a critical revenue shortage, so much so, that if we did not have reserves, we would have not been able to remain open. Apart from this, we had some of our staff who contracted the virus, including myself. As you know that when this virus attacks it takes a substantial number of days in which you will be away. This affected productivity in an already depressed climate further affecting us a great deal (Editor, *Confidente*).

The marketing manager at *The Namibian* echoed these sentiments stating that Covid-19 had really brought changes in behaviour of advertisers who became reserved in their provision of adverts and drastically cut on their budgets. Owing to this, the same manager noted that *The Namibian* was forced to set aside special publications that were a source of supplement income as the main edition grew thinner and struggled to obtain optimal advertising. All three marketing managers from the three publications were of the view that digital media technologies are becoming prominent at a time when potential advertisers no longer had the money to spend because of the economic crisis caused by Covid-19.

In this regard, the respondents further noted that digital media platforms are able to charge much less for advertising than print newspapers, and that advertisers are fast becoming more inclined to that space which in turn makes the print newspapers like *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* tiptoe on sustainability concerns.

High-price clients like car dealers have cut down their advertising drastically and are incorporating social media in their marketing mix. Maybe we can say vacancies and tenders are still being advertised but even with that, the advertisers are now calling and asking for the cheaper digital platforms as opposed to the more expensive hardcopy advertising space. This has really meant that we are unable to meet our target which subsequently means that we are not meeting our overhead costs (Marketing Manager, *Confidente*).

A common trend that most of the respondents also partially attributed to the rise of Covid-19, is declining circulation numbers at the three newspapers over the past year. The distribution manager at *The Namibian* noted that owing to both the depressed economy and the internet, circulation numbers had declined from 39 000 to as low as 17 000 copies between Monday and Thursday, and from 75 000 to 35 000 for the main edition which is printed on Fridays. The same reality was also observed at state-owned *New Era* which saw its circulation figures cut down from 24 000 to 11 000, according to its distribution manager.

Confidente's distribution manager also confirmed the decline in circulation numbers at his organisation. He highlighted that although the publication owned its own printing press, the

newspaper now tends to print fewer copies in response to the declining revenue. *Confidente's* circulation has declined from 30 000 copies pre-Covid to 8 500 at the height of the pandemic. The same manager also highlighted that street sales also suffered a major blow. For example, the manager said, Windhoek's street sales moved from 5 500 copies down to extremes of 1 000 sold copies during the third wave of the pandemic.

We have had to drastically cut down our print runs and we have seen how Covid-19 in the third wave made it practically impossible for us to sell copies of the newspapers. We had to adjust the copies so that we limit returns and save on printing costs. In Windhoek we could only give the vendors who were available about 1 000 copies from what we used to normally give them which is at least 5 500 copies. Right now, our total print run has decreased to between 8 500 to 9 500 from what used to be one of the biggest national print runs of 30 000 (Distribution Manager, *Confidente*).

Interviewed journalists also confirmed that Covid-19 has been a significant cause of job losses in the news media and continues to pose this threat. This was also coupled with salary cuts of up to 30% that were introduced in the industry as attested to by interviewed journalists. One of the journalists from *The Namibian* expressed fear of losing her job and opined that the impact of Covid-19, which had seen the publication lay off fellow colleagues, had made her unsure of whether the industry would sustain her for long, highlighting that this fear had impacted negatively on her work. These are her sentiments:

Everyone is nervous about losing their job. We have seen papers closing and going online. We are worried and this is no threat anymore, because it's already happening. We get paid through advertising and advertising is going down and newspapers are shrinking in size, which makes us very nervous and is affecting us negatively. I am scared of losing my job for one because it's always coming one day. I don't know how long this will be. To cover myself, I have been trying to get new skills so that I can be able to do more in the newsroom. That way, I may be preserved when another time to trim the team comes (Journalist, *The Namibian*).

Among other journalists who shared the same sentiments, a freelance journalist with *Confidente* highlighted that because many newspapers were cutting jobs, he had felt insecure with the fear of being soon regarded as redundant. He further highlighted that working under this strain meant that he had to try and overthink stories to impress the editor which by extension meant stories losing the cutting edge that comes with one written from a composed point of view. Trying to convince the editor that he was worth the position led to being burnt out and weakened his health, the reporter said.

In addition, journalists from all three publications decried how Covid-19 had changed the manner in which they source news and inflicted much fear of them also contracting the virus. Essentially, the journalists revealed this had without doubt impacted the quality of the stories they write, and instead of providing more depth and quality to beat the online content, they are seemingly operating on the same level. These are some of the sentiments presented by the journalists:

Covid-19 has restricted my interviews mostly to emails and phone calls. Emails and phone call interviews are not ideal when compared to face-to-face interactions. Face--to-face interviews enable me to get emotions and make follow up questions based on those emotions that otherwise I can't see through the email or via phone (Journalist, *New Era*).

The pandemic has not only reduced our time at offices but it has also limited our movement into communities where news is gathered. The lockdowns, state of emergency and curfews were the most damaging as journalists were unable to move out of Khomas region without passes and or move freely after working hours (Journalist, *The Namibian*).

When government imposed the restrictions, it made it difficult for me to cover certain events. Curfew meant that my hours of being outside sniffing for stories were limited. Less interaction with people means less story tips received. Covid-19 has also prevented me from going on international trips or attending conferences and workshops. This has prevented me from building relationships that present

opportunities to build sources that can sustain our newspaper (Journalist, *Confidente*).

Distribution managers from the three publications also made similar claims about how Covid-19 had pushed the costs of printing up as the hard lockdowns and depressed economic climate forced the logistics industry to offset costs to print presses who rely on imported newsprint paper. The distribution manager at *Confidente* noted, “Our printing costs escalated because printers adjusted prices when things also went down in their line of business. They also acquire consumables outside the country which makes it difficult for them to operate normally under lockdowns and the inconveniences that were ushered in by Covid-19.” The distribution manager at *The Namibian* extended this view saying that if the costs of printing keep rising, it would leave them with no choice but to consider going digital which is a more affordable format of publishing their newspaper - which has stood the test of time for 31 years.

4.3.2. Positive implications of Covid-19 on Namibian newspapers

In responding to questions that sought to understand how Covid-19 has affected the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers in Namibia, some of the respondents gave insights on how the pandemic has not only been an eye-opener, but has provided an opportunity for restructuring that could allow for newspapers to be sustainable in the long term.

The media manager at *The Namibian* revealed that for a media house that had been able to sustain a large workforce over its three decades of existence, the pandemic had to some extent allowed *The Namibian* to test new operating models that will sustain the newspaper. He notes:

If anything, I would say that over the years, *The Namibian* has employed a bloated workforce without noticing. Covid-19 and its implications which forced us to trim up to 50% of our staff taught us that we can actually be effective with a smaller wage bill that is streamlined to provide more quality than quantity. Had it not been for the

Covid-19 squeeze, we may have been operating at higher costs which would have adversely impacted our future as a printed newspaper (Editor, *The Namibian*).

Interviewees, particularly journalists, were asked for their views on how Covid-19 has changed their newsgathering processes. While most of them acknowledged adverse implications particularly, reduced opportunities for fieldwork, some highlighted that Covid-19 had enhanced the scope of their diaries and also helped them develop new techniques of sourcing news. Some of their views are as shown below:

With Covid-19 regulations in place, I have become more creative in obtaining authentic, factual information. Previously, I used to only source news via interacting directly with people at an event but with Covid-19, I have been forced to learn how I can be more innovative online. Now, I am better with research and interacting on platforms online has allowed me to link with so many more people that assist in getting and shaping stories (Journalist 1, *New Era*).

Covid-19 has brought out some social ills and vulnerable groups and this for us has meant more stories to focus on. We have also been able to do a lot of human-interest stories such those in Covid-19 wards and success stories of how Namibia has united during the pandemic. So yes, it is not all bad. Our scope of stories has been broadened and that is our food as journalists (Journalist 2, *The Namibian*).

With Covid-19, we were forced to decongest the office and on a rotational basis we were forced to work from home. For me this provided enough rest and space to be more creative as a journalist as opposed to having a line editor that exerts too much pressure in the newsroom. Working from the comfort of my own environment to some extent allowed me to write better and find renewed love for my profession (Journalist 3, *Confidente*).

In essence, both managers and journalists that were interviewed acknowledge the positive aspects of Covid-19 in the operations of their respective newspapers, as well as processes related to newsgathering.

4.4 Creative interventions and their impact

Questions around strategies that are being taken by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* to respond to the influences of Covid-19 were posed to the interview respondents. There is no question that the three newspapers, from a strategic point of view, are conscious of the grave implications of Covid-19 on their operations and sustainability and as such, have developed and are still developing systems to adapt to these implications.

The editor at *Confidente* said that the newspaper was forced to adopt a myriad of measures to respond to the pandemic which threatened closure of the newspaper at its peak. Although the silver lining was that no one was retrenched, he noted that the newspaper had no choice but to cut salaries by 30% and at the same time seize any benefit that was offered. For him, these and a few other changes have been the key in keeping the publication alive amid Covid-19. Highlighting other key measures that are being exploited he noted,

To create breathing space, we recently shifted the pay day from the last day to the month to the fifth of every month although salaries are processed earlier if money is available. We have also not replaced staff members that have departed and this has meant a trimmed team which has allowed us to cope. Recently, we invested in a commercial printing press that can help generate more needed revenue and cushion us in terms of printing *Confidente* in the long term (Editor, *Confidente*).

The same editor went on to say:

We have been tendering for things such as annual reports in the hope that if these come on board, we will supplement our income. The salary cuts and the reduction of our print run has also ensured sustainable costs. To save we have also been forced to close all our regional offices. We remain only with a freelancer in the north and have no resources deployed elsewhere in the country which narrows our scope for broad news as a weekly national newspaper. Other, smaller non-essentials such as DSTv, coffee and colour printing had to be cut.

The marketing manager at *Confidente* said that the publication has resorted to out-of-the-box solutions and one of the things that their newspaper did was to introduce tailor-made advertorials that are written and designed for free for prospective clients.

This has really worked to cover the generic advertising gaps because it allows the advertiser to say more in the space that they would have purchased as opposed to previous generic adverts. We have been targeting events of potential advertisers and after the events we sell the idea of an advertorial that would share the same event with the rest of the stakeholders across the country. We are also targeting companies suffering reputational damage and helping them manage their reputation through our mainstream print newspaper (Marketing Manager, *Confidente*).

Interviewing the same manager, he highlighted that in order to retain clients in the face of Covid-19 and not lose them to digital media platforms, the publication has resorted to giving clients who advertise on a longer term, discounts. He said that as a strategy, those who place more adverts find it more affordable to utilise their print publication. He also stated that they have adopted a strategy in which they rapidly follow up with existing clients and offer them incentives to continue using the print channel as a potentially lucrative advertising avenue.

His counterpart at *The Namibian* said that the publication has also seen that during these times clients need tailored products and they have been trying to offer them tailored advertising products such as advertising packages including the e-paper and social media platforms, so as to increase chances of securing advertisements. He further noted that when an advertiser offers to advertise in the mainstream newspaper, value adverts are placed on the website at discounted costs to help clients get value for money amid the pandemic.

On the editorial side, the editor of *New Era* highlighted that cognisant of the fact that the public has become more tech savvy and more inclined to get information over the internet which is readily available and faster to access, the *New Era* has, in response to Covid-19-induced revenue setbacks, resorted to sharing snippets of their articles on their online

platforms to drive interest for the fuller version stories that appear in their printed editions. This, he says, is geared towards increasing hardcopy sales and ensuring that the same can be sustainable.

This interviewee told the researcher that although there is not really much to go with at times, deep analytical treatment in the newspaper article allows for the readers to still hold on to their traditional copy. He notes that,

The breaking news is for the online versions and the analytical stuff for the print. In the printed paper we now make sure we give them (readers) quality updated and in-depth news. The thing is that people do not like to read long stories online because their attention span is not that deep and they prefer to do that in the newspaper, giving us room to do just that. That's how we have tried not to be left behind, in that while we maintain the print, we also have a conscious eye on the digital media (Editor, *New Era*).

This was echoed by the editor at *Confidente* who revealed that the paper had to develop deeper relationships with traditional print readers around targeted areas of interest and is strengthening their articles because readers are loyal to their print publication because it provides high-quality content on specific areas of interest, particularly politics. He notes:

As long as our stories are well sourced and the issues are of importance to our readers and advertisers, we know that our print edition will not die anytime soon. We have also designed our internet platforms in a manner that they help grow the print version. For instance, we no longer upload full articles online because we want the readers to complete the story when they read the newspaper (Editor, *Confidente*).

The marketing manager at *The Namibian* also highlighted that as a response mechanism, they have also increased their rates to help our revenue base cope. This was done at the beginning of the year as part of the annual adjustment. The manager notes that, this move,

despite adverts being fewer helps to cover the gap presented by the implications of Covid-19 and has allowed *The Namibian* to cope with economic pressure.

The distribution manager at *The Namibian* also highlighted key interventions that they devised to cope with the onslaught of digital media technology:

We have strategies now in place such as home deliveries and increased subscriptions. These home deliveries are sometimes on Sundays because even if the newspaper has come out on Friday, some people would like to still re-read the paper relaxed over the weekend. We also have deliveries to old people's homes and other areas to increase visibility and interest in the hardcopy paper (Distribution Manager, *The Namibian*).

On the other hand, the distribution manager at state-funded *New Era* highlighted studying the possibility of increasing their print run targeting more remote areas such as the Oshana region and opening up new distribution points across the country. This, the manager says is already being tested in areas which the frontpage story covers. If the lead story is an article based on events in a particular area, more copies are sent there to increase sales.

To bolster revenue, the editor of *The Namibian* said that the publication had obtained a radio and television licence from the Communication Regulation Authority of Namibia (CRAN). This is not to kill the print edition in the long run, but to supplement the income obtained by the newspaper so that the newspaper can be sustained for longer. The editor notes:

Covid-19 is teaching us that we have to be diverse in our approach so that we can be able to survive. For this reason, our new TV and radio units will ensure that we do not have only one source of revenue, which gives us a better base to better respond when things such as hard lockdowns are in force. The print edition remains our flagship product and instead of thinking of its lifetime coming to an end we need to think about how to preserve it in times that its revenue is under pressure from one force or another (Editor, *The Namibian*).

All the journalists that were interviewed agreed that because of the shrinking industry owing to the implications of Covid-19, they are resorting to up-skilling and learning more ways through which they can handle tasks for highly trimmed newsrooms which now have to cope with as little human resources as possible. To guard against the unknown, the journalists explained that they are expanding their scope of knowledge and are getting acquainted with managing the reporting side as well as the other newsroom tasks such as editing and proofreading, photography and other digital-related tasks.

What is clear from the responses is that all the media managers acknowledge that without having put measures in place they may have not made it out of the first and second hard lockdowns. Due to some of these strategies that have been employed, newsrooms have managed to buy time and cope with a new normal where revenue is depressed and both the operating climate and environment have changed.

4.5. How can the Namibian print media remain sustainable?

Most of the respondents in this study noted that although the strategies that have been employed have helped their newspapers cope with the ever-changing media environment in the face of Covid-19 implications, more needs to be done to further sustain operations in the long term. They also provided ideas and solutions that they felt would keep the printed newspaper sustainable. The managers suggested a myriad of interventions that could make their respective newspapers more viable. In this regard, the editors and marketing managers were in conformity when they acknowledged that their newspapers needed to quickly look at ways to diversify revenue so that they are not fully reliant on dwindling newspaper advertising. In their responses, some highlighted the following:

The restrictions posed by Covid-19 have really constrained our ability to do anything outside the box but we are looking towards introducing things such as events to grow our revenue pool. Otherwise, currently we have not been able to introduce anything new as we battled to get the advertising revenue back to acceptable levels (Editor, *Confidente*).

I think the revenue streams have to be diversified, no doubt. We have to first look at how digital media can be monetised to supplement revenue from traditional

sources. It is our responsibility to get our audiences to a point that they can pay good money for digital products. We can also look into other areas such as a converged media offering radio, broadcast and print to have a fully-fledged media house that can have multiple revenue streams (Marketing Manager, *The Namibian*).

The editor of *New Era* said that in order for the newspaper to remain sustainable in the long term, government needs to realise the merits of the media and assist print media by subsidising some of their costs such as printing. He highlighted, “One of the ways is for government to lend support to the print media outlets, find a way to subsidise their work in order for them to be able to make ends meet and break even. The biggest problem in print media is the print cost, that’s what threatens the sustainability. Paper is expensive, ink is expensive, and the government should meet the print outlets half way. There are also other solutions such as tax rebates in order for them to escape some costs.”

In view of government support, editor of *Confidente* also noted that at a time when they are feeling the pinch of the pandemic, they have been further affected by the fact that the Public Procurement Act is not been followed in the spirit of inclusivity. He said that verily, they are always being told by ministries and government agencies that only two newspapers have been chosen for advertising placements and this situation had to change if they are to stay afloat, since government is biggest advertiser.

We have taken the matter up and we hope we will all be given a chance to bid for adverts from the government which is the biggest advertiser. The way we have tried address this was to write letters to executive directors at most ministries to complain about such treatment. So, in all honesty, we cannot be left out of government advertising campaigns if we are to survive. We need this to be addressed to help us to stay a viable publication. In fact, government should be doing more to help us (Editor, *Confidente*).

Providing sustainability solutions from his own lens, the marketing manager at *New Era* said that perhaps the cost of advertising is currently too steep considering that not only the media has been affected by the pandemic. In his view, if the advertising products are out of reach, advertisers will always opt to find alternatives which in turn leaves newspapers grappling for survival.

I think our pricing where a single full page is nearly N\$20 000 is a bit too high in these trying times and perhaps lowering it would ensure more advertising and sustainability, by extension (Marketing Manager, *New Era*).

The distribution manager at *Confidente* noted that what could help create more value for their printed edition is that they needed to keep proving to clients that when they advertise with *Confidente*, their information reaches the right people at the right time, and produces the right outcomes. Once we fail to do this, she said, advertisers will see no need to advertise and this will subsequently lead to the death of the printed newspaper as we know it today. Apart from this, she also noted that the newspaper itself had become complacent and should work on increasing its visibility so as to attract more advertising. This, she says, can be done by also advertising the newspaper through partnerships with radio stations, something she said was key to attracting new advertisers and retaining the current clients.

The journalists also voiced their views on what they thought needed to be done to keep the print newspaper sustainable in the new normal brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of their views are highlighted below:

Journalist 1, *The Namibian*:

Keeping *The Namibian* print edition relevant can be done either through the revitalisation of the designs used for the front page to attract the reader or by also having articles that are not too long because most of the time, people tend not to read stories longer than 1 500 words. Furthermore, *The Namibian* must not dump the same things from online into the print edition because this will lead to a decline in readership.

Journalist 2, *The Namibian*:

Digitisation is one route that newspapers cannot escape. So, what we can do is to find ways to monetise digital content so that money can be channelled to costs that are pivotal in sustaining the print edition of the newspaper. *The Namibian* also has to capitalise on their online and social media audience base to convince local businesses to advertise their products and services in the printed edition.

Journalist 3, *Confidente*:

I think for *Confidente* to remain relevant they must shift their publication date to Monday where there is little competition. The current Thursday has many big newspapers and sometimes when you give audiences that choice, you are likely not to make it in as far as newspaper sales are concerned.

Journalist 4, *New Era*:

Real stories with real people will make the *New Era* an irresistible product going into the future. Yes, politics and other stories of that nature are important but human-interest community stories that audiences are in touch with provide greater impetus for sustainability. This is what we need to do.

Journalist 5, *New Era*:

For print newspapers to survive, they must strive to make investigative stories their core business. There is no point to print a story in tomorrow's edition when it was already being discussed on social media.

In addition, other journalists highlighted that their respective newspapers must use digital media platforms to understand the needs of their readers. One of these journalists from *The Namibian* observed that their newspaper does not respond to comments that are posted on their digital platforms and this is not helping in bringing readers closer to the print paper.

We have to understand that these readers also help the newspaper for example when you have spelt names wrong, they can redirect you (Journalist, *The Namibian*).

Holistically, the journalists agree that in order to survive the Covid-19 onslaught, newspapers need to find a balance between print and emerging digital solutions. This, for them, has to be done in such a way that digital is used as a conduit to creating pathways for a more sustainable print media.

4.6. Whither newspapers: What does the future hold?

The researcher also sought to find out if apart from attempting to cope, there is a future for the printed newspaper in the long term. This detail provides the basis for assessing whether

strategic efforts are being undertaken with the view of a positive future for the newspaper. Fairly mixed reactions and sentiments emerged on whether the hardcopy newspaper will survive in the long term.

The editor of *The Namibian* stated that in Namibia, media consumption is still underdeveloped or underexploited which subsequently means that the majority of media consumers or audiences still rely on traditional media for information. This is despite the fast growing online and new media platforms. He highlights that the trust that Namibians attach to traditional media can be attributed to the credibility and accuracy of the news produced. Other issues, such as convenience and the lack of technology and ICT infrastructures across the country to facilitate online accessibility, can also be considered. In essence therefore, this editor declared that the print version still has a strong future.

His sentiments were echoed by the editor of *Confidente* who said that they believe that the Namibian media landscape will still need its print edition for the long term despite Covid-19, a conviction that drove them to purchase a newspaper printing machine in 2016. Further, he said that this is also partially because data is expensive and also that the print papers which have built decades of legacies are still the trusted source of news. He observes that:

Newspapers still have a future in Namibia because of the type of audiences we have that have not embraced digital to the extent other countries in the global north have. Even advertisers still talk about tear sheets and print adverts if they are to pay. I believe the greatest damage has already been and the newspaper will make it for the next few years. If we can find ways to sustain costs, we will continue to survive from month to month. Vaccination rollout must be amplified so that the economy can fully open and offer us more hope for survival. It's obvious that with lower disposable incomes for corporates due to limited activities it is the advertising that goes first. We are grateful though that we have had some good advertising here and there (Editor, *Confidente*).

Respondents also spoke of the depth and credibility of printed newspaper in an environment in which fake news has become prevalent as a key element that will make

readers always hold on to the hardcopy. This, they say will allow newspapers to rise above the challenges presented by Covid-19 and find their way towards sustainability. A journalist with *Confidente* who also presented this view noted that the hardcopy newspaper is more reliable for the reader and has many gatekeepers which makes it a better option for many people:

These days we have to consider that everyone or anybody can write things online that may not necessarily be reliable. The newspaper, on the other hand, goes through editors and sources tend to be more reliable too, hence I think the the print paper is more reliable in the information that it provides to the public (Journalist, *Confidente*).

A journalist from *The Namibian* also acknowledged that the question about whether Covid-19 is the final nail in the print version of the newspaper is a difficult one, but noted that he did not see the printed newspaper dying soon because of the trust that the public has in the newspaper for factual information.

In the responses, there seemed to be some consensus that while the prospects for sustainability are there for the print edition, it needed to co-exist with digital media because there are people that cannot afford to have a smart phone and those that cannot access the hardcopy regularly, making these platforms complementary.

In agreement, the distribution manager at *The Namibian* explained that according to her, most people, especially the middle and older age, prefer the printed newspaper and it is mostly the youth that prefer the online newspapers. The same remarks were made by a journalist at *The Namibian* who, in short, said that as much as media houses are going digital there is still that market of people who want to hold the newspaper and read it.

The marketing manager at *Confidente* also placed a vote of confidence on the future of the newspaper saying that it will be sustainable but practitioners need to establish synergy between print and online platforms. He reiterated that in the case of *Confidente*, which is a

weekly newspaper, it should use the other days to push online content and direct people to the printed edition.

However, on the contrary, some of the respondents stated outright that they did not see the print media surviving in the long term due to digital media technologies. A journalist from *The Namibian* said that despite Namibia being a small country that will allow for extended survival of the printed newspaper, it is inevitable that it will eventually die. Talking specifically about *The Namibian*, she said that already now, not so many people go out to buy newspapers and that is why *The Namibian* has started the process of adopting the e-reader, which is a move towards embracing the reality of digital media technology.

Another journalist, this time from *Confidente*, said that the physical newspaper will run its race and people will eventually adapt to not having the newspaper because in this day and age, it's fast becoming about how fast people can get information and where it can be found. Another journalist from the same publication also said:

I really doubt that newspapers will survive in the long term because people are moving in a new direction and I don't think people will spend that much money printing hardcopy newspapers because we have also seen how the readers are now becoming more inclined to the digital media technologies (Journalist, *Confidente*).

Apart from this, the marketing manager at *The Namibian* opined that globalisation is inevitable and although the product lifecycle of the printed newspaper has not completely declined yet, he believes there will come a time when everything will be digital. However, he remains optimistic that this will not happen anytime soon:

I feel that although the world is definitely moving towards a complete digital overhaul in most if not all aspects of trade, for the next few years, the tangible aspects and requirements of printed newspapers will still play a major role in the survival of the newspaper. The slow pace at which Africa embraces globalisation in turn attributes this. In essence, we will always catch up but it will always take us longer (Marketing Manager, *The Namibian*).

From the data presented in this section, one can assume that the print version of the newspaper in Namibia may have been accelerated toward phasing out by the Covid-19 pandemic but if managed well and side by side with digital media technologies, it still has a prolonged lifespan. The respondents contend that it can no longer be business as usual in the print media industry as newspapers have to adopt new ways to remain sustainable in the long term. However, it may not be now, but the time will come when newspapers will cease to exist as we know them today.

4.7 Discussion and analysis of findings

This section discusses the findings above within the framework set in the literature review, conceptual framework and theoretical framework outlined in chapter two. The study is informed by the media sustainability concept and the structuration theory as discussed at length in the second chapter.

While the study focussed on the implications of Covid-19, it is not oblivious to fact that there have been other factors that may have contributed to the changes in the print media. These include digital media transformations, economic recession in Namibia, institutional management issues and others. Hindsight of these factors, this study focussed on implications of Covid-19 in particular, and how it may have impacted the sustainability of the print media directly or indirectly. It should also be noted that the respondents of this study were key informants who provided valuable empirical data from their experiences within the newsrooms studied. This thus amplifies the reliability of study data.

The study found that the Covid-19 pandemic has weighed in heavily on the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers with declining advertising having posed grave sustainability concerns at the media houses. To this end, editors explained that the revenue took a nosedive as advertising budgets were cut across the public and private sector while at the same time, vendors could not sell newspapers during hard lockdowns. The revenue decline was also in part because of drastic cuts in print runs for the publications to cope with costs. This reality is consistent with the findings of Posetti, Bell and Brown (2020) which highlighted that in most of their studies covering the Sub-Saharan

region, respondents had knowledge of drastic revenue losses at newspapers where in some cases, revenue had plummeted by as much as 75% owing to the implications of Covid-19. Other scholars (Nevill, 2020; Ifex, 2020; Ntibinyane, 2020; Jooste, 2020; Santos and Mare, 2021) also arrived at this conclusion which mirrors the implication of Covid-19 on the viability of newspapers in Africa. This sombre reality within the print media industry as the findings suggest, was also met with the reality that Covid-19 had pushed up the costs of printing as the hard lockdowns and depressed economic climate forced the logistics industry and print presses to review their prices since they import their consumables and had to offset extra costs.

The findings also affirm that owing to a depressed media environment that arose from the Covid-19 pandemic, newspapers were also forced to forego special publications as they struggled to get regular newspaper advertising, which further negatively impacted income. Apart from this, revenue is being shared with digital media platforms which all the three publications agreed were becoming prominent at a time when potential advertisers no longer have the money to spend widely because of the economic crisis caused by Covid-19. This prominence confirms findings by Santos and Mare (2021) who in their study found that media houses in Southern Africa which were pro-digital such as News24 in South Africa and Eagle FM radio in Namibia made more revenue at the height of the second Covid-19 wave. As these media organisations thrived, the sustainability of printed newspapers was increasingly under threat as they lost significant revenue to digital media, this investigation, which is unique to printed newspapers, established. This reality reminds of a study conducted by Remmert (2019) on the state of being among media houses in Windhoek which identified digital media technology as a threat to the future existence of newspapers in Namibia. Notwithstanding this, Mdlongwa (2009) described the influx of digital media technologies as the 'moment of truth', which prompted for proper analysis and solutions for the survival of newspapers. This assertion is echoed by Otieno (2009), who also acknowledges that digital media technologies have shaken up the newspaper industry to such an extent that media houses need to adapt or face sustainability consequences.

The findings above, when mirrored to the concept of media sustainability, as Kluempers and Schneider (2015) put it, depict a concerning present and future for print media. This is because media sustainability transcends beyond survival. It also entails the media having

adequate resources that are crucial for producing high-quality journalism that is independent and worthy of supporting developmental areas of government inclusive of human rights, market growth and a tradition of liberty, among others. On the contrary, the evidence shows that the three media house studied are operating at the bare minimum and their resources continue to suffer severe strain.

From a journalistic point of view, the study found that Covid-19 has been a significant cause of job losses in the news media and continue to pose this threat which is consistent with Kahuirika and Ngutjinazo's (2019) observation on job losses in the Namibian news media industry. These job losses have also come at a huge cost to remaining journalists who, because of lack of funding to replace those that were laid off, are forced to take up more responsibilities than before. The burden of extra work coupled with the fear of contracting the virus, the fear of losing their jobs and reduced opportunities for fieldwork owing to restrictions, have greatly impacted on the quality of articles and by extension, plays into the future existence of newspapers. This assertion conforms to a study conducted by Evan (2020) which highlights that owing to Covid-19, newsrooms have had fewer journalists involved in the process of gathering, assessing, creating and presenting the news, taking a toll on the available journalists in their endeavour to produce quality output. In essence, this researcher notes that this has led to reduced readership as readers feel short-changed in purchasing thinner hardcopies with lower quality articles, a situation that is consistent with the findings of this study.

While the thinner copies with poor quality stories are subjective to readers, the issue of strained journalists working in fear is highlighted by CIMA (2021) which contends that in an environment that propels a sustainable media, journalists too must operate in a manner without any fears and where they are adequately compensated, which also encourages integrity from the media practitioners. Moreover, the structures that own the sector must allow for multiple views that can harness the trust of citizens in the media, that is it there to represent society fully and provide adequate, trustworthy information, particularly to those that are generally lacking access to information (CIMA, 2021). Again, this remains a sustainability concern for the Namibian print media which, according to the findings above, is reeling from journalists working in fear of losing their jobs and contracting Covid-19, while

newspapers have become thinner, cutting sections and subsequently providing what is arguably, inadequate content.

The evidence presented speaks to how Covid-19 affected the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers in Namibia, and also shows that pandemic has not only had negative effects on the operations of the three newspapers, but positive ones also. The editor of *The Namibian* characterised Covid-19 as an eye-opener which helped the newspaper see that it has been employing a bloated workforce without noticing. Covid-19 and its implications, which forced *The Namibian* trim up to 50% of its staff, taught them that they can actually be effective with a smaller wage bill that is streamlined to provide more quality than quantity, this according to the editor. While most of the interviewed journalists acknowledged the adverse implications of Covid-19 particularly and reduced opportunities for fieldwork, some highlighted that Covid-19 had enhanced the scope of their diaries and also helped them develop new techniques of sources for news. These enhanced processes of newsgathering include being innovative online which is aligned with Foreman's (2009) observation that digital media technologies have had a positive impact on story ideation in that journalists can now also get story ideas and background content from the internet, as opposed to relying only on traditional news sources.

Findings relating to the second objective that sought to identify measures that have been put in place by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers to respond to the implications of Covid-19 on their sustainability show that private newspapers, *The Namibian* and *Confidente*, were forced to adopt a myriad of measures to respond to the pandemic which threatened closure of the newspapers. These include retrenchments, salary cuts, reducing print runs, changing the salary payment dates, and offering advertising discounts for long-term clients, amongst others.

The evidence also shows that the three newspapers now use social media platforms to keep audiences engaged with the print edition. This is also the same strategy used by all publications. They share snippets of stories that appear in the main paper on their social media platforms so as to generate interest for the full articles that appear in the print editions. The combination of print and digital platforms tallies with literature reviewed and

the submissions made in a study conducted by Pago (2020), who outlined the power of digital media technology as one that is vast. Even the way information is shared amongst readers has changed over the years and publishers are beginning to explore ways in which they share information through rapid updates on various news issues (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). This researcher also explained that newspapers recognise that their online presence is imperative and are therefore making it their responsibility to ensure that they have regular content on these platforms, keeping the audiences engaged in the print editions.

In terms of other strategies, this study also reveals that the three newspapers have gone on the offensive to think out of the box to help enlarge their revenue base. In essence, the *Confidente* for example, has resorted to tendering for things such as annual reports, apart from going into the printing business to supplement costs of producing the newspaper. In the literature reviewed, Mayhew and Turvill (2020) advise that publishers may have to turn to other streams of income since declining newspaper sales will not be able to sustain them, adding that this may mean introducing paid-for products that supplement newspaper revenue. This also concurs with a key tenet of media sustainability as opined by Matschke (2015), who notes that in the context of strained media, the importance of diversifying revenue streams and investing in quality journalism is an imperative of media sustainability.

Apart from this, a marketing manager from one of the publications outlined that they have resorted to giving discounts to clients who advertise on a longer term. To innovate, the marketing manager at *Confidente* said that the publication has resorted to out-of-the-box solutions and one of the things that their newspaper has done was to introduce tailor-made advertorials that are written and designed for free for prospective clients. The evidence also shows that journalists are not sitting and waiting to see what will happen in the future. Some have started to up-skill as a strategy to cope with the changes that are being brought about by Covid-19. In essence, owing to slimmer staff complements, the journalists are becoming multi-skilled to cover gaps within the newsroom. Lastly, respondents expressed that they are writing incisive, analytical and fact-checked articles to eliminate the competition of online newspapers, while allowing the readers to still hold on to their traditional hardcopy.

In responding to the last objective of this study on how strategies adopted by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* have enabled the three newspapers to adapt to the implications caused by Covid-19, this study reveals that the strategies that have been employed by the three publications such as cost reduction and broadening revenue streams, have given newspapers a lifeline for the future. This affirms literature that shows that despite Covid-19 having ravaged the media, the print newspapers still remain the main and important informative document for the people to rely on (Silverman 2020). This is also echoed by Cook and Bakker (2019), who in their study discovered that every online reader of newspapers in 2019 was outnumbered by 4.5 readers of the printed copy, suggesting that the printed paper may be favoured by some readers for the foreseeable future. The study also shows that despite the added pressure of digital media technology amid Covid-19, most of the respondents agree that both printed newspapers and digital media platforms can co-exist if managed well. This co-existence, the study reveals, must also involve expanding the use of digital media platforms by traditional news media to keep the newspaper alive - at least for now.

While there is no question about the threat to the future existence of newspapers, this threat, the study found, can either be delayed or derailed by applying a number of strategies, which include changing the way stories are told, deepening coverage of community stories and seeking cost-cutting interventions from the government. This idea is also suggested by Adel (2020) who opines that the possible way forward for newspapers is perhaps to push for reduced tariffs for the internet, telecommunications, electricity, water and paper which would reduce Covid-19-induced burdens.

The evidence presented above can be better explained using Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration as it shows how Covid-19 has enforced changes in the way Namibian newspapers operate, how they interact with their audiences, how they should arrange their distribution networks, how journalists interact with their sources, and how revenue is generated, among other key changes. This imbues the Covid-19 pandemic with what one might refer to as reconfiguration attributes whose implications (enabling and constraining) have had a direct impact on various structures that directly influence the sustainability of

the print media, such as the economy, readership preferences, supply chains in distribution, and others (Giddens 1984).

As seen in the evidence presented by this study above, Covid-19 has had grave impact not only on human social life but also far-reaching consequences on economic activities, as well as changing various elements in the environment within which media houses operate (see Giddens 1984). For example, the pandemic, through hard lockdowns, affected businesses that advertise in newspapers to an extent that they cut their advertising budgets, while the same containment measures affected the print presses that newspapers use to print their edition with escalating printing costs as consumables became more difficult to access. The pandemic also limited the ability of journalists to partake in fieldwork which is a primary requirement for well-resourced articles and also it prevented vendors from selling newspapers, among other far-reaching realities that have had sustainability consequences on newspapers in Namibia. Indeed, these realities show the extent to which Covid-19 has imposed itself on Namibian newspapers.

A more nuanced picture of this reconfiguration, as posited by the concept duality of structure in the theory of structuration, also includes the ways in which media houses in Namibia, including the practitioners, responded to the influences of the pandemic. In this duality of structure, human actions and social forces cannot be separated but are deeply intertwined where human actions are referred to by Giddens (1991) as the agency or agents that are bound in social structures, while at the same time these agents are able to influence change in these structures (Dany, 2013). In essence, the agents (media managers and journalists) enabled their organisations to change their operational structures albeit changes that were forced upon them by Covid-19 (see Craib, 1992). Without doubt therefore, the three newspapers, *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* resourcefully responded (or attempted to respond) to the emerging conditions which emanated from the pandemic, as study findings show. These findings show that the newspapers devised new ways of luring readers, new ways of operating with fewer staff members, new ways to make more money to sustain operations, and new ways to distribute their newspapers under severe strain, while on the other hand, the journalists explored new ways of gathering and processing news. In more ways therefore, this corroborates Giddens's (1984) insightful

observation that agents in the duality of structure must have the power to make a difference (thereby reproducing structural resources) and must have the knowledge to use their powers in meaningful, normative ways. At the same time, it is also in sync with idea that the structural properties of social systems (like journalism) are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, the findings have shown how the wider socio-economic factors, such as Covid-19 and its impact on social structures, interact with human agency. In this case, print journalism has managed to find ways to keep their doors open by putting in place some adaptive measure to delay their complete closure, at least for now. These findings are not unique to Namibia alone as demonstrated in chapter 2, as similar changes and adaptations have been faced and implemented by other print media houses in the region and beyond (Santos and Mare, 2021; Mayhew and Turvill, 2020; Olsena, Pickard and Westlunda, 2020).

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the study's findings. The findings were presented in terms of various themes that directly speak to the objectives of this study. The chapter also analysed this data and used the reviewed literature, as well the conceptual framework and theoretical framework presented in chapter two, to make sense of the key findings of the study. In essence, the chapter has answered the research questions which primarily sought to assess how Covid-19 has influenced the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*, the strategies that these three newspapers devised to respond to these influences, and whether these strategies are helping the newspapers sustain their operations amid Covid-19. The next chapter summarises the findings, concludes and provides some recommendations in view of the results of this study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises and provides a conclusion as well as recommendations of the study. The summary captures the study's focus, key aims, assumptions, methods and findings. The conclusion spells out the researcher's deductions from the analysis of findings before offering some recommendations and areas of further study regarding the influences of Covid-19 on the sustainability of Namibia's print media. The general finding is that all the three newspapers have been affected in the same manner by Covid-19 and also followed similar paths in attempting to respond to these implications which mirrors the overall trajectory of the print media in Namibia as will be shown in this chapter.

5.2 Chapter summaries

The first chapter presents an overview of the entire study. It introduces the study's subject matter and details the reasons for investigating the implications of Covid-19 on the sustainability of the print media in Namibia using case studies of *The Namibian*, *Confidente* and *New Era*. The chapter also outlines the problem statement and aims of the study as set out by the three objectives and concurrent research questions listed therein. In addition to highlighting the significance of this study, the chapter also notes the limitations and delimitations of the study and addresses concerns linked to these.

The second chapter discusses the literature that is relevant to the study, particularly that which engages with the implications of Covid-19 on the operations of newspapers in the region and beyond. This discussion focuses on structural challenges confronting the newspaper industry, the newspapers' response to emerging trends owing to the pandemic, the future of print newspapers against the backdrop of declining revenue emanating from Covid-19, as well as other factors, primarily digital media technologies (Camus, 2020; Remmert, 2019; Mayhew & Turvill, 2020; Piechota, 2020; Posetti, Bell and Brown, 2020; Casero-Ripollés, 2020; Silverman, 2020; Adel, 2020). Chapter two also outlines and

evaluates the conceptual framework and theory that informs this study, namely the media sustainability theory and the structuration theory. The concept of media sustainability as invoked by Kluempers and Schneider (2015) revolves around the proposition that the media's ability to remain economically viable to discharge its watchdog role independently and with adequate resources is determined by the economic environment within which the media operates, the media outlets' revenue sources, and the structures in place for the media outlet to remain viable. On the other hand, the structuration theory coined by Anthony Giddens (1979-1984) revolves around the 'duality of structure' proposition that, while social structures are products of human action, they are also shaped by the same (Jarzabkowski, 2008). In essence, Covid-19 is a new reality that has induced immediate reconfiguration implications (enabling and constraining) on various structures that directly impact the sustainability of the print media while at the same time, agents, in this case media practitioners, are seen as able to respond to the structural changes in the media as they are resourceful social actors. Both the above concept and theory expand the scope within which to analyse the forces at play in the interaction between traditional print media and Covid-19 as a new phenomenon that has sustainability consequences on Namibia's print media.

The third chapter outlines the research methodology of the study. It presents the research philosophy of the study which is the interpretivist paradigm. As such, the research uses a qualitative approach and case study strategy which creates an opportunity to study real elements in real situations and allows for more clarity regarding the operations of the studied newspapers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The chapter also discusses such issues as the population of the study, the sampling of participants and the data collection methods used. It explains the data analysis procedures followed before addressing concerns around quality and ethics. Paramount to the ethical consideration was consent from participants, confidentiality, as well as integrity from the researcher.

The fourth chapter presents and analyses the data that was collected by the researcher primarily through open interviews and desktop review. The chapter uses a thematic approach to present data using themes that are aligned to the research objectives. The researcher uses direct quotes from the respondents as evidence of the arguments being

made in terms of the study's findings. Finally, the chapter analyses the findings using the literature review, as well as the conceptual and theoretical framework, both of which allowed the researcher to make sense of the findings.

This final chapter provides the conclusion of the study and recommendations that are in sync with the study's objectives.

5.2 Study conclusions

5.2.1 How has Covid-19 affected the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers in Namibia?

The study concludes that the Covid-19 pandemic has weighed heavily on the operations of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers with declining advertising and newspaper sales revenue having posed grave sustainability concerns at the media houses. Coupled with other forces such as the influx of digital media technologies, Covid-19 has pushed the costs of printing up, forced newspapers to forego special publications, and has also led to newspapers producing thinner copies, as both print runs and the number of pages were reduced to cope with the pandemic implications. Owing to the pandemic-induced lockdowns which reduced movement, newspaper street sales also drastically reduced. The study also concluded that Covid-19 has been a significant cause of job losses which has placed excessive strain on remaining practitioners (journalists) who have had to take up extended duties in the newsrooms that the researcher studied. Furthermore, the work of journalists has been reconfigured and journalists have had to find different and new ways to source news as reduced opportunities for fieldwork as well as fear of contracting the virus themselves. On the flip side, the study also concludes that Covid-19 had some positive impacts on Namibian newsrooms. On one hand, the pandemic has been an eye-opener that has provided an opportunity for restructuring that could allow for newspapers to be sustainable in the long term. In this regard, some newspapers discovered that they could operate more effectively using leaner staff complements at the expense of bloated newsrooms, which has significantly reduced costs. On the other hand, journalists highlighted that Covid-19 enhanced the scope of their diaries and also helped them develop new techniques of sourcing news. In essence, both the managers and journalists that were

interviewed acknowledged the positive aspects of Covid-19 in the operations of their respective newspapers, as well as processes related to newsgathering.

5.2.2. What measures have been put in place by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers to respond to the implications of Covid-19 on their sustainability?

To respond to the implications spawned by the pandemic across their operational horizons, it can be concluded that *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* newspapers were forced to adopt a myriad of measures to respond to the pandemic which threatened closure of the newspapers. These include retrenchments, salary cuts, reducing employee benefits, changing salary payment dates, and reducing both print runs and the number of pages, amongst a few. Instead of waiting for their fate, newspapers like the *Confidente* have resorted to expanding their scope of business and entered the tendering space where they are bidding for printing jobs as well as writing annual reports for public and private enterprises. The newspapers are also now using digital platforms to generate interest for their print editions by sharing snippets of articles on social media prior to publication of fuller articles in the print edition. Apart from expanding their digital platforms and introducing innovations such as tailormade advertorials that are written and designed for free, this study also observed that the newspapers have also resorted to giving discounts to clients who advertise on a longer term, in order to keep them engaged with their print editions. Further, *The Namibian* and *Confidente* in particular have developed packages that include extended advertising on digital platforms for current and prospective advertisers. The study further concludes that some of the journalists have started to up-skill as a strategy to cope with the changes that are being brought about by Covid-19 that has seen slimmer staff complements in newsrooms. Furthermore, the study has also concluded that newspapers are now attempting to make the stories deeper, well-researched, analytical and fact-checked to eliminate the competition of online newspapers while allowing for the readers to still hold on to their traditional copy.

5.2.3. In what ways have these measures helped the three newspapers to sustain their operations amid Covid-19?

The study concludes that the response mechanisms applied by *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* have allowed the three newspapers to buy more time in the face of a challenging operating environment. Cost-cutting measures, inclusive of slashing the wage bill and print runs, have allowed the newspapers to ride out the Covid-19 storm and survive the peak period of the pandemic. On the other hand, the use of digital platforms to lure readers and advertisers has allowed the newspapers to remain relevant in the interim as they try to navigate changing dynamics with the print media industry. Journalists who have deliberately taken on new skills have allowed the newsrooms to bridge the gaps that have been created in their respective newsrooms, while at the same time saving money through leaner wage bills.

Amid these positive realities within the newspaper sector, what has come out clearly is that *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente* still depend on their print editions to generate income from adverts. This shows that the newspapers fully view themselves surviving for years to come. While the acknowledgement that newspapers will cease to exist at one point is unanimous, a key conclusion, from the perspective of the newspapers, is that this can be either delayed or derailed by applying a number of strategies which include changing the way stories are told, deepening coverage of community stories and seeking cost-cutting incentives from the government, among others.

In summation, the study concludes that despite the pressures presented by Covid-19 in Namibia, the printed newspaper remains resilient owing to specific market dynamics unique to the country as shown in chapter four.

5.3. Areas for further study

Having conducted a qualitative study that looks directly at newspapers in Namibia, an alternative quantitative study that attempts to investigate changes within the readership, including preferences, can be helpful to determine the sustainability of print newspaper and what the titles may need to do to remain viable from the perspectives of the readers. The researcher also recommends further studies on whether Covid-19 vaccination campaigns currently underway have had any effect on an improved future for Namibian newspapers.

Apart from this, further research must also consider the government's Access to Information Bill which is waiting to be debated in parliament, and its potential impact on the work of journalists and the media at large. Finally, a comparative study with other newsrooms in the region could also be helpful in understanding sustainability dynamics from different media domain which could provide a more nuanced picture of the future of print media.

5.4 Recommendations for action to address the concerns raised in this study

This section presents recommendations arising from the study and areas of potential further research. The researcher recommends that in view of the growing revenue decline owing to Covid-19, newspapers must indeed look at revenue diversification and one good way of doing this could be to devise more ways to maximise their use of digital media platforms to generate revenue. This can be done by placing paywalls on their online portals and mobile apps. Apart from this, newspapers must allow for donations from well-wishers who see the value of print journalism. The newspapers can use their own space together with their digital platforms to encourage readers to donate when they are able to do so.

From a strategic point of view, newspapers should re-evaluate their business models. This should be done with the view to circumvent the risk of investing into models that are outdated and no longer bears fruit for the respective media organisation. Apart from this and to stand out and to convince readers to continue their faith in newspapers, the quality of stories in the print editions must be improved and the three newspapers must serve as bastions of verified stories in an era of fake news. This means that newspapers must improve their gatekeeping mechanisms and ensure quality control in stories.

Furthermore, the print media industry must collectively work together to come up with justifiable and competitive pricing that is responsive to the current conditions. This may mean slightly reducing advertising prices to allow for more participation from advertisers who are also reeling from the implications of Covid-19. To successfully do this, it may be advisable to achieve this through the Namibian Editor's Forum which is a collective media body that can be used as vehicle to drive a common agenda. This will be beneficial in that if

the reforms such as pricing are aligned across the entire newspaper industry, the acceptance of these reforms from targeted stakeholders is more likely.

In the face of growing costs that threaten sustainability, the newspapers must work with printing companies to lobby for reduced tariffs, such as reduced import tax on newsprint paper so that the cost of printing newspapers becomes affordable in the long term. The researcher also recommends that the changing media environment that has forced journalists to require multiple skillsets to cope, warrants media workshops that will help journalists to adapt and be of greater use to their media organisations. To effectively execute these workshops, the newspapers must seek smart partnerships with organisations that train journalists, and possibly funders.

Finally, academic institutions such as Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and University of Namibia (UNAM) that produce the bulk of journalists working in Namibia should also alter their curricula to accommodate the changing dynamics in the print media industry and provide a scope for better career development.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter summarised and concluded the study in view of its objectives. The chapter provided key conclusions tied to each individual objective of the study. It also provided recommendations to newspaper organisations, academic institutions which offer journalism courses, and to future researchers in the same field.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: NUST Ethical Clearance Certificate

 NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (F-REC) DECISION: ETHICS APPROVAL	Ref: S004/2021 Student / Staff no.: 216001919 Issue Date: 04 August 2021
<hr/> RESEARCH TOPIC <hr/>		
Title: Investigating the implications of Covid-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia: A case study of The Namibian, Confidante and New Era		
Researcher: Hilary Mare Tel: +264 81 491 3608 E-mail: hilarymare@gmail.com		
Supervisor: Dr Hugh Ellis E-mail: hellis@nust.na		
<hr/>		
Dear Mr Mare,		
<p>The Faculty of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) of the Namibia University of Science and Technology reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.</p> <p>We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> maintain the ethical integrity of your research,<input type="checkbox"/> adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and<input type="checkbox"/> remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the F-REC. <p>Should any aspect of your research change from the information as presented to the F-REC, which could have an effect on the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are under the obligation to report it immediately to F-REC as applicable in writing.</p> <p>We wish you success with your research, and trust that it will make a positive contribution to the quest for knowledge at NUST.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-end;"><div style="text-align: center;"> <hr/>Dr Godfrey Tubaundule Acting Associate Dean: Research and Innovation Tel: +264 61 207-2932 / 2325 E-mail: gtubaundule@nust.na</div><div style="text-align: center;"> <hr/>Dr Pilisano Masake Acting Dean: FoHS Tel: +264 61 207-2063 / 2325 E-mail: pmasake@nust.na</div></div>		

Appendix 2: Consent Letters



42 John Meinert Street
Tel: +264 61 279 600
Fax: +264 61 279 602
P.O. Box 20783
Windhoek, Namibia

05 February 2021

Dear Hilary Mare

CONSENT LETTER FOR YOUR ACADEMIC STUDY

This letter serves to grant you consent to have our publication, which is the biggest daily newspaper in Namibia, as one of your case studies in your study titled: **Investigation the implications of COVID-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia: The case of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*.**

This study is in partial fulfilment of your Master of Journalism and Media Technology at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and will be beneficial in understanding the state of the industry and its future.

We look forward to the outcome of your study and wish you all the best in this regard.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards



.....

Ashley Smith
News Editor

**The Free Press of Namibia
(Pty) Ltd**
t/a The Namibian
PO Box 20783, Windhoek
42 John Meinert Street
Tel: 279600/Fax: 279602

The Free Press of Namibia (Pty) Ltd
Reg. 85/058
www.namibian.com.na

Directors: Theo Frank (Chairperson), Alisa Amupolo, Ulla von Holtz, Graham Hopwood
Editor and Managing Director: Tangeni Amupadhi

08 February 2021

Dear H Mare


Consent for academic research at our publication


This letter serves to inform you that your request to conduct academic research at our publication for the fulfilment of your Master: Journalism and Media Technology at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) has been granted.

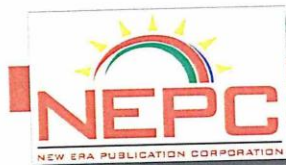
Your topic of study, investigating the implications of Covid-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia: A case study of *The Namibian*, *Confidente* and *New Era* is of particular interest to us and we look forward to the outcome of the study.

We hope that this will go a long way in aiding your studies.

Kind regards


.....
Max Hamata
Editor in Chief

CONFIDENTE 
lifting the lid
PO Box 5033 Ausspanplatz
Tel: (061) 246 136
Fax: (+264) 61 271 782
E-Mail: news@confidente.com.na



New Era Publication Corporation

Tel: +264 61 273 300 • Fax: +264 61 220 583 • Private Bag 13364 Windhoek, Namibia
Email: info@nepc.com.na • www.nepc.com.na

07 February 2021

Dear Mr H Mare

RE: CONSENT FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH AT OUR PUBLICATION

We write to inform you that in view of ethical standards in academic research, we are granting you consent to use our publication as one of the case studies in your study titled: Investigation the implications of COVID-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia: The case of *The Namibian*, *New Era* and *Confidente*.

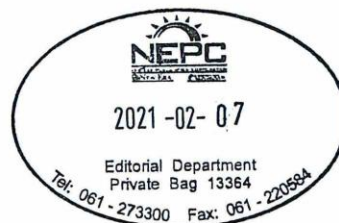
In this time of the pandemic, we are fully aware of the challenges that have been brought to the print media and we believe that your study which is in partial fulfilment of your Master: Journalism and Media Technology at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) will be beneficial in understanding the state of the industry and its future.

We hope that this will go a long way in aiding your studies and we wish you all the best in your academic endeavours.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Festus Nakatana
Managing Editor



Appendix 3: Interview Guide (Interview Questions)

Interview guide for Managing Editors

TITLE: INVESTIGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY OF *THE NAMIBIAN*, *CONFIDENTE* AND *NEW ERA*.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER: Hilary Mare

CONTACT NUMBER: +264 81 491 3608

Thank you for voluntarily agreeing to participate in this interview on the implications of Covid-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia.

Right to participate

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline from participating at any time, without being negatively affected in any way. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you had agreed to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). In case of doubt about participants' rights, please contact my supervisor Dr Hugh Ellis at tel: +264 61 207 2893 if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.

1. In what ways have you been affected by Covid-19 in the operations of your newspaper since it broke out?
2. How have you approached and responded to the impact of Covid-19 on your operation so far?
3. Do you think newspapers can survive the onslaught of Covid-19 in the long term?
4. What strategies have you put in place to ensure sustainability of your publication considering other forces such as the influx of digital media technologies?

5. How do you ensure that readers maintain their hold on the print edition in a time where digital editions are a growing preference?
6. How have the measure and strategies that you have put in place helped you sustain current operations?
7. Do you think these measures are will continue to be relevant in the long term?
8. Apart from Covid-19 are there any other factors affecting the operations of your newspaper?
9. How do you look to address these issues?

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Interview guide for Marketing Managers

TITLE: INVESTIGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY OF *THE NAMIBIAN*, *CONFIDENTE* AND *NEW ERA*.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER: Hilary Mare

CONTACT NUMBER: +264 81 491 3608

Thank you for voluntarily agreeing to participate in this interview on the implications of Covid-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia.

Right to participate

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline from participating at any time, without being negatively affected in any way. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you had agreed to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). In case of doubt about participants' rights, please contact my supervisor Dr Hugh Ellis at tel: +264 61 207 2893 if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.

1. How have economic challenges brought by Covid-19 affected uptake of advertising space in your newspaper?
2. What marketing strategies and plans has your newspaper employed to survive the implications of Covid-19?
3. In what ways have tried to expand your revenue pool beyond traditional sources and practices?
4. How do you think the print edition of your newspaper can be made sustainable in the long term?
5. How have the current marketing strategies ensured survival of your newspaper?

6. What more can print newspaper do to increase revenue in the advertising space amid Covid-19?
7. Do you think newspaper will survive Covid-19 in the long term?
8. In your view, what other factors affect advertising sales at your newspaper?
9. What can newspapers' marketing departments do to keep the print version relevant?

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Interview guide for Distribution Managers

TITLE: INVESTIGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY OF *THE NAMIBIAN*, *CONFIDENTE* AND *NEW ERA*.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER: Hilary Mare

CONTACT NUMBER: +264 81 491 3608

Thank you for voluntarily agreeing to participate in this interview on the implications of Covid-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia.

Right to participate

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline from participating at any time, without being negatively affected in any way. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you had agreed to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). In case of doubt about participants' rights, please contact my supervisor Dr Hugh Ellis at tel: +264 61 207 2893 if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.

1. How have the implications of Covid-19 affected newspaper sales in your distribution networks?
2. Has Covid-19 affected print runs at your newspaper? If so, please explain how.
3. In view of Covid-19 spreading by contact, what do you think is the preference of people today when you look at online newspapers and hardcopy newspapers and why?
4. What strategies are you putting in place to increase or maintain audience appetite for your print newspaper amid Covid-19?
5. What strategies have you put in place to reach your online readers?

6. How have your circulation trends been affected since Covid-19 regulations such as curfews and lockdowns?
7. How do you think the print newspaper can be made sustainable in the long term?

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Interview guide for Journalists

TITLE: INVESTIGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY OF *THE NAMIBIAN*, *CONFIDENTE* AND *NEW ERA*.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER: Hilary Mare

CONTACT NUMBER: +264 81 491 3608

Thank you for voluntarily agreeing to participate in this interview on the implications of Covid-19 for the sustainability of the print media in Namibia.

Right to participate

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline from participating at any time, without being negatively affected in any way. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you had agreed to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). In case of doubt about participants' rights, please contact my supervisor Dr Hugh Ellis at tel: +264 61 207 2893 if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.

1. How has your work been changed by the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. As a journalist, how has Covid-19 and the fear of contracting the virus changed the way you practice journalism in terms of newsgathering?
3. How has reduced opportunities for fieldwork affected the quality of articles produced by your newspaper?
4. There have been threats of job losses Covid-19, how are you dealing with this?
5. Do you think the preference of the readers in Namibia still lays in print newspaper?
Please elaborate.
6. What do you think can be done to prolong the viability of the print newspaper?

7. What are you doing as a journalist to ensure the sustainability of a print newspaper in the long term?

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Appendix 4: Similarity report (Turnitin)

216001919 Masters Thesis - H Mare

by HILARY MARE-216001919

Submission date: 16-Nov-2021 06:28PM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 1704684862

File name: 25051_HILARY_MARE-216001919_216001919_Masters_Thesis_-
_H_Mare_323303_1223946606.docx (327.78K)

Word count: 27032

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8	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	<1%
9	Submitted to Midlands State University Student Paper	<1%

Appendix 5: Editing note

22 November 2021

TO WHOM IT CONCERN:

This is to certify that Hilary Mare's Master's thesis:

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE
PRINT MEDIA IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY OF *THE NAMIBIAN*, *CONFIDENTE* AND
*NEW ERA***

has been fully edited and proofread in accordance with NUST's standards and APA
7th Edition.

I am a registered vendor for NUST and edit the Nawa Journal for the English
Department.



Yanna Smith

081 811 2117