NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
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An investigation into how the Namibian print media industry is coping with contemporary economic conditions.

BY

TIMOTEUS N. SHIHEPO

STUDENT NUMBER: 212108220

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ABSTRACT

This study provides an investigation into how Namibia's print media industry is surviving under the current economic crisis, which has been affecting the country since 2016. This is done, firstly through examining how global media has been faring when their respective countries are suffering from an economic crisis. The examination revealed that newspapers operating in these countries are struggling and their existence is being threatened. The verdict is the same with the newspapers in Africa, whose sustainability is being intimidated by the economic crisis. In Namibia, print media newspapers are looking at new sustainable models to survive the economic recession. Just like globally and continentally, the sustainability of Namibia's print media newspaper industry is being threatened by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which has killed millions of people and forced businesses to close since 2020. In order to collect data, the researcher employed document analysis, semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Using the interpretivism paradigm as a qualitative methodology, the study relied upon both the trained researcher and the human subject as the instruments to measure some phenomena, and typically involves both observation and interviews. Six newspapers namely: *The Namibian*, *Namibian Sun*, *New Era*, *The Southern Times, Windhoek Observer* and the *Confidente* were purposely selected. At least 16 people from these newspapers were thoroughly interviewed. For these newspapers, it was 'business as usual' until their operations encountered an economic crisis in 2016. Their normal operations were further dented when the Coronavirus (Covid-19) crippled the global economy from early 2020. This study was informed by three interlinked sub-research objectives. These are: to examine how the print media has been affected by the current economic challenges; to investigate the coping mechanisms put in place by the print media in Namibia and to explore new business models emerging in Namibia's print media to cope with the economic recession. The findings of this study indicates that some print media newspapers in Namibia were forced to go online while others reduced print runs with at least two ceased to exist. Other findings revealed that newspapers were forced to cut salaries, retrench employees and streamline operations as advertising revenues continued to dwindle. The study recommends the adoption of media sustainability models which are not only centered on 'migrating online' approaches but rather encompasses five interconnected dimensions; politics, economics, community, technology as well as content and expertise. It also recommends that newspapers should speed up the implementation of their new business models to ensure financial sustainability in a context characterised by economic recession and the Covid-19 pandemic.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the study and outline the background. It immediately discusses the statement of the problem before highlighting the social context of the research where the status and history of six Namibian print newspapers is discoursed. The chapter also introduces the theoretical framework. The chapter then reveals its research goals and objectives while proceeding to state the significance of the study. The literature review on similar studies are also briefly introduced in this chapter. The study then proceeds to the sections of research designs, and research techniques. The sections of ethical considerations, and structure of the study are discussed at the end of this chapter just before the summary.

1.1.2 Background

Hustad (2018) states that print media (like any other sector in Namibia) and the world at large is feeling the pinch of global economic downturn. Emmott (2018) articulates that the global economic recession, which began around 2008 has affected the operations of media organisations as evidenced by reduced profit margins, closure of some companies and even job losses. The situation has been made worse by the adoption of new media technologies, which have led to automation of work and routine tasks. As a result, it appears that no one knows the future of print media. Kamal (2014) defines print media as any medium that publishes written information to the public through means such as brochures, newspapers and magazines. Many scholars (see Hustad, 2018; Emmott, 2018; Purdy, Wong and Harris, 2017) have cast doubt on whether the print media would survive the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis. Scholars (Carson, 2014; Lundén, 2009) paints a picture of a print media industry that is having difficulties with advertising declining and dwindling circulation revenues, and cutbacks on operational costs largely due to the economic downturn. However, it appears that while print media and physical buying of the newspaper is in decline, Africa at the moment is seemingly not highly affected. Literature below suggests that people from Africa will continue buying physical copies.

Cag´e (2014) avers that despite the print media industry suffering from the effects of poor economic growth in several countries, research suggests that in some African countries the reading of newspapers will continue to expand during the coming decades. What happens then after the coming decades? Media sustainability is a key concept to this study because the study will look at Namibia's print media financial sustainability during the current economic crisis. In a broader definition, Grant (2020) regards sustainability as a way of meeting present needs while making sure that the needs of the future generations aren't compromised. In his sustainability concept, Grant (2020) outlines three pillars. These are economic, environmental, and social—also known informally as profits, planet, and people. "Sustainability encourages businesses to frame decisions in terms of environmental, social, and human impact for the long-term, rather than on short-term gains such as next quarter's earnings report. It influences them to consider more factors than simply the immediate profit or loss involved. Increasingly, companies have issued sustainability goals such as commitment to zero-waste packaging by a certain year, or to reduce overall emissions by a certain percentage" (Grant, 2020, p. 1). Print media's sustainability is further threatened by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic which struck the world at a time when this study was being done. The effects of Covid-19 being felt worldwide have also trickled down on print media and it's severely being felt in southern Africa.

Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zimbabwe (2021) notes that the media in the region has faced many challenges, such as falling advertising revenue and falling print media sales. This is happening at a time when there is a rush to switch to online and digital platforms. The same report articulates that while the media, especially print media, has been able to renew and relive these problems, the covid-19 pandemic poses an existential threat to an already crippled industry. (MISA Zimbabwe (2021). Misa Zimbabwe simply puts it as below:

> "Many industries have been impacted by the outbreak of Covid-19. However, the collapse of media in the region could have a serious impact on freedom of speech and democracy. A free and unfettered media is one of the pillars of democracy, thus, the collapse of media organisations poses a threat to democracy" (MISA Zimbabwe, p.1. 2020.)

The effects of Covid-19 being felt by the print media in the southern African region is relatable to what's happening in Namibia. In Namibia, the print newspapers' sustainability is also being threatened by the novel virus. Based on the phenomena presented above, the discussion around Covid-19 will form an integral part of this study regarding how it affects media sustainability. Kluempers and Schneider (2015) define media sustainability as the press' ability to ensure economic sustainability, independence, and quality media coverage. For this to be achieved, “three factors are crucial: 1) the overall economic environment and media-market structure, 2) revenue sources of media organizations, and 3) media organizations’ resources and structures. Simply said, they represent macro-, mid-, and micro-levels” (Kluempers & Schneider, 2015, p. 1). The term 'sustainability’ “it is very contestable. There are many definitions. Is the sustainability of the media reliant only on the content it produces?

Hollifield’s 2015 study, he examines media sustainability as a means of evaluating the quality of journalism and media content.

Hollifield (2015) argues that the factors to ensure media sustainability are intertwined. “Quality content needs serious investment. The investment should attract quality journalists and equipment to produce top notch work including investigative work. Therefore, it's crucial to focus on resources to sustain quality media” (Hollifield, 2015, p. 1).

While many scholars above are concerned with the financial aspect of media sustainability, other scholars such as Ruhanya (2018) believe that media sustainability should stretch as it involves the political dynamics of a country. Despite all these systemic challenges, the economic politics regarding news in Africa “is an important but neglected research topic in the field of journalism and media studies” (Ruhanya, 2018, p. 202). Yet, the issue of sustainability is important particularly “if the news media are to remain viable and independent” (Ruhanya, 2018, p. 202). Chuma (2005) argues that it is difficult for the private print media to get revenue and private investments during periods of economic and political turbulence. The Namibian economy has been battling tough economic headwinds since 2016. As a result, “all economic sectors have been affected, subsequently leading to Namibia’s worst economic decline since independence in 1990” (Shimuafeni, 2019, p. 8). A BTI Transformation Index (2020) indicates that an economic crisis has hampered planned investments in infrastructure since 2016, and this crisis has transformed into a full-scale depression in 2017 and 2018. The BTI Namibia country report also reveals that a fiscal liquidity crisis forced the state to borrow on an emergency basis to remain solvent. It paints a bleak economy as follows:

> “In combination with a massive drought, this had disastrous consequences for the local economy as well as the administration, which faced budgetary cuts. Delivery of services suffered, unemployment rose and companies (especially in the construction sector) had to close. Under pressure, the government sought refuge by entering a debt spiral, which economists consider to have reached a risky stage. The financial rating agencies have downgraded Namibia since 2016/17

to junk status. Through massive borrowing (the last loan in 2018 amounted to US$10 billion), China cemented its declared all-weather friendship. Chinese companies dominate uranium mining and the local construction sector. Observers are afraid of a new dependency syndrome emerging" (BTI Transformation Index, 2020, p.1).

As revenue continues to dry up and the economic crisis deepens, Amukeshe (2021) reveals that the government had its N$4 billion loan approved by the International Monetary Fund in 2021. It's the first time the country has ever applied for a loan from this institution since 1990. Amukeshe (2021) adds that Namibia's public debt is estimated to reach N$130 billion for the 2021/22 fiscal year. At the time of conducting this study, the world faced one of the biggest global pandemic, coronavirus (Covid-19), which has affected all the sectors including print media. In Namibia, Shikongo (2020) reveals that the effects of Covid-19 were felt sharply as many print media houses implemented contemporary measures to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. Shikongo (2020) adds that since the Namibian government declared a six months (starting from 27 March 2020) Covid-19 state of emergency, *The Namibian newspaper* and *The New Era newspaper* reduced the number of pages they print. Meanwhile, in order to survive the pandemic, The Namibia Media Holdings - publisher of *The Namibian Sun, Republikein, and Allgemeine Zeitung newspapers* slashed employees' salaries by 20% for the duration of the Covid-19 state of emergency (Shikongo, 2020, p. 3). The general consensus is that the effects of Covid-19 compounded the negative effects that are already brought upon onto print media by the economic crisis. The aim of this study is to investigate how Namibia's print media industry is coping under current economic conditions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

To a greater extent, print media depends on revenue generated from adverts, which are placed in publications by corporate entities. Since 2016, Namibia's economic growth "has been in decline with the country's economy slipping into recession after it failed to grow for 11 consecutive quarters" (Shimuafeni, 2019, p. 5). The lack of growth in the country's main sectors has posed serious problems to the print media industry (Remmert, 2019). For example, the once thriving *The Villager newspaper* has since closed down. *The Windhoek Observer's* future in 2020 is uncertain, *The Southern Times* is struggling to stay afloat, and *The Economist* has already migrated to online. Aha (2019) states that print media's sustainability is a tale in which technological disruptions, imploding business models and socio-economic challenges are all intertwined. The decline in the economy has had an effect on the day-to-day operations of the print media industry in Namibia as close to 40 journalists have lost their jobs since the start of the economic crisis in 2016 (Kahiurika and Ngutjinazo, 2019). The outbreak of the coronavirus global pandemic in 2020 is also having a toll on Namibia's print media. As a result, unsubstantiated evidence suggests that some print media houses in Namibia have implemented strategies to cope with the poor economic growth. In light of the above, this study seeks to examine how the economic crisis has affected the operations of selected print media houses in Namibia, and investigate the mechanisms that have been implemented by these media houses to circumvent the effects of the economic crisis. The study will also look at how print media in Namibia is surviving under the threats brought by the Coronavirus effects. Lastly, the study also sought to explore how the critical political economy of the media theory is applicable to Namibia's print media in its battle with the economic recession.

1.2.1 Research objectives

The purpose of the research was to investigate how six print media newspapers in Namibia coped during the contemporary economic crisis, which gripped Namibia since 2016. The study examined how *The Namibian*, *New Era, Namibian Sun, The Southern Times, Confidente, and Windhoek Observers* dealt with the issue of economic crisis. The study also looked at how the Coronavirus (Covid-19), which became a pandemic in 2020 affected the same newspapers.

The main objectives are:

1. To examine the effect of economic crisis on print media;
2. To investigate coping mechanisms put in place by the print media;
3. To explore new business models emerging in the print media in Namibia to cope with the economic recession.

1.3 Significance of the study

There is a lack of a comprehensive study on how Namibia's print media is coping under the current economic crisis. Equally, there are no academic studies on how Namibia's print media is coping under effects brought upon by Covid-19. The study will be shared with the concerned media houses to help them deal with economic challenges. It will also be shared with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Editors Forum of Namibia and the Office of the Media Ombudsman to help them when enacting policies related to the topic.

1.4 Delimitation

Although the economy appears to be affecting all the print media houses in Namibia, this study is only limited to the following case studies: *The Namibian, The Southern Times, Windhoek Observer, Namibian Sun, Confidente, and the New Era newspapers.*

1.5 Context of the Research

The aim of this segment is to give the status and history of the newspapers being investigated by this study. Press freedom is guaranteed in the Namibian constitution. Namibian media operates more freely than most other African countries. Namibia boasts many newspapers. It has *The Namibian*, an independent English newspaper with Oshiwambo section; *New Era* and *The Southern Times* who are both owned by the government operate on a daily and weekly basis, respectively. The *Namibia Press Agency* (NAMPA), also owned by the government, is the only news agency in the country. Online newspapers include The *Namibia Economist, Namibia Daily News* and *The Windhoek Observer.* The weekly print section of the Namibian print media is struggling as only the *Confidente* is still operational. Weeklies such as *The Villager* and *Patriot* newspapers have both closed down. *The Windhoek Observer* and *The Southern Times* have both migrated online. Entertainment newspapers include *Unwrap.Online* and *Nalebrity*.

A dominant player is Namibia Media Holdings (NMH). Under its previous name, Democratic Media Holdings was run by the official opposition party of the country, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). DTA is a grouping of whites and others opposed to ruling party Swapo. Under new owners, the Namibia Media Holdings (NMH) now owns *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Namibian Sun* and *Republikein*.A German paper from Windhoek founded in 1916, *Allgemeine Zeitung* is published each week. The *Namibian Sun* is an English daily newspaper while *Die Republikein* is an Afrikaans daily newspaper. NMH also owns three community newspapers in the country. These are *Erongo*, *Ewi lya Nooli* and *Windhoek Express*. Furthermore, the company owns Newsprint Namibia.

1.5.1 Case Studies

This section will look at the history and economic status of *The Namibian* newspaper, *New Era* newspaper, *Namibian Sun* newspaper, *The Southern Times* newspaper, *Confidente* newspaper, and *The Windhoek Observer* newspaper.

1.5.2 *The Namibian newspaper*

Established veteran journalist Gwen Lister in 1985, the publication started off as a weekly newspaper with a heavy dependence on donors as the paper embarked on a path to help Namibia achieve independence from South Africa. Lister (1995) reveals that the first edition with a print run of 10 000 was published in 1985. In 1989, it became a daily newspaper. To mark the newspaper's 15th birthday, Kofi Annan described it as a great legacy. "The Namibian worked courageously in difficult and often dangerous conditions. Since then, it has contributed immeasurably to press freedom and nation-building in Namibia. Throughout, it has maintained its integrity and independent stance" (Lister, 2010, p. 1). Prior to Namibia's independence in 1990, Rothe (2011) states that *The Namibian newspaper* has been a vocal critic of the apartheid government whose system was designed to colonise and mistreat black people while looting the country's resources. Even the name; *The Namibian* irked the oppressors, who at the time referred to the country as South West Africa.

Prior to independence, the newspaper suffered several incidents as Lister (1995) reveals that shooting into the building required the installation of bulletproof glass and there were several incendiary bombs and tear gassing attacks. Lister (1995) adds that the newspaper's offices were attacked by the Afrikaner Wit Wolwe vigilante group in October 1988. The newspaper's offices were almost burned down. Information contained in the African National Congress Truth and Reconciliation report also states that South Africa's Civil Cooperation Bureau planned to poison editor Lister, while Rothe (2011)adds that the newspaper was boycotted by the white business community, and "journalists and sympathisers" of *The Namibian* were denied entry in shops all over the country. In 1990, Lister (1995) states that the offices of the newspaper were again devastated by a phosphorus grenade attack shortly after Namibian independence by a right-wing counterrevolutionary group whose plot to unseat South West African People Organisation (Swapo) was covered by *The Namibian*.

After independence, the newspaper stuck to its objective of holding the government accountable to the public. The continuous critical approach of the then new government by *The Namibian* angered the Swapo party, and the government. *The Namibian* (2011) wrote that the unpopularity reached its peak in December 2005 when the government banned its offices from advertising in the newspaper and buying it. The boycott was only overturned in August 2011. Documents provided by the publication show that company ownership The Free Press of Namibia (Pty) Ltd is owned by the Namibia Media Trust, which in turn belongs to no one. The objectives of the Trust are: to utilise the capital and income from the assets of the trust and such income and assets, which the trust will acquire in the future for the purpose of furthering and supporting and funding an independent non-profit newspaper called *The Namibian* or its successor or similar media activity including the training of Namibian journalists. The aim is also to generally further the principle of press freedom and freedom of expression in Namibia.

1.5.3 *The New Era*

Created by the *New Era Publications Corporation Act of 1992*, the *New Era* is a daily newspaper owned by the Namibian government (NEPC, 2014). Kivikuru (2013) states that the Namibian government deemed it necessary to start a newspaper, which can establish credibility as opposed to *The Namibian*, which criticizes work carried out by the government. Just like *The Namibian*, Rothe (2011) reveals that the *New Era* was established as a weekly newspaper and was later published only bi-weekly. It has appeared daily since 2004. Rothe (2011) added that some government ministers have acted as direct owners of the newspaper, telephoning the editorial department about articles that have criticised them. Because of this, the newspaper is perceived to be Swapo -friendly, and is "often reproached for being biased in favour of the government."

1.5.4 *The Namibian Sun*

Launched in 2007, the *Namibian Sun* is the third largest daily newspaper in the country (NAB, 2020, p. 2). Initially it printed only Tuesdays and Thursdays until it became a daily in 2010. The company's document shows that the *Namibian Sun* is published by Namibia Media Holdings (formerly Democratic Media Holdings, which also publishes *Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Republikein*. While *Allgemeine Zeitung* has a German-speaking readership, and *Republikein* targets Afrikaans speakers, the *Namibian Sun* focuses on an English-speaking audience. It is similar to the South African Daily Sun in layout and features.

1.5.5 *The Southern Times*

The Southern Times is a Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional newspaper distributed throughout the South African region. September 2004, the newspaper was established and is operating on a 50-on-50 joint venture between the Namibian New Era publishing company and Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited. As Africans tell their own stories from politics, business, art, entertainment, culture, travel and tourism, as well as sport, *The Southern Times* seek to tell stories from a Pan-Africanist perspective and promote African values. *The Southern Times* is based in Windhoek, Namibia and has offices in Harare, Zimbabwe. It has placed its reporters in most of the 16 SADC countries (The Southern Times, 2020).

1.5.6 *The Confidente*

Confidente is a weekly newspaper founded by veteran journalist Max Hamata in 2011. *Confidente* is a tabloid newspaper printed every Thursday. Using only his pension after leaving another weekly newspaper, *Informante,* Moodie (2013) reveals that Hamata was determined to grow his publication. By 2012, Moodie (2013) states that the total circulation of the newspaper reached 7321 from a mere 3000 copies in 2011. Moodie adds that *Confidente* was initially transported via minibus taxis from the Windhoek printing base to areas such Walvis Bay and Swakopmund and to areas located in the northern part of the country. Hamata eventually signed a barter agreement with a friend who had a courier business. In an interview, Hamata said the barter agreement really helped the paper where it saw the print run increase between 10 000 and 11 000 before printing costs and the effects of the economic crisis took its toll on the operations of the publication. Today, *Confidente* is the only remaining print weekly newspaper in the country.

1.5.7 *The Windhoek Observer*

Information on the company's website shows that the *Windhoek Observer* is the oldest newspaper in the country since its inception in 1978. The publication was founded by a combined effort of Hannes Smith and Gwen Lister - who at the time was the political editor. Through her political desk, Lister wanted to give Namibia's liberation movement Swapo a 'human face' to counter argue the notion that the political party was being led by terrorists and communities.

Lister (2016) documents that the newspaper was officially banned in May 1984 after Lister herself travelled to Zambia to report on Namibia's independence negotiations. Although the ban was lifted after an appeal to the Pretoria Broadcasting Appeals Board, the *Windhoek Observer's* management dropped Lister for her involvement in the ban, which led to Lister's dismissal and other employees of the newspaper. The following year, Lister founded *The Namibian* newspaper.

After Lister left, Afrik (2008) adds that Smith then ran the *Windhoek Observer* as a one-man operation, calling himself "reporter-in-chief" while his daughter, Yanna Erasmus, later joined him at the newspaper. Smith adopted a "hard-line editorial stance against those in authority" with Rothe (2010) saying that Smith "did not bow to the South African nor the Swapo government." Smith died in 2008, and Erasmus took over as editor before the newspaper was sold to Paragon Investment Holding in 2009 (Rothe, 2010, p. 36).

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study uses the critical political economy theory. Political economy approach has been in existence for many centuries and many scholars (such as Garnham, 1990; Schiller, 1996; McChesney, 2000; McChesney & Schiller, 2003; Bagdikian, 1997; Mansell, 2004; Wasko, 2001; Mosco, 1996; Mosco & Foster, 2001) all have adjusted the political economy theory. For the relevance of this study, it will use the political economy of the media, which was advanced by McChesney (2003). McChesney (2003) scrutinises the structure of media industries, questions of ownership, market structure and commercial support and how these affect media content, performance and impact. Mchesney's political economy of the media is relevant to this study in the essence that it highlights how an economy affects print media operations.

The main assumptions of political economy is that it is concerned with the relationship of media systems to the broader social and power relations of society. Another main assumption is that, political economy uses economic tools to examine political phenomena. Collinson (2003) stipulates that political economy is a useful approach because it explains how political forces influence the economy and economic outcomes including that of print media. Hardy (2014) advocates for critical political economy of the media because it provides a clear, comprehensive and insightful introduction to the political economic analysis of contemporary media. Scholars (see Mosco, 2009; Winseck, 2008) find the political-economy approach important because it scrutinizes acquisitions, mergers, buy-outs, and partnerships. However, Wasko & Meehan (2013) criticise the approach because they regard the political economy of the media to be reductionist, too economistic, and simplistic.

Scholars (Artz, Macek, and Cloud, 2006; Schiller, 2007) insist that the necessity of including power and social class relations in political economy of the media as well as committing to praxis by combining research and action to advance a more democratic society. Graham (2007, p.16) observes that, "The main difficulty I have with McChesney's political economy of the media is that it appears to lack a theory of value, or at the very least appears to presuppose one. This is most apparent when 'economic factors' are taken for granted and are entirely separated from 'politics and social relations' by being placed in subjective relation to them."

1.6.1 Research Methodology

This study is anchored in the interpretivism paradigm, which prefers qualitative research methodology as its approach (Cloud, 2018). This research employed a multiple-case case study research design. "Multiple-case design is a research methodology in which several instrumental, bounded cases are examined using multiple data collection methods. This research methodology is more powerful than single-case designs as it provides more extensive descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon or issue" (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, p. 1.). The cases included six newspapers as mentioned above.

It will rely on non-probability sampling techniques like purposive and convenience. This study will use document analysis, which is one of the data collection instruments under the qualitative research methodology. A total sample of 36 people of which two editors, two journalists, and two administrative staff from the selected media houses will be interviewed using semi-structured questions to understand the situation on the ground and how media companies are circumventing the economic challenges. After data collection, this study will use thematic content analysis, with Caulfield (2019) stating that the researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. With thematic content analysis, the research moves from the qualitative data that have been collected, into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations being investigated. This method enabled the researcher to prepare and organise the data into specific codes and themes.

The researcher then presented themes in a cohesive manner. In order to ensure validity, the study will be based on trustworthiness. Smit (2001) defines trustworthiness as the believability of the researcher's findings, i.e. all that the researcher has done in designing, carrying out and reporting the research to make the results credible.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Print Media: Kamal (2014) defines print media as the medium that disseminates/distributes printed information to the mass through its mediums of newspapers, magazines, and brochures etc.

Media Sustainability: Kluempers and Schneider (2015) define media sustainability as the press' ability to ensure both economic sustainability and independent, quality media coverage.

Economic recession: Investopedia (2021) regards the recession as a macroeconomic term that refers to a significant decline in general economic activity of a country.

1.8 Outline of the Chapters

This thesis comprises chapter one, which consists of the introduction and background. It's the chapter that shares what's expected of the study. It gives insight of what to expect in chapter two, three, four and five.

Chapter one also outlines the problem statement. It then highlights the social context of the research of the six newspapers investigated for this study. The theoretical framework for this study, which is surrounded around McChesney's political economy theory, is also introduced in chapter one. The research objectives and goals, research designs, and research techniques are also included in chapter one

In **chapter two**, the study will review literature related to this study done by African and international scholars including but not limited to Ekmekcioglu, 2012; Rosenfeld, Lorsch, and Khurana, 2011; Silva, 2015; Ruhanya, 2018; Lunden, 2019. The study will expand on the theoretical framework in this chapter. The theory developed by McChesney in 2003 will be used. The theory scrutinises the structure of media industries, questions of ownership, market structure and commercial support and how these affect media content, performance and impact.

The study then looked at the methodology in **chapter three**, where a multiple-case study design was employed. In this chapter, document analysis, which is one of the data collection instruments under the qualitative research methodology, was used. In chapter three, the researcher also conducted interviews using semi-structured questions with editors, administrative staff, journalists, and print media owners to understand the situation on the ground and how media companies are circumventing the economic challenges.

The analysing and presenting of data will be done in **chapter 4**. This study will use document analysis, which is one of the data collection instruments under the qualitative research methodology. The researcher will conduct interviews using semi-structured questions with editors, administrative staff, journalists, and print media owners to understand the situation on the ground and how media companies are circumventing the economic challenges. After data collection, this study will then use qualitative data analysis (QDA). This method will enable the researcher to prepare and organise the data into specific codes and themes. Chapter four presents findings and analysis that enables for summary and conclusion in chapter five. The analysis is weighed against the information given by the literature review in chapter three. Furthermore, the findings will be analysed in accordance with the political economy of the media and media sustainability.

The thesis then proceeded to the stage of summary and conclusion in **chapter five** before listing the references in the last chapter. Chapter five will state the answer to the main research question, summarize and reflect on the research, make recommendations for future work on the topic, and show what new knowledge you have contributed.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the comprehensive fundamentals of the thesis. It detailed the nitty-gritties in the background of study. The statement of problem, the social context of the research, and theoretical framework were briefly introduced. The research goals and objectives were outlined just before the significance of the study section. The sections of research designs, and research techniques were discussed. At the end of the chapter, ethical considerations were outlined just before the structure of the study was laid out. The thesis will now proceed to chapter two which will contain literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter three, four, and five will follow suit.

CHAPTER TWO:

Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

2. Introduction

In chapter one of this study, I gave a sketch regarding the aim of the research, which is to examine how print media in Namibia is surviving under economic conditions. This is done, first, through examining reports on how print media is faring under the poor economic conditions. Secondly, this is done via questions in the form of interviews to respondents from various print media houses. This study is mindful of the fact that the issue of media sustainability has been debated for decades. The question mark on whether print media would survive became even bigger after the 2008 world financial crisis resulting in the current global recession. In an effort to contextualise the effects of the economic crisis on Namibia's print media or the lack of, this chapter gives a background on previous similar studies done on the topic. It looked at studies done in the United States, Portugal, Australia, United Kingdom, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa amongst others. The study then proceeds to examine how print media in Namibia has been surviving under the contemporary economic conditions, which have been affecting the country since 2015. This study was carried out at a time, when the world encountered a pandemic in the form of the Coronavirus (Covid-19). As such, a Covid-19 section has also been added to this chapter and carried through the study, in order to determine the effect it has on print media.

2.1 Revisiting Key Terms

2.1.2 Print media

There are several print media definitions, for example Bean-Mellinger (2018) regards it as a printed version of a news message, mostly through newspapers and magazines. Before the invention and widespread use of printing machines, printed products had to be written by hand. It was a comprehensive process that made mass spread impossible (Bean-Mellinger, 2018). The World Association of Newspapers considers the first newspaper in the modern sense to have been published by Johann Carlous in 1605 titled *Relation aller Furnemmen und gedenckwandigen Historien.* The term printed media is a combination of two words, the first of which means printing; especially in large quantities, production by a mechanical process in which text or drawings are transferred to paper (books, newspapers, etc.). And the word 'media' means; like any mass media television, radio, newspaper, internet and so forth (Kamal, 2014).

Therefore for the relevance of this study, it will use the following definition whereby Kamal (2014) defines print media as the medium that disseminates/distributes printed information to the mass through its mediums of newspapers, magazines, and brochures etc.

Based on the above definitions, this study has established that the print media definition is now on the verge of changing. This is because many organisations have incorporated a multi-media model that integrates the traditional paper, the electronic paper and the online version. In the midst of doing this study some of the newspapers that formed part of the multiple-case study have migrated to the electronic version but still call themselves a print media organisation.

In light of the above, this study proposes to enhance the print media definition as follow:

A medium that publishes printed information to the public through mediums such as traditional newspapers, electronic newspapers, magazines, and brochures etc.

2.1.3 Media sustainability

Media sustainability is a key concept to this study because it is concerned with the survival of Namibian print media during the current economic crisis. Kluempers and Schneider (2015) define media sustainability as the press' ability to ensure both economic sustainability and independent, quality media coverage. Adjin-Tettey, Garman, Kruger, Olausson, Berglez, Tallert, and Fritzon (2021) regards sustainable journalism as journalism that meets the information needs of the present without compromising the ability of a future generation of media workers to meet their information needs.

2.1.4 Economic Recession

Rodeck (2018) defines recession as a huge reduction in the main sectors of the economy for a prolonged period of time lasting months or years. Rodeck (2018) articulates that experts explain the recession by the fact that the country's economy has experienced negative gross domestic product (GDP), a rising unemployment rate, and a decline in retail sales and a decline in revenue and production figures over a long period of time. He argues that these recessions are considered an inevitable part of the business cycle—or the regular periodicity of the expansion and contraction occurring in the country's economy.

2.1.5 Covid-19

The World Health Organisation (2021) defines Covid-19 as an attack that identify a large family of viruses that can cause a variety of diseases, from colds to more serious diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV). The World Health Organisation adds that the new strain found in Covid-19 have not previously been detected in people. As per WHO, widespread among the symptoms of infection are respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and shortness of breath and in severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death can result.

2.3 The business model of print media organisations

Print media organisations appear to be embracing new business models in order achieve sustainability. Evans, Raats and Rimscha (2017) argues that media management research has also contributed to this growing literature on business models. Evans, Raats and Rimscha (2017) reveals that digital technologies have and continue to have a huge impact on how media organizations create value and position themselves in a growing value network.
This study is informed by several African and international scholars (such as Ekmekcioglu, 2012; Rosenfeld, Lorsch, and Khurana, 2011; Silva, 2015; Ruhanya, 2018; Lunden, 2019) who have researched on a similar topic. In a study conducted in Zimbabwe, Ruhanya (2018) contends that where the government is unfriendly to private press coupled by an economic struggle, print media industry will struggle to make revenue, subsequently leading to survival of the fittest. Patel (2019) believes that the answers to questions regarding post- print media are sketchy as it appears that no one is certain of the print media's future. Remmert (2019) highlights Namibia's media's sustainability, which has failed to transform in the midst of digitalisation, tough international competition, and poor economic conditions. Besides Remmert's 2019 report and newspaper articles, there are no Namibian studies on how the print media has been affected by the economic recession.

The theory was further refined by McChesney (2003). Mchesney scrutinises the global media industries, queries the media ownership, the structure of the market, commercial support, how the media is coping, and the impact it has on media's performance, and content. McChesney's political economy of the media is relevant to this study in the sense that it highlights how an economy affects the operations of the print media, and how the media cope during an economic crisis. The critical political economy approach is the most appropriate for this study as it will help the researcher to scrutinise the operations and structures of *The Namibian*, *The Southern Times*, *Windhoek Observer*, *Namibian Sun*, *Confidente*, and the *New Era* newspapers.

The print media industry, which to a certain extent survives on advertising, was massively affected by the crisis because companies were no longer advertising at the favourable rate. Ekmekçioğlu (2012) utters that the 2008 global financial crisis affected all sectors, and as capital has fled, and the global credit crunch ensuing has been able to freeze the arteries of a global economy, which is based on easy cheap credit. Media companies are being denied the normal flows of credit. There is therefore a massive global economic crisis in transforming and restructuring the media (Ekmekçioğlu, 2012). In a similar study done by Rosenfeld, Lorsch, and Khurana (2011), the research finds that the evolution of the media and their role in the recent crisis is more complicated. Rosenfeld *et al.* (2011) admits that apart from the economic crisis, there are many factors that are contributing to the challenges being faced by the media.

Rosenfeld *et al.* (2011, p.17) add that “it is a tale in which technological innovation, imploding business models, and intellectual fashion are all intertwined. And it is a story of two different journalistic genres: the public-interest variety that the profession prides itself on but that has lost its main source of funding (and that never focused much on the economy anyway), and the financial reporting that remains a solid business proposition but tends to echo the very flaws of the financial and economic system that we might want it to expose.” Spurk (2016) notes that the economic sustainability of the media remains a major problem - this is especially true for smaller local media outlets such as local or community radio stations supported by media development funds. Furthermore, Spurk (2016) makes a case that many media development organisations are run by journalists, most of whom are not interested in the media economy, profit and business.

The literature reviewed underneath looked at similar studies that were carried out in various countries. It looked at studies carried out in countries like the United States of America - post 2008 global financial crisis. Several similar studies have been done in Portugal, Turkey, Finland, India and lastly in Nigeria. Although similar studies have been done in several countries across the globe, it has been established that no similar study has been done in Namibia. This study will provide a basis for future studies. This chapter explains the meaning of print media, how it depends on the economy, and what the industry needs to do to survive economic crises.

2.4 Effects of the economic crisis on print media

An analysis indicates that print media depends so much on a good performing economy of a country. Silva (2015) states that financialisation is an important process depending on current trends in the media industry. He adds that high dependence on capital and debt is evident as the media industry fails to recover from the effects of the global financial crisis. Silva's research looked at the dynamics of media groups in Portugal undertake the concept of financialisation amid newly introduced media regulation authority.

Through consultations with 25 academic sources, it also provides an internal discussion of what the restructuring of the media is and under what circumstances it takes place. It considers the economic and financial performance of large media groups which are under conditions characterised by declining staffing and falling advertising revenue. It concludes that this (2008) crisis and its effects were also critical due to the growing lack of transparency regarding ownership, models and financial processes. Given the economic and financial conditions of the country, the need for capital appears to have increased in the Portuguese media.

Cronin (2018) is of the opinion that the media – not just newspapers – is still facing a vicious cycle when it comes to generating revenue in the wake of digital disruption and global economic crisis. Agreeing with Cronin is Patel (2019), articulating that nobody knows what will happen after the demise of print media and urged the media houses to figure out new ways of doing journalism.

In the United States of America, Kiss (2005) is very frank when she says newspapers are dead but it will take a while for the body to cool down. In her research, Kiss (2005, p.30) shouts that "it's unofficially official: news print is dead. Behind closed doors, web editors are united in their predictions of doom. These particular closed doors were at Cambridge-MIT Institute's digital technologies project in 2015, where the big guns of British and US media were discussing the future of online news." At the time of doing research, Kiss (2005) discloses that all the editors and publishers who present at the Cambridge-MIT Institute were speaking under the Chatham House Rule, which means their quotes can't be attributed. But the consensus was clear: newspapers are dying and dragging their news sites down with them.

Kiss (2005) suggests that newspapers sales didn't increase nor decline for 20 years despite the population increasing by 25%

Angelucci & Cagé (2016) adds that the newspaper industry probably suffered its worst year in 2015 since the recession.

Pew Research Center (2016) reveals that print and digital advertising revenues of companies listed on stock exchanges declined by 8%. In Australia, Carson (2014) paints a picture of a print media industry that is being affected by the economic growth setback leading to dwindling advertising revenues which resulted in cuts and closures. By examining business investigative journalism, Carson (2014) concluded that the setback was evident during the world recession crisis. .

Likewise in Finland, Lundén (2009) articulates that the operations of the media industry in the scandiavian country depends on levels of the GDP growth. Lunden (2009) argues that the global economic downturn, which deepened in the last six months of 2008 (and continues at the time of writing) is leaving a dent as far as media advertising revenue is concerned.

The literature looked at the effects the global crisis left on the Finland print media. Compared to most literature reviewed in this chapter, Lundén concludes that print media will never die. Williams (2017) disagrees with Lundén arguing that while many critics believe that dwindling advertising revenue is undermining democratic values, a large number of the public is not aware of the financial issues affecting the industry. Williams (2017) asserts that it's no longer worthy to report or publish that the journalism industry is in crisis because of financial struggles.

Pech, Cherian, Koutsouvelis, & Papastathopoulos (2019) believe that the incorporation of exciting technologies have distrubed the flow of revenue into Greece's print media industry.

2.5 Digital disruption and the decline of print media

The 2008 global economic crisis has affected the print media industry in several countries. Many scholars (such as Hustad, 2018; Emmott, 2018; Purdy, Wong and Harris, 2017) have cast doubt whether the print media will survive the effects brought upon by the global economic crisis experienced in 2008. Hustad (2018) believes that the economic crisis has led to the public lowering their trust in the media.

Critics such as Emmot (2008) and Purdy *et al*. (2007) question if economic reporters did their job by researching the financial industry to alert the public about a possible crisis. Emmott (2018) pointed out that the biggest challenge is the business model of the media itself. The loss of revenue to platform companies particularly Facebook and Google, and the disruption of the advertising model are seen as major challenges facing the print media across the world. That, along with the move of publications online, has led to a metric-based and often a click-based incentive structure, which produces very short-form entertainment type of journalism rather than investigative or challenging things. The simple fact is that in the years ahead, Purdy *et al.* (2017) warn the newspapers will have to shift most, if not all, of their publications to digital online.

Mdlongwa (2019) argues that in the past two decades, global technological platforms such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, YouTube and Twitter have entered the business of news and of journalism of mainstream media, dramatically raising the stakes for economic and financial survival of traditional media. For instance, Google has for decades been operating its Accelerated Mobile Pages that allows news organisations to market their news on that platform in return for sharing advertising revenue that is made on those pages. In a similar fashion, the largest social media network, Facebook, used its News Feed and Apple its Apple News for the same purpose. The tech giants promised mainstream newspapers and broadcast stations that they would get 70% of advertising revenues from these pages, while the tech firms would net 30%. In countries such as Australia, Germany and Britain, newspapers are arguing strongly for governmental intervention to tax the tech giants to pay for news which they are accused of pirating from newspapers (cf. Rusbridger, 2016). The tech giants have rejected the accusation, suggesting that they are, in fact, giving 'old media' greater reach and revenues.

Talemwa (2018) notes that newspaper's subscription and revenue generated from sales have been constant largely thanks to the growth in Africa and Asia Pacific compared to other continents. However, Talemwa (2018) admits that the rate at which revenue from advertising is plummeting is worrisome.

Thompson (2016) reveals that advertising revenue for print newspapers plummeted from an estimated US$60 billion to US$20 billion between 2000 and 2015 - affecting the growth recorded in the previous half a century.

Collins (2013) believes that the internet and gadgets such as smartphones have completely changed the traditional way of advertising and consuming the news. A research conducted by eMarketer reveals that average time spent with mediums like radio and print have declined up to 15.4% in 2012. Simons (2017) articulates that it is clear there will be many more smaller newsrooms in the future – including new entrants, non-media organisations touting their wares and the wasted remains of the old businesses. Simon (2017) asserts that the media in many countries face a deep crisis caused both by new technologies and more general economic circumstances while in others they are experiencing rapid growth.

In both cases the entire structure of the field is undergoing a dramatic change in terms of professional practice and in how media are organized and run (Mancini & Hallin, 2004). In the U.K. alone, more than 5,000 jobs disappeared in the decade up to 2014 (Harding, 2015:6). In South Africa, at least 5,000 media jobs were lost in the past decade alone – effectively half of the editorial staff in the entire country (Daniels, 2018:8). Desjardins (2016) articulates that over the last five to 10 years, people have been talking about how the newspaper, magazine, or radio station would become all but obsolete, and while certainly things have changed in all of these industries, it's clear that there has not been a full paradigm shift yet. Levy & Nielse (2010) warn media owners should not only view the new changes as challenges but also as opportunities to reinvent their publications. It's clear that none of the literature reviewed above suggests that print journalism has run its course but one thing for sure is that its sustainability is being threatened.

2.6 The precarious survival of print media in Africa

In a study conducted in Nigeria, Ekeanyanwu, Tobechukwu, & Samson (2008) reveal that the economics of decline that affected the industry globally also manifested in Nigeria. Ekeanyanwu *et al.* (2008) attribute the cause of this spiralling economic decline in the Nigerian newspaper industry to the reduction in GDP, reduction in consumer disposable income and the rising cost of productions etc. The study explored the impact of the global economic recession on three national newspapers based in Lagos, *The Guardian*, *The Sun*, and *Leadership newspapers*. In-depth interviews were conducted with senior editors of the newspapers to explain the economics of decline as well as investigate the survival strategies adopted by them. The findings reveal that these newspapers are truly facing a bigger threat of extinction and that the survival strategies adopted by them to stay afloat are inadequate.

Hyacinth (2018) adds that the ongoing economic depression in the world is a bad wind that no country blows economically well. Findings from the study are discussed within the context of the much larger body of knowledge on mass media and the link with the economic downturn. Therefore, the study recommends that to stay afloat economically, print newspapers should think of new media sustainability business models. Cag´e (2014) shouts that despite the print media industry suffering from the effects of poor economic growth in several countries, the point, however, is that the reading of newspapers will continue at a much higher rate compared to other continents in the coming years.

Cag´e (2014) is basing the conclusion on the history regarding newspapers from sub-Saharan Africa as well as intricate pieces of history information from the United States and Europe. Cag´e (2014) argues that while it's true that sales from physical copies are declining, as print media battles to keep up with broadcasting and online media, the circulation of newspapers is growing in sub-Saharan Africa. Cag´e (2014) adds that the increase in literacy results in the reading growth of newspapers at a time when people in sub-Saharan Africa struggle with modern day media brought upon technologies and the internet.

Adjin-Tettey *et al*. (2021) paint a picture of media organisations in sub-Saharan Africa suffering the global trend of losing advertising revenue to social media and other digital media platforms. Typically, Adjin-Tettey argues that commercial media organisations depend on sponsors and advertisers to fund their programmes and to pay their employees. Adjin-Tettey *et al.* (2021) add that many public broadcasters also depend on commercial revenue. They reveal that African publishers have had to find new income streams, but many jobs have still been lost. This trend appears to have escalated under the Covid-19 crisis. In order to deal with their financial challenges, Adjin-Tettey *et al.* (2021) call on some media organisations in Africa to turn to funding from international donor agencies as alternative forms of revenue, including from development agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious organisations.

Adjin-Tettey *et al* (2021) reveal that many investigative stories in Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana, as well as health reporting in South Africa, have been sponsored by foreign aid funds. Adjin-Tettey *et al.* (2021) warn that although donor funding or private investment in the media in Africa has led to reportage and investigative stories in areas such as health, social justice, education and the environment, which are often neglected because of lack of capacity within newsrooms, donor-funded journalism can sometimes compromise media independence. Adjin-Tettey *et al.* (2021) argue that sponsors of foreign development assistance coming into Africa for media development tend to set the agenda for the media coverage they want prioritised through funding criteria. This can pose a threat not only to media freedom, but also to local media determining their own priorities. Scholars such as Adjin-Tettey, Garman, Kruger, Olausson, Berglez, Tallert, and Fritzon warn that the economic weakness of much of Africa’s media results in poor remuneration and poor conditions of service for journalists.

The scholars add that some journalists are driven to pay their own transport, communication and other costs. The generally poor conditions of service of journalists is a great disincentive and impacts the independence that is required of them in carrying out their duties. In Guinea Bissau, as an example, Adjin-Tettey *et al.* (2021) reveal that journalists are compelled to join political parties to be able to continue to work as professional journalists. Poor remuneration also means media organisations lose good journalists who leave the profession to take up better-paid work in other sectors -those who stay in the profession often become susceptible to influences that impact their independence (Adjin-Tettey *et al*, 2021). Adjin-Tettey *et al.* sums up the situation as follows:

> "In addition, even in contexts where the media environment is free, diverse and vibrant, there is also the trend of political actors dominating ownership of media organisations which often leads to a polarised media environment. Typically, journalists in such media organisations put aside best practices and professional standards as they work to push the agenda of their owners rather than serve the public interest. A polarised media environment provides a fertile ground for watering down independent critical media" (Adjin-Tettey *et al*. 2021, p.10).

2.7 The economic effects on Namibian print media

There appears to be a lack of research conducted in Namibia on the survival of print media during tough economic conditions by scholars. The lack of studies could be attributed to the fact that since independence in 1990, this is the first time that the country is going through an economic recession. Despite the lack of scholarly studies, several people such as Wasserman (2018) researched it albeit on a small case. Wasserman (2018) articulates that in Windhoek, the focus fell on journalism's sustainability in conditions of severe economic uncertainty. The sustainability of the news media, Wasserman (2018) believes that it's a precondition for good journalism in the public interest. Wasserman (2018, p.1) urges for the economic questions "to form part of discussions of press freedom. And that has implications for media ethics. The importance of embracing digitalisation, explaining that although it presents a threat to traditional media houses and their ability to remain relevant, it is part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterised by a need to provide digital products and services."

The Namibian media industry is urged to avoid armchair journalism, and not to compromise on quality (Uiras, 2019). The lack of growth in the country's main sectors has posed serious problems to the print media industry (Remmert, 2019). For example, the once thriving *The Villager* newspaper has since closed down. *The Windhoek Observer's* future in 2020 is uncertain, *The Southern Times* is struggling to stay afloat, and *The Economist* has already migrated to online. Aha (2019) states that print media's sustainability is a tale in which technological disruptions, imploding business models and socio-economic challenges are all intertwined. The decline in the economy has had an effect on the day-to-day operations of the print media industry in Namibia as close to 40 journalists have lost their jobs since the start of the economic crisis in 2016 (Kahiurika and Ngutjinazo, 2019).

2.8 The effects of Covid-19 on print media

At the time of conducting this study, the world encountered a Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The World Health Organisation (2019) defines Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) as an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The effects of Covid-19 are severe as World Health Organisation (2019, p.1) puts it, "Most people infected with the Covid-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness."

Ponsford (2020) admits Covid-19 is the greatest challenge to the world news industry since the global economy crashed in 2008. Ponsford adds that the pandemic is happening at a time when the media industry has never been so vital in the midst of fake news, news proliferating on social media, and access to quality news and information can be a matter of life and death. Mayhew (2020) concurs with Ponsford, saying that the financial crisis brought about by Covid-19 has accelerated existing trends – namely the shift from print to digital – but it is not an "extinction event" for the news industry at large. So what might the news industry look like once the Covid-19 crisis has eased? And will it ever return to the way it was before?

Information published by Print Media Global Market Report states the world print business will decrease to US$289.9 billion in 2020 from US$315.7 billion in 2019. This is mostly attributed to the slowdown in economic activities due to the pandemic and its inability to curb it. The report states that growth in the global print media market might bounce back and grow to US$299.3 billion in 2023.

The report shows that several regions whose print media industry was affected most are Asia Pacific (37%), and North America (32%). Africa was the least hit in the print media market. The report cites video magazines and many other digital platforms as the game changer for the print media industry.

The report further states that consumers would rather spend an enormous amount of time on digital platforms watching videos, reading articles or just browsing through social media instead of paying or picking up a physical copy of the newspaper to read.

Research firm Forrester calculated that one-minute of video is equal to 1.8 million words. Studies as per Forrester analysis, have also shown that video advertising generates four times the leads of non-video advertising.

Imadalou (2020) reveals that Covid-19 has affected so many industries that working hours fell 14% during the second quarter of 2020 - equivalent to the loss of 400 million full-time jobs, globally.The print media was not spared. Kalita & Das (2020) believe that the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the negative effects that were already brought onto print media by struggling economies. Kalita & Das (2020, p1.) argue that "unfortunately the present epidemic has posed a huge threat particularly to the print media where thousands of workers have been working at a meagre earnings and with no future economic security. Especially those who are working at different vernacular print media houses having a gloomy future ahead because of the whim of their owners or proprietors."

Economic woes affecting several print media industries appears to have been compounded by the effects of Covid-19. In the UK there have already been casualties, Buzzfeed has closed its news operation and Quartz has shuttered its London newsroom with redundancies falling across the wider news industry. Newman (2020) warns print media that the financial impact caused by the coronavirus crisis is a "catalyst for change" in the news industry that has forced publishers to do things they had been putting off – and at speed. While closures of print media houses will be guaranteed, Newman predicts that a lot of changes will be around consolidation, and cost-cutting, re-organising and rethinking what a news organisation needs to do going forward if not in an all-digital way [then] in a way in which digital is genuinely leading the charge.

As if the media's troubles were not enough, the year 2020 rudely ushered in a debilitating global health pandemic, COVID-19 — the worst such pandemic in a century. Aside from its staggering human death toll, the pandemic accelerated the collapse of news media, forcing more media houses to close and retrench tens of thousands of media workers across the world (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2020). McCabe (2020) believes that while the print media journey has been quite complicated to get to the position it's got to, (*The Guardian*) has nonetheless proven without a doubt that if a newspaper express it mission "you can look your readers in the eye and say: Look, you don't have to pay for this, but if you did, it would be incredibly helpful to this business." McCabe's opinion refers to the strategy of the *The Guardian newspaper*, which has been asking for financial support from its readers since early 2016 despite continuing to provide content for free online. More recently this tactic has also been adopted by *The Independent* and many newspapers.

In India, Kalita & Das (2020) paint a picture of an industry suffering from the effects brought upon by Covid-19. Kalita & Das (2020) add that different newspapers are now being forced to effect drastic costs because Covid-19 has led to the decrease in readership and dwindling advertising revenue. Kalita & Das (2020) reveal that employees of these newspapers have either had their salaries reduced or fired entirely. They further added that newspapers also had to reduce the number of pages and copies printed.

Kalita & Das (2020) admit that the coronavirus pandemic has not spared top industry media organisations such as Quintillion Media Private Limited, Business Standard Limited, The Times Group, The Indian Express Group, and Hindustan Times Media Limited.

Dods (2020, p.2) argues that "Covid-19 highlighted the need for change in certain sectors, and all things online and digital have been accelerated throughout the pandemic. One such sector to have experienced this rapid change is the media industry. With a number of publications announcing closures or a move to digital, Meltwater, the global leader in media monitoring, tracked and analysed news and social media to explore the impact that Covid-19 has had on this particular industry. The answer, the data seems to indicate, is not the end of print media, but rather, a 'new normal' for the media industry."

VOA (2020, p.1) describes "a situation of newspapers and other publications being under pressure as advertising craters in the United States resulting in job cuts, staff hours and pay, dropping print editions -- and in some cases shutting down entirely. Statistics by VOA shows that more than 2,100 cities and towns have lost a paper in the past 15 years, mostly weeklies, and newsroom employment has shrunk by half since 2004. Many publications struggled as consumers turned to the internet for news, battered by the Great Recession of 2007-2009 and the rise of giants like Google and Facebook that dominated the market for digital ads. Further statistics show that recently, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, big national newspapers like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* have diversified revenue by adding millions of digital subscribers. Many others, however, remain heavily dependent on advertising."

Twenty global news publishers recently surveyed by the International News Media Association (INMA) expect a median 23% decline in 2020 ad sales. In the U.S., newspaper ad revenues have dropped 20% to 30% in the last few weeks compared with a year ago, FTI Consulting's Ken Harding wrote in another INMA report. On 03 April 2020, the largest U.S. newspaper chain, Gannett, announced 15-day furloughs and pay cuts for many employees. Four days later, another major chain, Lee Enterprises, also announced salary reductions and furloughs. *The Tampa Bay Times*, owned by the non-profit Poynter Institute, cut five days of its print edition and announced furloughs for non-newsroom staff.

Ntibinyane (2020) opines that the impact of this global pandemic on the media industry is being felt acutely. Hamstrung by loss of advertising revenue and low sales, newsrooms across the world have announced staff layoffs, suspended or cancelled their print operations and downsized significantly. Ntibinyane (2020) paints the picture of an industry that is under immense strain and Africa has not been spared. "The traditional business model for newspapers, underpinned by advertising and circulation, has imploded. This is not a new occurrence or due to Covid-19: revenue from these two sources has been steadily declining in recent years due to the uptake of digital news and the challenging economic environment in many African countries" (Ntibinyane, p.4, 2020).

Ntibinyane (2020, p.2) argues that "the pandemic has added fuel to the fire: unless we take swift and decisive measures, the newspaper industry will be decimated. What should be done and how?" Ntibinyane's study proposes radical and urgent measures to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on print journalism in Africa. It's a study that analyses how for at least two centuries, newspapers have been the lifeblood of democracy. Local, independent publishers have pushed for strong and credible journalism, developing a public good that is now under threat. The study concludes that newspapers are still an invaluable medium in many African countries, reaching rural communities and those without internet access. But that appears to be changing. Ntibinyane (2020) articulates that while data is not readily available to assess the overall performance of newspapers on the continent, there is growing evidence in countries like Kenya and South Africa that newspapers are losing readership. In South Africa, Tech Central (2021) paints an industry whose overall circulation for the 17 daily papers in the country is 60% lower."

Tech Central (2021) reveals that eight papers have seen declines of more than 60%, with Pretoria News down 87%, The Star down 75% and Cape Argus and Cape Times each down around 70%. The best performing title since 2016 is The Citizen, with a circulation decline of 32%. In Kenya, data shows that in 2018, the number of English daily newspapers declined to 87.1 million from 102 million in 2014. The number of Kiswahili daily newspapers, on the other hand, declined to 37 million copies in 2018 from 58 million copies in 2014.

For the curve to tilt, Ntibinyane (2020) believes that for the newspaper industry to have a chance of survival post-Covid-19, radical measures must be pursued. First, Ntibinyane (2020) urges the industry to consider migrating online. Second, newspaper owners must engage with the government about economic relief measures, without compromising on sacred principles like editorial independence. Third, the industry should embrace support from ‘Big Tech’ but should also call for profit-sharing and taxation to support independent journalism. In Uganda, Kigambo (2020) talks about a pandemic that has thus far stretched everyone beyond their limits. This, Kigambo (2020) adds that includes Ugandan journalists and especially those working in print media; the bedrock of the country’s journalism. Kigambo (2020) reveals that many such reporters and news companies have been pushed on and over the edge by outright suspension or downsizing of operations and severe wage cuts as few unfortunate workers have had their contracts terminated.

Although speculations abound, it is early days to say with any certainty what permanent effects will remain, since these interruptions are said to be temporary. It appears that the full impact will only be assessed more efficiently when Coronavirus has fully wrecked its havoc and been forced to move on. For now, however, this much is true: this global health pandemic has completely exposed the precariousness of especially the print media industry in Uganda that something ought to be done to keep it alive and kicking (Kigambo, p.1). Kigambo (2020, p.1) discusses that “for a long time, newspapers and the few, mostly lifestyle, magazines that exist have been struggling to survive as a going concern. Coupled with that, myriad constraints to professional practise that are usually aimed at the printed press because of their unrivalled influence have seen many of its finest members exit for better, safer and less strenuous jobs – leaving Ugandan journalism the worse for it. Thus the need to examine the fulcrum of Uganda’s media has never been greater.”

In southern Africa, Mare (2020) talks of a region whose media organisations face the questions of sustainability as the economies of countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been struggling for growth. Mare (2020) predicts a bleak print media whose future is set to become severe due to the implementation of lockdown rules during the early stages of Covid-19 as advertising in newspapers dries up because of the effects brought upon by the pandemic. In April 2020, South Africans said goodbye to independent media house, Associated Media Publishing (AMP), following challenges it faced due to Covid-19. This resulted in the closure of magazines such as C*osmopolitan SA* and *House & Leisure* (Dods, 2020).

The Daily Sun has announced that it has published its last print issue of the newspaper for regions other than Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West in South Africa. In Zimbabwe where the economy has faced trials and tribulations for so many decades, Truscott (2020) describes a print media industry that is facing distress calls from journalists, salaries slashed by 50 percent - Zimbabwe's media is not just struggling for press freedom – Covid-19 threatens to close it down much faster. The situation appears to be even worse in Zambia with Chirwa (2020) revealing that at least 8% of the country's media organisations have cut jobs or salaries due to Covid-19. The research was conducted in 40 different media organisations participated (Radio, TV, Newspapers, Magazines), among them ZNBC, *Zambia Daily Mail*, *Times of Zambia*, *Daily Nation*, *News Diggers*, *The Mast*, *Hot FM*, *QTV*, *Muvi TV*, *Diamond TV*, *Live Radio*, *The Globe*, *Solwezi Today*, *Radio Icengelo*, *Breeze FM*, *Zambezi FM*, and *New Vision*.

Chirwa (2020) states that the core objective was to have a well-balanced representation from traditional media that is currently feeling the pinch of the economic downturn worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. Chirwa stipulates that feedback reveals deep concerns about the future of the news media, post-Covid-19 and relative to worldwide trends with regard to the industry. Wamunyu (2021) discloses that until the arrival of the World Wide Web, the media model that worked revolved around money made from selling advertisements and from revenue from subscriptions or copy sales. But, Wamunyu (2021) cautions that online delivery has left traditional media struggling to find new revenue sources while using web metrics to quantify audience numbers and engagement. She believes that there are some significant factors that contribute to the strength and sustainability of a media house. One of them is how news outlets are organised – how they conduct their day-to-day business. In particular, how they marry traditional practices (before the arrival of the internet), with the demands of making news available for online distribution. Towards this end, Wamunyu (2021) encourages media houses with digital and traditional newsrooms in Africa to engender more collaborative environments to address the tensions that often emerge between the old and the new. This, she believes, would go a long way towards sustainability.

Already bearing the effects of the economic crisis, Namibia's print media sustainability appears to be stretched. The country's largest media conglomerate, the Namibia Media Holdings (NMH) has reduced employees' salaries by 20% in light of the economic decline the country is facing in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic (Shikongo, 2020). The country's largest daily newspaper, *The Namibian*, carried out retrenchments and renegotiated benefits with employees in a bid to contain costs and streamline its business. The newspaper employs 110 people, an additional 20 people are on a contractual basis, and also employs freelancers. Editor Tangeni Amupadhi said the desired costs to be cut should be at most 60%, and a minimum of 40%, according to financial analysts approached by the company. Ngatjiheue (2020) quotes Amupadhi saying that the reasons for restructuring as a process are complicated by an economy that is not getting anywhere – despite the government's optimism that the domestic economy would recover. Ngatjiheue adds that cost-cutting measures were a given and were exacerbated by the Covid-19-imposed lockdown in addition to the recession the country has been in since 2016.

This research will seek to provide a foundation for future studies given the absence of any empirical study on the impact of economic recession and Covid-19 on print media in Namibia. The conclusion and findings will present any problems and solutions that this study may find. Print media organisations can then use this information to re-invent their business models. The study will also be useful to the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Editors Forum of Namibia and the Office of the Media Ombudsman to measure how print media is faring under the current economic conditions and Covid-19 challenges.

2.9 Theoretical frameworks

This study uses the critical political economy theory and the concept of media sustainability. Political economy approach has been in existence for many centuries and many scholars (such as Garnham, 1990; Schiller, 1996; McChesney, 2000; McChesney & Schiller, 2003; Bagdikian, 1997; Mansell, 2004; Wasko, 2001; Mosco, 1996; and Mosco & Foster, 2001) all have revised the political economy theory. For the relevance of this study, it will use the critical political economy approach, which was advanced by McChesney (2003). McChesney (2003) scrutinises the structure of media industries, questions of ownership, market structure and commercial support and how these affect media content, performance and impact.

Adjin-Tettey *et al* (2021) believe that media organisations need to have a firm financial footing to carry out their mandate. They put it as follows:

“Economic constraints undoubtedly affect the social and political functions of the media. Lack of resources narrows the news agenda as it costs money to produce high-quality content. Where the state is the biggest advertiser – as is the case in many African countries – public officials can too easily close the income tap if they are faced with coverage they do not like (Adjin-Tettey *et al*. p.10, 2021).

Mchesney’s political economy of the media is relevant to this study in the essence that it highlights how an economy affects the print media operations. The main assumptions of political economy is that it is concerned with the relationship of media systems to the broader social and power relations of society. Another main assumption is that, political economy uses economic tools to examine political phenomena (Jin, 2018). Collinson (2003) stipulates that political economy is a useful approach because it explains how political forces influence the economy and economic outcomes including that of print media. Hardy (2014) advocates for critical political economy of the media because it provides a clear, comprehensive and insightful introduction to the political economic analysis of contemporary media. Mosco (2009) and Winseck (2008) find the political-economy approach important because it scrutinizes acquisitions, mergers, buy-outs, and partnerships.

Litschka (2019) likes the theory because it gives an overview of some important streams of heterodox political-economic approaches in economics and their role in a "mediatized" world and centers on two concepts of major interest for media policies: These are the potential media capabilities can have for media users in a mediatized economy, and the important role of publicity and mass media when questions of justice are concerned. For both issues, Litschka (2019) argues that the capability approach offers interesting insights from a political-economic perspective.

Jin (2018) regards media political economy as useful because it covers a variety of fields, including journalism, broadcasting, advertising, and information and communication technologies. Jin (2018) defines a political economic approach that deconstructs the power relationship between politics, mediation, and economics. He refers to them thus: first, it is necessary to define the intellectual history of this field, to grow and grow the political economy of the media as an academic field. Second, the epistemology of this field is debated, highlighting several key features that distinguish it from other approaches in media and Communication Research. Third, it is necessary to understand the regulatory and legal environment affecting information and communication technologies (ICT) and/or the communication environment based on digital media, especially to map the beginning of political economic research of the media in the culture industry. In particular, what are the ways to develop and use political economies in a new media environment based on platform technology in the three new areas of digital media and digital platforms, big data and digital labor?

Jin (2018) believes that the areas listed above are crucial for analysis, not only because they are closely related, but also because they have become a major and major part of modern capitalism.

However, Wasko (2011) and Meehan (2013) criticise the approach because they regard the political economy of the media to be reductionist, too economistic, and simplistic. Artz, Macek, and Cloud (2006), and Schiller (2007) all insist on the necessity of including power and social class relations in political economy of the media as well as committing to praxis by combining research and action to advance a more democratic society. "The main difficulty I have with McChesney's political economy of the media is that it appears to lack a theory of value, or at the very least appears to presuppose one. This is most apparent when 'economic factors' are taken for granted and are entirely separated from 'politics and social relations' by being placed in subjective relation to them" (Graham, 2007, p.16).

Literature above suggests that ultimately, the entire population will be born and grow with the internet available to them. It's further suggested that the products of print media would be only found in museums. The last bastion of print ads will be direct mail (Rogers, 2018). However, Levy & Nielse (2010) point out that the print media has not reached its end and that there is a need to investigate ways as to how it can survive in these harsh economic conditions. In Namibia, this investigation has not been carried out. This study seeks to investigate how Namibia's print media industry is surviving under the current harsh economic conditions impacting the country's print media industry since 2016.

Based on the literature above and the political economy of the media, the concept of media sustainability is now at the forefront if the print industry is to survive. Moore, Hollifield, Jurrat and De Roy (2020) claim that so far, there is no common language among media and media development stakeholders to describe the complex challenge of media viability: 'media sustainability,' 'financial sustainability,' 'business viability,' or 'economic sustainability' of the media are just some of the labels being used. As suggested by these terms, Moore *et al.* (2020) assert that many media outlets and media development strategies have solely focused on the financial aspect of news media viability—testing paywalls, membership models, or support from donors, concentrating on individual, innovative business models.

However, Moore *et al.* (2020) warn that this approach often ignores other significant areas that influence the functioning and quality of news media, such as the overall political, legal, and economic context in which news media operate. "It also ignores the question of the quality of the content that is being produced and how it is being published; whether news organizations not only survive but do so with the resources to serve as watchdogs of government, business, and society. Moreover, it is essential to look at the way the audience, or citizens in general, perceive and use news media and what technological possibilities they have to access media content" (Moore *et al.*, p. 2, 2020).

Therefore, Moore *et al.* (2020) argue that media viability is the ability of media outlets and media landscapes to produce high-quality journalism in a sustainable way. This definition goes beyond the individual media outlet level and its revenue streams, taking into account the larger picture, including markets, networks, and individual outlets. Moore *et al.* (2020)'s media viability/sustainability has five dimensions and considers a country's entire information ecosystem, while keeping the user at the center of all analysis. These are “First, the political environment is taken into account—at both the national and the local levels—and how it affects the diversity of views represented in news media content, as well as the extent to which news media are influenced and controlled by the government. The economics dimension relates to financial and economic aspects of the media market, news media organizations, and their audiences. The community dimension covers the audience’s capacities and values as well as its relationships with media outlets, i.e., levels of trust, emotional attachment, and participation.The technology dimension assesses the news media’s access to production and distribution resources and technologies, and their ability to optimize the use of those resources.

Finally, ownership, independence, and quality of the journalism available to the public is covered by the content dimension. All dimensions relate to individual organisations, media networks, and the overall environment for news media, representing the micro, meso, and macro level of media viability” (Moore *et al.*, p. 3, 2020). McChesney (2003) argues that profit motivations can lead to the right path of media sustainability. Carvalho (2007) believes that factors like ownership and the wider political economy of the media can provide significant contributions [to media content] as well as the press’s relations with established interests and the social distribution of power. Boykoff and Yulsman (2013) reveal that print media sustainability in the United States have suffered from a long-term trend of disinvestment in journalism, one that actually began before the economic meltdown of 2008 and the disarray wrought by the digital revolution. “In 2006, U.S. newspapers began to experience an economic meltdown—2 years before the nation itself did—with print advertising revenue and operating revenue overall falling off the table. Staffing in newsrooms, which had been slipping for about 5 years, also plummeted. Not surprisingly, that trend continued during the global economic collapse (Boykoff and Yulsman, p.3, 2013).

In order to achieve media sustainability, print media appears to be forced in retrenching and converging the newsroom with a small number of employees required to do many tasks. Boykoff and Yulsman (2013) argue that focused on efficiency, media organisations have forced journalists to cover an increasing range of beats under tighter deadlines. Moreover, Boykoff and Yulsman (2013) add that content producers in publishing organisations that have survived newsroom cuts and shortfalls have faced increased multi-platform demands (video, audio, and text, along with blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Reddit, 4chan, and YouTube). Media sustainability in the modern era appears not to be only threatened by social media. Craig (2019) argues media sustainability should be centered on how advertisements are presented to perform an important function in the misrepresentation of the social relations of production and consumption

Generally, Craig (2019) reveals that media portrayals of everyday sustainability are often given substance through representations of its featured ‘stuff’ and associated modes of production and consumption, and relations of exchange. “Advertising is a mundane feature of everyday life and it often fills media and public spaces. It conveys information about goods and services and involves a complex negotiation with the culture in which it communicates, drawing on particular images, narratives, and values in order to assign meaning to products (Craig, p. 121, 2019). In addition, Craig (2019) asserts that attaching meanings to products, advertising also helps elevate the significance of physical commodities and their consumption to both the economy and the culture.

2.10 Conclusion

The literature presented in this chapter centers around the sustainability of print media globally, in Africa and finally in Namibia. It asks questions whether print media will survive in the midst of the fast growing digital media and technological disruption. Some authors believe that print media must migrate fukky to online, others argue that it would present a revenue catastrophe if print media were to 100% abandon their core business. This chapter also presented the political economy of the media, which scrutinises the structure of media industries, questions of ownership, market structure and commercial support and how these affect media content, performance and impact. The information discussed in this chapter will be used for analysis in Chapter four but the data collection methods will be discussed in the next Chapter (three).

CHAPTER 3

Research methodology

3. Introduction

Withe end goal of determining how print media in Namibia has been surviving under tough economic conditions, the researcher garnered data by interviewing respondents from print newspapers. This study employed a qualitative approach. Semi-structured questions were used. It also used document analysis to collect data. The research design procedures used in this study were defined and explained in this chapter. This study utilised a multiple-case case study research design on six newspapers. These are: *The Namibian, Namibian Sun, New Era, Windhoek Observer, Confidente, and The Southern Times.*

3.1 Research Paradigm

This study used the interpretivism paradigm, which is regarded by Cloud (2018) as one form of qualitative methodology, which relies upon both the trained researcher and the human subject as the instruments to measure some phenomena, and typically involves both observation and interviews. Interpretivism was chosen for this study because it enabled the researcher to interpret elements of the study, thus interpretivism integrates human interest into a study. Accordingly, "interpretive researchers have the privilege to observe many things as instruments, shared meanings, consciousness and language etc (Myers, 2008, p.1)." Myers (2008) states that development of interpretivist philosophy anchors on the positivism discourse in sciences of sociology. This is because the philosophy of interpretivism dwells on qualitative instead of quantitative analysis.

Collins (2010) describes interpretivism from the idealism point of view - used to bring together a myriad of systems such as phenomenology, hermeneutics and social constructivism. The interpretivist approach as per Saunders and Thornhill (2012) state that it is important for the researcher as a social actor to appreciate differences between people. It is clear that from the above scholars, interpretivism studies usually focus on meaning and may employ multiple methods in order to reflect different aspects of the issue. For this study, interpretivism was chosen as the research paradigm focusing on documents and information gathered from interviews.

3.2 Research Approach: Qualitative Research Methodology

Bhandari (2020) states that qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. He describes it as follows:

> "Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research refrain from collecting and analysing data presented in numbers. Qualitative research is commonly used in the humanities and social sciences, in subjects such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, history, etc. (Bhandari, 2020, p.1).

Because of how deep the researcher is involved, McLeod (2019) argues that the researcher in qualitative gets eye-catching information. This, McLeod (2019) believes that it allows the researcher to find issues that are often missed (such as innuendos and complexities) by the scientific, more positivistic inquiries. Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey (2016) regard qualitative' methods useful because they are used to arose responses about perspective, the past, and meaning directly from the participants' mouth. This kind of data is not measured or counted. In terms of qualitative research, Hammarberg (2019, p.5) states that "its techniques include 'small-group discussions' for investigating beliefs, attitudes and concepts of normative behaviour; 'semi-structured interviews', to seek views on a focused topic or, with key informants, for background information or an institutional perspective; 'in-depth interviews' to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective; and 'analysis of texts and documents', such as government reports, media articles, websites or diaries, to learn about distributed or private knowledge."

3.3 Research design: Multiple-case study design

Smith (2013) asserts that a case study deals with the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. Mills, Durepos & Wiebe (2010) define multiple-case as a research design in which various important bounded cases are chosen to establish a comprehensive understanding of a phenomena. Unlike in single case, Mills *et al.* (2010) affirm that generalisability is enhanced in a multiple-case study. They added that this research methodology is more powerful than single-case designs as it provides more extensive descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon or issue. Brink (2018) reasons that one advantage of a multiple-case study design is helping the researcher regarding how details obtained can facilitate the whole process that represents a bigger picture.

It is important for researchers to consider the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin interpretive research (Brink, 2018). In addition, detailed description is provided of the methodological assumptions and overall research approach as they relate to the multiple case study design.

This research employed a multiple-case study research design on *The Namibian*, *Confidente*, *The Southern Times*, *Windhoek Observer*, *Namibian Sun*, and the *New Era* to investigate how the print media in Namibia is surviving the current economic conditions. *The Namibian* was chosen on the basis of being the biggest daily newspaper in the country. Confidente is a case study because it's one of the only few existing weekly newspapers in the country that still consistently print. The *Southern Times* was chosen because it continues to print despite announcing that it was set to close. The *Windhoek Observer* is part of the case study because it's the oldest newspaper in the country. The *Namibian Sun* was included because it is one of the largest daily private owned newspapers in the country. The *New Era* also forms part of the case study to give balance as to how a government-owned print newspaper is surviving under the current economic conditions.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

This study relied on non-probability sampling techniques like purposive and convenience. Lavrakas (2011) defines purposive sampling as non-probability selection, which has the objective of producing a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population. Patton (2002) describes purposeful sampling as widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1 Document Analysis

The study used a document analysis, which is one of the data collection instruments under the qualitative research methodology. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). There are three primary types of documents (O'Leary, 2014):

> Public Records: The official, ongoing records of an organisation's activities. Examples include student transcripts, mission statements, annual reports, policy manuals, student handbooks, strategic plans, and syllabi.

Personal Documents: First-person accounts of an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs. Examples include calendars, e-mails, scrapbooks, blogs, Facebook posts, duty logs, incident reports, reflections/journals, and newspapers.

Physical Evidence: Physical objects found within the study setting (often called artifacts). Examples include flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, and training materials.

The information examined is from several documents and secondary data available on the Namibian print media. This includes newspaper articles and information from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR).

3.4.2 Semi Structured Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews using semi-structured questions. Liamputtong (2009) regards interviews as special conversations in social science research. The semi-structured questions allowed the researcher to be flexible in arranging and asking questions. This allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions in order to solicit more information from respondents. A total sample of 16 people of which includes owners, managers, journalists, marketing and administrative staff from the selected media houses were interviewed. The research was carried out in Windhoek between 20 November 2020 and 1 June 2021. The respondents were made aware of the research's topic, interests, objectives and rationale of the study. The respondents were given consent forms. The researcher explained and handed the respondents a consent form. After signing the consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study, the respondents answered 15 questions. All the respondents apart from one news editor didn't request anonymity.

Britten (1999) articulates that semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. The questions asked generated three themes: economic crisis impact on print media, responses to the economic crisis and new business model. Some of the questions (see also Appendix 1) included:

- What do you understand by the term economic recession?
- How have the current economic challenges impacted your operations as an organisation?

- What are the main challenges brought upon onto your organisation by the contemporary economic crisis?
- What coping mechanisms has your organisation put into place to counter these challenges?
- How useful have these mechanisms been in ensuring financial sustainability in the face of these economic challenges?
- What assistance does your organisation need in order to offset the impact of the economic recession?
- What are some of the new business models your organisation has put in place in an effort to sustain the operations in the midst of an economic crisis?

The main question for this study is: how has the current economic challenges impacted your operations as an organisation, other questions include; what are the main challenges brought upon onto your organisation by the contemporary economic crisis?; What are some of the new business models your organisation has put in place in an effort to sustain the operations in the midst of an economic crisis?; What's the way forward in your organisation's quest to mitigate the contemporary economic crisis?. During the interviews a phone recorder was used.

3.5 Data Analysis

The study used thematic content analysis together with the inductive data approach. Under the thematic content analysis, Caulfield (2019) states that the researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. Until recently, Braun & Clarke (2012) reveals that thematic analysis was a widely used yet poorly defined method of qualitative data analysis. Instead, qualitative researchers tended to either use the method without any guiding reference, or claim some mix of other approaches (e.g., grounded theory and discourse analysis) to rationalise what essentially was thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2020) believe that thematic analysis is rapidly becoming widely recognised as a unique and valuable method in its own right, alongside other more established qualitative approaches like grounded theory, narrative analysis, or discourse analysis. "Thematic analysis is an accessible, flexible, and increasingly popular method of qualitative data analysis. Learning to do it provides the qualitative researcher with a foundation in the basic skills needed to engage with other approaches to qualitative data analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.1). In this study, the researcher organised information according to common themes, topics, ideas and patterns.

3.6 Validity and Trustworthiness

This study is based on validity and trustworthiness. Middleton (2019) states that validity refers to how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure. If research has high validity that means it produces results that correspond to real properties, characteristics, and variations in the physical or social world. High reliability is one indicator that a measurement is valid. If a method is not reliable, it probably isn't valid. To ensure validity, Middleton (2019) offers a suggestion that the researcher's method and measurement technique are high quality and targeted to measure exactly what one wants to know. Middleton (2019) adds that information should be thoroughly researched and based on existing knowledge.

For example, Middleton (2019) articulates that to collect data on a personality trait, a researcher could use a standardised questionnaire that is considered reliable and valid. She adds that if the researcher develops her own questionnaire, it should be based on established theory or findings of previous studies, and the questions should be carefully and precisely worded. Furthermore, to produce valid generalizable results, Middleton (2019) urges researchers to clearly define the population they are researching (e.g. people from a specific age range, geographical location, or profession). This, she adds, will make sure the researcher has enough participants and that they are representative of the population. Smit (2001) defines trustworthiness as the believability of the researcher's findings, i.e. all that the researcher has done in designing, carrying out and reporting the research to make the results credible. DeVault (2019) asserts that trustworthiness has four key components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

> "Credibility: Triangulation and member checks help establish credibility and contribute to trustworthiness. Other factors include prolonged engagement with and persistent observations of research subjects.
>
> Triangulation asks the same research questions of different study participants and collects data from different sources through different methods to answer the same questions. Member checks occur when researchers ask participants to review the data collected by interviewers and the researchers' interpretations of that data. Participants generally appreciate the member check process because it gives them a chance to verify their statements and fill in any gaps from earlier interviews. Trust is an important aspect of the member check process.

Transferability: generalises study findings and attempts to apply them to other situations and contexts. Researchers cannot prove definitively that outcomes based on the interpretation of the data are transferable, but they can establish that it is likely.

Dependability: any qualitative researchers believe that if credibility has been demonstrated, it is not necessary to also and separately demonstrate dependability. However, if a researcher permits parsing of the terms, then credibility seems more related to validity, and dependability seems more related to reliability. Sometimes data validity is assessed through the use of a data audit. A data audit can be conducted if the data set is both rich-thick so that an auditor can determine if the research situation applies to their circumstances. Without sufficient details and contextual information, this is not possible. Regardless, it is important to remember that the aim is not to generalize beyond the sample.

Confirmability: qualitative research can be conducted to replicate earlier work, and when that is the goal, it is important for the data categories to be made internally consistent. Lincoln and Guba state in their 1985 book "*Naturalistic Inquiry*" that researchers must devise rules that describe category properties and that can, ultimately, be used to justify the inclusion of each data bit that remains assigned to the category as well as to provide a basis for later tests of replicability."

From the above, it is important for other researchers to be able to replicate the results to show that those results are a product of independent research methods and not of conscious or unconscious bias.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Alrc (2010) defines ethical considerations as an accumulation of values and principles that address questions of what is good or bad in human affairs. Alrc (2010) states that ethics searches for reasons for acting or refraining from acting; for approving or not approving conduct; for believing or denying something about virtuous or vicious conduct or good or evil rules. However, in addition to the importance of selecting an appropriate research methodology and methods is the importance of the ethical considerations around conducting the research. Fleming (2018) highlights some ethical dilemmas commonly encountered as an 'insider researcher', including the power differential and ongoing relationships with participants. It is, however, important to further consider the fundamentals of ethical research involving human participants.

The cornerstone of ethical research is 'informed consent' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The term consists of two important elements, with each requiring careful consideration, that is, 'informed' and 'consent'. Participants must be fully informed of what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and what (if any) consequences there could be. The participants must provide explicit, active, signed consent to taking part with the research, including understanding their rights to access to their information and the right to withdraw at any point. The informed consent process can be seen as the contract between researcher and the participants. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) argue that the aspects of 'informed' should include clear explanation on:

- Who the researcher(s) are,
- What the intent of the research is,
- What data will be collected from participants,
- How the data will be collected from participants,
- What level of commitment is required from participants
- How this data will be used and reported, and
- What are the potential risks of taking part in the research

Denzin & Lincoln (2011, p.10) adds that "it is important the identity of participants is kept confidential or anonymous and the assurances extend beyond protecting their names to also include the avoidance of using self-identifying statements and information. Anonymity and confidentiality is an important step in protecting the participants from potential harm. Participant anonymity and participant confidentiality are two terms commonly used synonymously when in fact they are different. Participant anonymity means the participant's identity is unknown to the researcher (e.g., when using anonymous surveys, the participant identity is truly unknown to the researchers). Participant confidentiality means the participant's identity is known to the researcher but the data was de-identified and the identity is kept confidential (e.g., interviews, where the participant identities are known to the researcher, therefore, only confidentiality, not anonymity, can be offered). The research design needs to consider the potential of harm to the participants, the researcher, the wider community, and the institution. The harm can range from physical, resource loss (including time), emotional, and reputational. When considering the potential for harm, the approach should be, in descending order, to eliminate, isolate, and minimize the risk, with the participants being fully informed on what the risks are."

"Existing relationships or prior activities by the researcher can potentially create a conflict of interest that is important to transparently report on within an ethics approval application so the committee can provide guidance on how to manage this conflict of interest. It is common for WIL researchers to conduct research around their institutional WIL programs where the researcher may also have teaching (and assessing) responsibilities and perhaps also line management of staff who are participants in the research (see example Fleming, 2018). Where the conflict of interest lies around the power differential, removing the source of the power differential is the solution. For example, a teacher removes themselves from being an assessor of the student participant's work, the data collection is conducted by a third party who de-identifies the data before making the data available to the researcher, or, the data collection is anonymous (e.g., anonymous surveys) to ensure the teacher does not know who the participant identity. Similarly, it is not uncommon for researchers to have business interests in addition to their academic activities, however, these activities may impact on research involving external stakeholders with similar business interests" Denzin & Lincoln (p.10, 2011).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methods, procedures and techniques used in this study. It has explained how the study is embedded in the Interpretivism paradigm. It has outlined which print newspapers are included in the multiple-case study. The chapter outlined why the study opted to use techniques such as purposive sampling. Document analysis and semi-structured interviews were the methods used to gather data for this study. These methods enabled the researcher to use thematic content analysis to arrange the data according to common themes, topics, ideas and patterns. Furthermore this chapter revealed that the study is based on trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 4

Data presentation and Analysis

4. Introduction

This chapter presents data from documents, and findings garnered from 16 interviews conducted with respondents from six print media newspapers in Namibia. These newspapers are: *The Namibian*, *Namibian Sun*, *New Era*, *Windhoek Observer*, *Confidente*, and *The Southern Times*. The aim of this study was to find out how the print media in Namibia is surviving under contemporary economic conditions. It also sought to investigate the coping mechanisms that have been implemented by these media houses to circumvent the effects of the economic crisis. Although initially not included in the study, the effects of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic also became an integral part of this research. This study was informed by three interlinked sub-research objectives. These are: to examine how the print media has been affected by the current economic challenges; to investigate the coping mechanisms put in place by the print media in Namibia; and to explore new business models emerging in the print media in Namibia to cope with the economic recession. The answers given generated three themes:

- Theme 1: Economic crisis impact on print media
- Theme 2: Response to the economic crisis
- Theme 3: New business model

4.1 The impact of the economic recession on print media in Namibia

All respondents interviewed for this study agreed that the economic crisis, which has been affecting Namibia's economy since 2016 is affecting the operations of their media organisations. Many respondents observed that the effects of the economic crisis were going to be felt at some point in Namibia. They believed that the on-going crisis came at a time when the online media ecology, which is more cost effective and easily accessible, was making inroads in the Namibian media landscape. The study also found that economic impact on the operations of the print media has affected it, especially with regards to reduced print runs, dwindling advertising revenue, retrenchments, salary cuts and closure of some weekly newspapers. I address these sub-themes below:

4.1.2 Dwindling advertising revenue

New Era Publication Corporation Managing Editor, Mr Festus Nakatana, described the economic recession as “a slump in economic activity, resulting in negative growth”. He pointed out the negative economic growth that has left the publication pursuing alternative survival initiatives because of slow economic activity, which is felt across the whole economy. He added that advertising is the revenue generator of the newspaper business and with companies folding; it has been a struggle to get the necessary support to continue operating optimally. He also admitted that the economic challenges have left the *New Era* unable to meet its revenue targets from an advertising and circulation point of view.

Dwindling advertising revenue has put the *New Era* newspaper in a tough position. The company has not replaced those who went into retirement while also letting go of vernacular language translators. *New Era* journalist Paheja Siririka weighed in by saying that lack of revenue which led to downsizing of the newsroom has left a burden to the few remaining journalists. He said the pressure mounted to deliver good quality, well researched, multiple source and credible stories. *Confidente*’s Managing Director, Mr Max Hamata, explained the economic recession as “a slowdown in the economy performing at levels that were not anticipated”. Mr Hamata described Namibia’s contemporary economic challenges as follows:

> “…has affected us big time because people are not advertising anymore. Every weekly newspaper has shut down except us” (Mr Hamata, *Confidente*, 11 March 2021).

He pointed out that the main challenge brought upon his organisation is the fact that *Confidente* is the only remaining weekly print newspaper in the country. Prior to the current economic challenges, Mr Hamata observed that his organisation was growing tremendously with the idea of turning the newspaper into a daily.

In an interview with *The Namibian’s* News Editor, Mr Charles Tjatindi compared the effects of the current economic crisis to those brought onto the newspaper when the government placed a ban on it in 2000. *The Namibian* newspaper was banned by the government in 2000 'because of its ‘anti-government stance and unwarranted criticism of Government policies.’ An article published in *The Namibian* on 31 August 2011 states that documents obtained through government sources in 2000 and 2001 indicated that the Cabinet imposed the sanctions 'because of its (*The Namibian*) anti-government stance and unwarranted criticism of government policies'. Interestingly, the ban was decided on the birthday of *The Namibian's* founding editor, Gwen Lister, on 5 December 2000. Mr Tjatindi summed up the issue of the ban as follows:

> "The ban meant that for 10 years, *The Namibian* missed out on adverts and from the government offices, ministries and agencies. The government offices, ministries and agencies were also not allowed to subscribe, leading to the newspaper losing out on money that would have been generated from print sales" (Mr Tjatindi, *The Namibian,* 12 February 2021).

The ban was overturned in 2011. A media statement released by the then Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Joel Kaapanda on 30 August 2011 announced that Cabinet has revoked former President Sam Nujoma's order that no government department should buy copies of *The Namibian*.

Sales Consultant at *The Namibian,* Ms Jezuva Keeja said the main challenges the company experienced during these challenges are lower revenues in terms of advertising. This, she said, led to downfall in production and distribution, retrenchments, and reduced benefits etc. *The Southern Times* General Manager Mrs Gwen Snyders defined economic recession as the decline in the economy's gross domestic product, employment, industrial production and general economic activity over a period greater than three successive months but less than three years.

Mrs Synders described the economic challenges that have affected the revenue generation from sales. As a result, planned recruitments have been halted as there is less revenue for salaries. She highlighted that cash liquidity has been reduced, as debtors are either holding on to their cash or even defaulting on credit terms. She added that overheads have all of a sudden become too high in comparison to the revenue generated. This has affected the company severely as Mrs Synders puts it:

> "Our business is constantly making a loss. Revenue generation and collection are now lower" (Mrs Synders, *The Southern Times*, 20 April 2021).

The Southern Times Marketing Coordinator, Dignity Mare, outlined how his company is suffering due to decline in advertising and distribution (circulation) sales revenues and profits as a result of the economic crisis. Mr Mare revealed that the economic crisis has affected the organisation so badly that expenditures for marketing, advertising, and promotional spending have been reduced. He added the following insightful views:

> "We cut back on hiring new employees or freeze hiring entirely. In an attempt to minimise costs and increase the bottom line, the company had to stop purchasing new unnecessary equipment, reduce research and development and stop rolling out new products (a factor in the growth of revenue and market share)" (Mr Mare, *The Southern Times*, 12 February 2021).

The *Windhoek Observer*'s News Editor, Mr Roadwin Chirara, defined an economic recession as "a period where the country is going through a bad patch due to internal or external factors." Mr Chirara said many companies are at the point where they are holding onto the little money they have. Mr Chirara opinionated that money is no longer circulating well in the economy, a situation which has left little to nothing for adverts that can help sustain the print media.

Digital and Social Media Focal Person at *The Southern Times'* Ms Sharon Kavhu said the challenges being experienced by print newspapers is also being felt by the entire media sector. Ms Kavhu said revenue has dried up because companies that are supposed to place adverts are also facing economic challenges. Ms Kavhu said the challenges are so deep that even the newspapers who have migrated online are struggling to attract adverts. This, she said, is because several companies in Namibia still prefer having their business advertised in the physical format of the newspaper.

4.1.3 Reduced print runs

The persisting effects of the economic crisis have led to many newspapers reducing the number of pages and the amount of copies printed. Dwindling revenue means it's no longer sustainable to print many pages.

This is because newspapers are struggling to achieve the 60:40% standard practice of sustaining a newspaper business. The 60% represent the number of stories while the 40% represent the number of adverts filling up the newspaper. This is an international standard, which is thought to be the sustainable model of operating a successful print newspaper.

For stance, Mr Tjatindi from *The Namibian* revealed that economic challenges since 2016 have negatively impacted his organisation to the extent that they were forced to reduce their print run as well as retrenching workers. He observed that *The Namibian* is currently printing 20 000 to 25 000 a day. In the past, they used to print around 30 000 or even above 40 000. Mr Tjatindi painted a dire picture of *The Namibian*, which has been punching above its weight ever since the economic recession became a reality in the country. He said the following:

> "We are no island. Advertising revenues have diminished over the past years and few months. Subscription has decreased so is circulation. Even the people selling newspapers in the streets are bringing a lot of returns. For the ordinary person who has to think about his meager budget, they have stopped buying the newspaper" (Mr Tjatindi, *The Namibian*, 12 February 2021).

Mr Chirara described a reduced print run situation, which was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

> "When Covid-19 came we were still printing. However, things changed for the worse when lockdown was implemented. I remember when we printed 10 000 copies but they had to be dropped off here at the office because we realised that they couldn't go anywhere" (Mr Chirara, The *Windhoek Observer*, 26 April 2021).

Mr Chirara also added that:

> "We tried to negotiate with the printers to allow us to reduce and print 4000 copies only for Windhoek but they said no, we have a contract. The printers told us that they will print 10 000 copies and what we will do with them is our business. In 2020, The *Windhoek Observer* was paying about N$85 000 per week for printing. Now imagine how much advertising revenue you had to make per week to pay printers, salaries and other expenses."

When it became apparent that the economic crisis wasn't a short term problem, the *Namibian Sun* had to quickly reduce the number of pages it printed. The paper used to print over 25 pages but now it has reduced that to mostly to around 16.

It can be observed from the above interview extracts that it's no longer business as usual as far as printing of newspapers is concerned. From the above, it is clear that reduced print runs is one of the biggest sacrifices being made to ensure print media sustainability.

4.1.4 Salary cuts and retrenchments

A lot of respondents have described a situation where many newsrooms have cut salaries and have gone as far as firing employees in order for their organisations to be sustainable. For example, at the *Windhoek Observer*, Mr Chirara, described an economic situation which forced his company to drastically cut jobs. There was a staff complement of 21 and that number has been brought down to 15. He explained the situation as follows:

> "We were forced to look at where to streamline operations. Looking at people who can do more. For example if a person is just a photographer but can't write a story we had to let them go. We were forced to apply newsroom convergence. As part of cutting costs, one is required to be a photographer, videographer, writer etc." (Mr Chirara, *Windhoek Observer*, 26 April 2021).

Business Journalist at *Namibian Sun*, Ogone Mr Tlhage, explained that staff members had to agree to a reduction in remuneration packages in order for the company to manage its cash flows. Namibia Media Holdings, which owns the *Namibian Sun* cut employees' salaries by 20% in 2020 (Shikongo, 2020). This was partly due to the economic crisis which was further accentuated by the coronavirus global pandemic. Mr Tlhage asserted that it was inevitable for his or any other media organisation to escape the effects of the low economic growth. He summed up the current crisis as follows:

> "It was inevitable, in fact I don't believe any one, company or organisation has been immune to the effects of the low economic growth that have been witnessed" (Mr Tlhage, the *Namibian Sun,* 2 May 2021).

The *Windhoek Observer's* journalist, Mr Andreas Kathindi indicated that the economic effects are evident by the virtue of now having a smaller newsroom at his organisation. Although he made it clear that he could not speak for management, he believed that having a smaller staff complement means fewer human resources available and more is expected from those available, which sometimes means that reporters can't attend all important events. Kahiurika (2019) noted that the country's oldest newspaper; the *Windhoek Observer, retrenched* three journalists in order to ensure financial sustainability.

> "I think the period from 2013-2015 was very healthy for many news organisations and I don't believe many envisioned the economic troubles that began in 2016/2017 and were precipitated by the advent of Covid-19" (Mr Kathindi, *Windhoek Observer*, 9 March 2021).

Ms Rosalia David, a journalist from the *Confidente* revealed that the organisation was forced into enforcing salary cuts of 20% and 10% depending on the scale they were.

It is clear from the above interview extracts that without the salary cuts and retrenchments, Namibia's print media sustainability would have been threatened heavily.

4.1.5 Closure of some weekly newspapers

The economic crisis has had an impact on the financial sustainability of many print media newspapers in Namibia. Weekly newspapers such as *The Villager*, which was known for tabloid news, and *The Patriot* - which was starting to dominate the weekly space - have ceased to exist. Others like *The Economist*, *Informante*, and the *Windhoek Observer* have migrated online. Regional newspaper, *The Southern Times* is now printing only once or twice a year.

4.2 Responses by the print media to the economic crisis in Namibia

As advertising revenue continues to dwindle, print media has been forced to respond to economic challenges, which is significantly affecting their operations. A significant number of respondents have detailed how their organisations responded to the economic crisis in order to stay afloat. These coping mechanisms include: cutting costs and streamlining operations.

4.2.1 Cutting costs and streamlining operations

New Era Publication Corporation, Managing Editor, Mr Nakatana, admitted that the company has adopted measures such as cutting costs and streamlining operations to do more with less. Responding to the economic crisis like that, he argued that it has helped them keep their heads above the waters, considering reduced government subsidy and the overall revenue decline. The *New Era* had to let go of vernacular language translators. They got rid of freelancers and reduced the number of pages printed.

Coupled with strict discipline, Mr Nakatana believed that some of these mechanisms were game-changers, but challenges still prevail, considering that the company was unable to fulfil its mandate optimally. He described their responses as follows:

> "It has helped us to keep our heads above the waters, considering reduced government subsidy and the overall revenue decline" (Mr Nakatana, *Namibian Sun,* 10 February 2021).

Sentiments by Mr Nakatana were also supported by the *Confidente's* Managing Director, Mr Max Hamata who revealed that his organisation had to cut salaries as a response mechanism to the crisis. He had this to say:

> "I don't believe in the issue of laying off people. Let's rather share the small thing that is there. The economic issue made us think outside the box and innovatively. We will have to do with little resources and make an impact for a positive outcome. It was a rude awakening but it's good to make us think of new ideas" (Mr Hamata, *Confidente*, 11 March 2021).

Mr Hamata asserted that the mechanisms above have been useful in the sense that *Confidente* are still able to print every week and keep going as an organisation.

As for *The Namibian*, Mr Tjatindi indicated that the newspaper introduced various coping mechanisms to circumvent the effects of the economic crisis. This is what he had to say about them:

> "There are few. Some of them are industry secrets. One of those things is to embrace digitisation. We realised that the world is moving towards digitisation and we have to jump on the bandwagon. Not entirely because we still have our brand product, which is the print copy but somehow, eventually we will have to move. We have introduced social media advertising. We have moved onto a more profound social media on our online platforms. We even created a live website for Covid-19. So that we can attract people not just for clicking but for advertisers as well" (Mr Tjatindi, *The Namibian*, 12 February 2021).

Mr Tjatindi had no definite answer when asked about how useful the coping mechanisms are, simply saying it's a trial and error thing at the moment. However, Mr Tjatindi was positive about the prospects that they hold. He believed that advertisers are warming up slowly to coping mechanisms as it's a new thing to them as well.

Other mechanisms introduced by *The Namibian* include restructuring and laying off workers.

> "The company introduced certain restructuring measures meant to reduce the cost of production to sustain operations. This includes laying-off close to half of the staff and re-evaluating certain benefits for the remaining workers" (Mr Iikela, *The Namibian*, 4 April 2021).

The Southern Times General Manager Mrs Synders said as part of coping mechanisms, the company has adopted cost containment and a more stringent credit policy to the customers. Although these coping mechanisms have been useful to some extent, Mrs Synders warned that it results in lower revenue generation. Mrs Synders opined that these mechanisms are not really helping the organisation to maintain sustainability and it would be best for the country to reach its previous economic activity levels.

The Southern Times, Marketing Manager Coordinator, Mr Dignity Mare disclosed that the company had to reduce printing and distribution costs and introduced an electronic-paper and the use of online platforms to remain in business. Mr Mare explained that his organisation has established supplements, and a special focus magazine to meet targeted revenue while lowering operational costs. Mr Mare said it can be testified that these mechanisms are working because *The Southern Times* is still in operation. Kahiurika (2019) notes that for over a decade the sustainability of *The Southern Times* was solely put in the hands of the Namibian government. From 2015 to 2019, Kahiurika (2019) reveals that the Namibian government spent about N$60 million for the newspaper's sustainability until its demise in 2019. *The Southern Times* initially announced that it was closing shop in 2019 until its dramatic resurrection.

Mr Mare summarised the effectiveness of coping mechanisms put in place by his organisation as follows:

> "To a larger degree, the mechanisms have helped to provide us with another window of opportunities to deliver our offerings in a lower but competitive market, and now we are promoting the use of technology. There is more contact with our clients across online channels" (Mr Mare, *The Southern Times*, 12 February 2021).

In the case of the *Namibian Sun*, Mr Tlhage stated that the company may have been forced to retrench staff to contain its escalating costs had the remuneration packages not been renegotiated. Another journalist, Mr Kathindi argued that the new mechanisms are useful for his organisation. He believed that the organisation has found a strong footing in the digital space without the demands of printing costs while maintaining marketing value. He put it as follows:

> "I can't speak for the executive management, but I believe the cuts to printing costs plus a slimmer newsroom has helped the organisation weather the economic crisis storm" (Mr Kathindi, *The Windhoek Observer*, 3 March 2021).

In order to circumvent the effects of economic crisis, Mr Kathindi revealed that the *Windhoek Observer* has temporarily moved its core business to digital platforms to alleviate printing costs. In order to cut costs, the *Windhoek Observer* had to move offices. Mr Chirara revealed that they are leasing out their building while renting from a small office space to generate an income. On cutting costs and streamlining, Mr Chirara argued like this:

> "The way forward for our organisation is to minimise costs. Just like other organisations we have also cut salaries. We are trying to see how best we can move forward. If you look at what's happening currently it might not be sustainable in the next five years. Everyday a business is closing that means one more client off the market, and so is an advert" (Mr Chirara, *The Windhoek Observer*, 26 April 2021).

The *Namibian Sun* Editor Toivo Ndjebela revealed that the organisation had to cut costs by retrenching some senior staff.

*Confidente'*s journalist Mr Hilary Mare admitted that the economic conditions have affected the quality of production. For example, *Confidente* no longer has reporters in the northern part of the country. This situation, Mr Mare said it's tricky because resources are simply not enough to send journalists to the north everytime there is a story to be written. Instead, *Confidente* gathers its stories from the north through phone calls. Mr Mare argued that this has an impact on the output. Mr Mare adds that the financial crisis put the company in a bad position because the organisation has no funds to hire a full time photographer or recruit more journalists.

4.2.2 Presenting a physical copy in a new format: Electronic-paper

Based on responses garnered from the interviews, a lot of newspapers have moved to present a physical copy in an electronic format well-known as e-paper. TechTarget (2021) defines an e-paper as an electronic newspaper that is a self-contained, reusable, and refreshable version of a traditional newspaper that acquires and holds information electronically. The electronic newspaper should not be confused with the online version offered on a website. Most respondents felt that Namibia still has a number of people who like to read physical copies so one had to balance the two (e-paper and physical copy.) Mr Chirara observed that the e-paper is crucial especially for young people because they only want to read the news but not buy the newspapers. He puts it this way:

> "The readership patterns have changed drastically. The young don't read print newspapers. The young consume news through different methods but the challenge is that the young don't like to pay. They want the information but they don't want to pay" (Mr Chirara, *Windhoek Observer,* 26 April 2021).

Mr Chirara added that "...when Covid-19 struck, it worsened the situation. It forced us to urgently implement plans that were earmarked to be introduced in like four or five years."

The sentiments were corroborated by Mr Mare, who explained that *The Southern Times* is looking at transitioning from conventional newspaper to e-newspaper. Through the advent of e-newspaper, publication can be in digital formats, searched comprehensively, quickly and reliably. E-paper provides opportunities to distribute and exchange content and connect directly with the consumer. Mr Mare had this to say:

> "The e-paper has been a hit for us, we can generate revenue at a minimal operating cost, and also it makes instant notifications, digital presentations, videos and more. It helps the public to connect with the paper itself as an online publication. Readers will also leave feedback, view picture slideshows, and even add their own thoughts and posts to the newspaper. We have managed to hit a wide geographic appeal" (Mr Mare, *The Southern Times*, 12 February 2021).

New Era journalist Siririka added that since the economic crisis is affecting people's pockets, consumers are less likely to buy the physical copy of the newspaper.

4.3 Creativity and Innovation in the Namibian print media

4.3.1 New business models

Kopp (2020) defines the term business model as a company's plan for making a profit. It identifies the products or services the business plans to sell, its identified target market, and any anticipated expenses. Kopp (2020) points out business models are not only necessary for new businesses but also for established ones. The persisting economic crisis has forced a significant chunk of Namibian newspapers to look for new business models to sustain their operations. The need for new business models appears to be of urgency as a number of respondents indicated that problems brought upon by the economic crisis have been exacerbated by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. This study found that media organisations in Namibia have put in place short to medium term strategies to push back against the challenges affecting the print media industry in general. These include: seeking government bailouts, subscriptions etc.

Most of the respondents indicated that they are trying to move to a visualisation approach. Trying to become an all media house and offer an all-round package (print, online and TV). These appear to be long-term projects to see how organisations can offer a customer an all-round package. The challenge being experienced by small newsrooms during the economic crisis is that it's difficult to compete with bigger companies. It's easier for big companies to attract advertising revenue because they can woo the clients by saying "if you pay a certain fee, your advert can appear in three or four publications under one entity."

Meanwhile, Mr Ndjebela has lauded the Namibia Media Holdings chief executive officer for being proactive. Mr Ndjebela puts it as follows:

> "Our CEO realised that change was needed because the future didn't look bright. As a result, new products that encouraged online business models were introduced. We are now looking at enhancing smart partnerships that involve digital media (Mr Ndjebela, the *Namibian Sun*, 26 May 2021).

Most of the respondents admitted that new mechanisms have helped their organisations. One respondent confidently said "we are now moving to become a profitable business." The new models are being implemented at a time when organisations are retrenching. This has put more work pressure on the employees who remained behind. Several managers who were interviewed puts it as follows:

> "We had to take tough decisions to ensure the sustainability and existence of the organisation."

Many newspapers interviewed for this study have invested a lot in the sales and marketing team to get proper training to make sure they get as many potential advertisers as possible. Others have taken advantage of their social media reach to push advertisers' products and services and take it closer to the people. Adverts are not just loaded on the physical copy but also on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook stories to reach a much wider audience.

> "They may not pick up the paper to read everything, but our clientele is phone based, they are forever on their phones, on social media so why not grab that opportunity?" (Mr Siririka, *New Era*, 1 June 2021.)

In light of the economic crisis and Covid-19, Ms Keeja warned that the new structure/model may have to take up to a year, in order to recoup all the income that the company had lost.

4.3.2 Government subsidies for state-owned newspapers

New Era Publication Corporation Managing Editor, Mr Nakatana, said that the simplest way to get assistance is to get a bigger cash injection from the government. As a government-owned media company, the *New Era* relies on public funding from the national budget. However, Mr Nakatana admitted that the government has even greater problems to deal with at the moment. The national budget documents show that *New Era* has seen its government subsidy cut from N$30 million in 2014 to a mere N$10 million in 2021. This significant cut in public funding has affected the operations of the New Era Publication Corporation, which has been forced to reposition itself and aim to do more with less.

As a parastatal, *New Era* journalist Siririka said they need more money allocated to them to fully achieve their plans and goals. He argued that the dire task of being a media house comes with a lot of work which is cumbersome and the financial injection will do them a great deal.

The Southern Times General Manager, Mrs Synders, declared that her organisation needs strategic partnerships with Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member states. She said it also needs strategic partnerships with other state newspapers as well as financial and technical support from SADC governments.

The Southern Times Marketing Coordinator, Mr Mare proposed that increased financial assistance from the government for his organisation to survive. The national budget statement shows that *The Southern Times* has its government subsidy cut from the range of N$15 million - N$ 20 million in 2015 to a mere N$4 million in 2020 due to the effects of the economic crisis. The Marketing Coordinator observed that increased revenue through adverts from private and public sectors companies could help the company mitigate the challenges. He also admitted that it would be unwise for the company to wait for handouts instead of embracing new models to survive.

4.3.3 Repositioning the company in the media market

This repositioning strategy entails a number of business operations such as distribution where they, among others, reviewed the printing contracts. Another area that the companies focused on was improving the brand image, with the aim of bringing in new customers who were traditional non-customers. The e-paper approach was another significant strategy that helped *New Era* to reach more people online. Mr Nakatana asserted that from a cutting cost point of view, they have managed to save quite a lot of money. Despite these challenges, respondents at the *New Era* were confident that things will improve for the better if people at the organisation remain focused on what has to be done. One of the respondents said the following instructive views:

> "We have a number of challenges to overcome as an organisation and this includes fixing IT-related issues because this is the backbone of the news industry. We will thus continue improving our website for better functionality as well as offering clients a better experience through our e-paper" (Mr Nakatana, *New Era*, 10 February 2021).

Mr Nakatana believed that his organisation was no longer only fighting the economic crisis. He admitted that there are other factors like technological disruption and changing consumption patterns of newspapers as well the Covid-19 pandemic that are crippling the print media industry in Namibia. In this regard, he added:

> "I think all factors are playing a role and have actually tested us to the limit. The continued world economic turmoil exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, for instance, has already seen a number of newspapers folding and concentrating only on online" (Mr Nakatana, *New Era*, 10 February 2021).

Mr Chirara questioned the sustainability of owning printers. In Namibia, media organisations like *The Namibian, Confidente* and the Namibia Media Holdings own printers. He also asked if it is sustainable to continue printing their own newspapers. What happens if they decide to go online? How many jobs will be lost at the printers?

Some respondents also fear that the introduction of Namibia Revenue Agency (Namra) will take adverts away from them. As a new agency Namra will be responsible for administering tax, customs and excise laws and services. This means all tax and customs, and excise-related matters will henceforth fall under the ambit of the new tax administration body. This, in fact, represents a tried-and-tested method in many countries around the world. It's a system designed to replace the old fashioned revenue agency which was vulnerable to tax evasions by companies.

Mr Chirara said despite the industry bleeding, companies still need to pay the statutory duties such as taxes etc. He said Namra is also going to come into the market and go after businesses. Mr Chirara is fearing that if Namra goes after an organisation and demands like N$10 million, that would signal the end of the company and it means one more advert out for print media. Furthermore, Mr Chirara argued that citizen journalism is one of the biggest threats to actual journalism because everyone is a journalist. He asserted that the only survival is investigative journalism because it's exclusive and the content is unique.

> "Look for example what happened over the weekend regarding the death of musician Tunakie. It was someone on Twitter who posted it. By the time you publish it tomorrow in the newspaper, everyone already knows what has happened and what are the plans" (Mr Chirara, *The Windhoek Observer*, 26 April 2021).

4.3.4 Covid-19 Relief Funds

A sizable number of respondents indicated that their organisations could do with a bail out as the effects of Covid-19 continued to take a toll on print media. In 2020, at the peak of Covid-19 global pandemic, the Namibian government introduced a relief programme to help businesses weather the pandemic storm. Ngatjiheue (2020) states that N$8,1 billion was introduced by the Ministry of Finance as a Covid-19 relief package and economic stimulus to help businesses and households.

To avoid more retrenchments in sectors hit severely by Covid-19, Namibia's Minister of Finance Ipumbu Shiimi set aside N$400 million as a wage subsidy. However, all correspondents from media organisations interviewed by this researcher indicated they didn’t receive any pandemic relief - a year after Covid-19 struck.

Fingers are being pointed at the Editor’s Forum of Namibia to help the ailing industry. The Editor's Forum of Namibia is a non-profit, non-governmental and voluntary organisation that was formed on 26 June 2007 by Namibia's senior educators, print and electronic media editors. It was formed with the aim of defending and promoting media freedom, pluralism, independence and self-regulation. One manager of a newspaper said the Editor’s Forum should move on from becoming a talk show and become a proactive organisation. He said:

> “Why am I saying this? I assumed that the Editor’s Forum would one day go to Cabinet and ask for a bailout for the print media sector. I assumed that the Editor’s Forum would go to the government to ask for the removal of duties on printing to ensure sustainability of the media sector. How many jobs have been lost in this industry in the last two years?”

The respondents feel that the bleeding of the media industry can be stopped but it needs to talk with one voice. They argued that it could be of great help if the government recognised the challenges and offered at least N$100 000 bailout to heavily affected newsrooms.

Others, advised that it would be nice if the government sat down with media organisations and listened to what mechanisms have been implemented to ensure sustainability. They suggested that the government should have offered tax breaks to media organisations.

> “The Ministry of Environment and Tourism helped the tourism sector as Covid-19 compounded the economic challenges. Why can’t the Ministry of Information Communication and Technology do that for the media industry? It’s a mess and the people are losing jobs,” another manager said.

Meanwhile, at *Confidente*, the newspaper was looking forward to receiving funds from Namibia’s Covid-19 relief programme. In line with this proposal, Mr Hamata believed that should the *Confidente* get these funds, it would be of great help. He reckoned that the funds would enable his organisation to stay afloat while implementing new business models. Mr Tjatindi felt that a stimulus package for *The Namibian* and the media industry at large would come in handy. He explained the situation as follows:

> “This is because the media, despite being the information disseminator, is also an employer. The current crisis is affecting everyone so we would greatly appreciate a stimulus that can prevent people from being retrenched. A stimulus that can assist us halfway would help. There are a lot

> of ways as far as monetary interventions can help us. Such for example are loans with window periods" (Mr Tjatindi, *The Namibian*, 12 February 2021).

Mr Chirara said it's not just the upstream, which is being affected by Covid-19 but also the downstream. He said even the man on the street is in trouble; as many people are no longer rolling down their car windows to buy a newspaper from the street vendor during Covid-19. He added that many people have lost jobs in the streets because newspapers are migrating online. In order to supplement the little profits that the company was making from its core business, *The Southern Times* was hosting conferences, but because of Covid-19, they were unable to host any conferences. This has affected their revenue collection in the process.

Due to the lock-down necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Ms Keeja described *The Namibian*'s situation whose sales from the physical copy had dropped drastically. This forced the organisation to enhance its social media platform, and divert advertisers to *The Namibian*'s social media platforms for their advertising needs.

Ms Jemima Beukes articulated that the Namibia Media Holdings' decision to proactively tap into the online market means that organisation was able to adjust quickly.

> "Fortunately, before Covid-19 hit Namibia, the organisation started to move towards social media and broadcasting, which in my view saved our operations during the Covid-19 pandemic" (Ms Beukes, *Namibian Sun*, 4 April 2021.)

Mr Ndjebela argued that while it would be nice for print media houses to get some sort of Covid-19 relief funds, he cautioned that there is a danger of funders imposing their control on what should be published.

4.3.5 Launching new innovative media products

Such models include strengthening *Confidente's* content which would turn the newspaper into a must-look for a possible Friday edition. Other models include introducing a weekend newspaper to be uploaded online on Sunday. Mr Hamata feels that these new models will be effective. On whether new business models that have been experimented with by newspapers like *The Namibian* have been effective, Mr Tjatindi does not think so. He opined:

> "I think it has been a cold start for this kind of situation even for the consumer. People have to warm up to them. Many people are still into the business of the traditional hub paper. However,

> I think we have managed to remain relevant and remain a credible source of information and for us, that's a big thing. Especially in the world of social media where everyone can be a publisher or a journalist. So credibility remains key, and we have managed to do that but I think it's all about enticing clients to put in more money, which they also don't have. It's about barter agreement. For example, there was an advert that says with your favourite meal you can get a copy of *The Namibian*. We are looking into things like that because we all need each other anyway" (Mr Tjatindi, *The Namibian*, 12 February 2021).

He warned that the new models would not sustain the operations of the organisation unless the economy improves. He said that most media houses in Namibia still rely on advertising in the hard copies. To turn the situation, Mr Tjatindi believed that media companies have to mount an aggressive online presence. He also argued that although media organisations are going online with videos, live content, the monetary aspect of that is still limited.

He added that the publicity, promotion of the brand newspaper is excellent but the actual money that is derived from such activities is limited. Why? Mr Tjatindi articulated that this is because of the population that is not yet hooked to online media as it is in other countries. He urged newspapers to avoid rushing migrating online while forgetting traditional media and that many of the readers still favours hard copy.

Apart from the economic crisis, Mr Tjatindi highlighted that *The Namibian* is affected by other factors. He described the situation in the following words:

> "Covid-19 struck us when we were already on our knees and that compounded the problem. Our industry was already unstable leading to the closure of many publications. We have reduced the pages and number of newspapers being printed. On Fridays, we used to print 32 pages to something like in the 20s. During the week, we even now reach 16 pages. Covid-19 drained a lot of our savings as advertisers said why I should market myself if we are closed temporarily. Especially during lockdown when the economy was almost at a standstill but we are an essential service that needed to go on. However, the costs at which we had to go on were immense" (Mr Tjatindi, *The Namibian*, 12 February 2021).

On the way forward, Mr Tjatindi suggested that there are few options that the top management and board are looking at.

> "What is very clear and important is that there is a need for cost cutting measures. We need to reduce costs because if you are not getting enough money in then you have to reduce the costs

going out. That's the number one thing. How are we going to go about it? It's not clear at the moment as there are a lot of ideas being thrown around that the board will have to deliberate on. It's all about how to save costs without cutting jobs and still remain in print. It's a catch 22 but it's something we have to do" (Mr Tjatindi, *The Namibian*, 12 February 2021).

The Southern Times General Manager Mrs Synders revealed that the organisation is looking at investing in online platforms; hosting sponsored digital dialogues and having more paid content in the electronic-paper and other digital platforms. On whether these have been effective thus far, Mrs Synders put it this way:

"The brand is now well recognised. The e-paper is now known all over the SADC region and beyond. The digital projects are being effective and we are working on better means of generating revenue online" (Mrs Synder, *The Southern Times*, 20 April 2021).

Mrs Synders added that there is constant need to evolve with the challenges, and the organisation will always strive to adjust to the challenges faced. Furthermore, Mrs Synders articulated that the way forward is to come up with a robust digital marketing module and to invest in the digital space e.g. online newspaper and other online platforms. She affirmed the statement with the following:

"The pandemic did a huge unexpected dent in our business, but the newspaper industry has been declining for some years now. News is free to access on the internet therefore subscribing to newspapers has tremendously declined. We are a bit behind with technology and people are still used to the traditional Newspaper" (Mrs Synders, *The Southern Times*, 20 April 2021).

Mr Mare believed that the new revenue generation strategies have the potential to sustain *The Southern Times* if properly implemented. He was optimistic that over time, the internet is expected to become the primary source of news. He was adamant that the current advertising–based business model will continue to support the company's activities. He said:

"The Covid-19 pandemic has severely affected the global economy, with significant consequences for all industries, societies and individuals. And now is the time for all to accept technology and make a transition to a new standard. The media industry works in a mature market, circulation figures are declining and reader preferences have changed and are still evolving. There is intensified competition from online news, news alerts and delivery through mobile technology. Yes, the challenges faced by *The Southern Times* are attributed to the economic recession to a greater extent. However, there are other factors. Changing consumer habits is one of the key independent variables that has led to the decline in print newspapers. Despite increased readership, the internet still accounted for less than 10% of most newspapers' revenues. With free access to newspaper websites, subscription revenue disappeared (Mr Mare, *The Southern Times*, 12 February 2021).

Mr Tlhage divulged that the *Namibian Sun* had to introduce a studio to generate additional income streams. He is not sure yet whether this business model has been effective, he said that only time will tell. Mr Tlhage articulated that the combination of economic recession and other factors like technological disruption and changing consumption patterns of newspapers are affecting the industry.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has just accelerated matters" (Mr Tlhage, *Namibian Sun*, 12 April 2021).

The way forward for *The Namibian* is to enhance their newly established multi-media studio and create advertising platforms that generate extra revenue. The multimedia studio has a radio station. It is also home to programs such as The Arena (sports show hosted on Mondays), The Heartbeat (health related hosted on Wednesdays), and The Conversation (current affairs hosted on Fridays.)

It is evident from the above interview extracts that Covid-19 accelerated the print media's problems which were started by the financial crisis. If it's anything, and based from the interview extracts above, it could be interpreted as Covid-19 having put Namibia's print media on a deathbed and needing resuscitation.

4.3.5 Migrating online and launching digital media offerings

All respondents indicated that their organisations have embraced online media as a tool to broadcast news and generate revenue. This is being done at a time when revenue from physical copies and advertising is dwindling. More respondents attributed their survival in these harsh economic conditions onto digital media offerings. For the *Windhoek Observer* to overcome the current economic crisis, Mr Kathindi argued that a digital business model with renewed outlook in the digital sphere is a must. He indicated that the new business models implemented by the organisation are helping the company survive and seek sustainability during a tough period. However, Mr Kathindi made a case of news organisations being hurt if economic contractions linger on. He painted a picture of a print media industry not just facing an economic crisis but one that is also grasping with technological disruptions and the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr Chirara shared the same sentiments saying that the *Windhoek Observer* has now stopped printing. He simply put as follows:

> “We are now 100% digital. The cost of printing in Namibia is ridiculous. If you look at the revenue generated from print newspapers compared to the printing costs it doesn't make business sense. You can’t survive” (Mr Chirara, *Windhoek Observer*, 26 April 2021).

4.4 Analysis of Findings

This section presents data and findings from the qualitative document analysis and interviews of respondents from six print media organisations used for this study. The inductive data approach through the thematic content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. This section is divided into five segments; how the economic crisis affects print media; the effects of the Covid-19; technological disruption of print media; new business models; and media sustainability.

The aim of this section is to analyse the findings in relation to the literature discussed in the previous chapters. This section will also discuss the political economy media theory and how it relates to this study.

Many scholars such as as Garnham (1990); Schiller (1996); McChesney (2000); McChesney & Schiller (2003); Bagdikian (1997); Mansell (2004); Wasko (2001); Mosco (1996); and Mosco & Foster (2001) all have used the political economy theory to understand media sustainability issues. As discussed in chapter two, this study deploys the critical political economy approach, which was advanced by McChesney (2003). McChesney (2003) scrutinises the structure of media industries, question ownership, market structure and commercial support, how these affect media content, performance and impact. This theory is useful to this study because it analyses the ownership structures and funding models of media organisations. For instance, *The Namibian*, and *Namibian Sun* have been consistent in holding the government accountable. This is because of their overreliance on advertising revenue from the private sector and donor funding. On the other hand*, the New Era* and *The Southern Times* act as government mouthpieces, because they are owned and funded by taxpayers’ money. *Confidente* has been flip flopping between supporting the ruling party Swapo and several individuals in order to guarantee itself a steady flow of advertising revenue from the government.

Mosco (2009) and Winseck (2008) find the political-economy approach important because it scrutinizes acquisitions, mergers, buy-outs, and partnerships. In the Namibian context*, the Windhoek Observer* was initially pro-Hage Geingob - the President of Namibia. However, when he gave a cold shoulder to the owners of the *Windhoek Observer* and its business partners, the newspaper turned on him. However, the owners ate a humble pie and the newspaper changed its stance on president Geingob. In return, Lazarus

Jacobs, co-owner of the *Windhoek Observer* was rewarded with the board chairperson post of the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation. Such kind of alignments leaves more questions than answers whether a media organisation would still be able to effectively carry their mandate without fear or favour. This is supported by Adjin-Tettey et al (2021, p.10) who contend that, “Economic constraints undoubtedly affect the social and political functions of the media. Lack of resources narrows the news agenda as it costs money to produce high-quality content. Where the state is the biggest advertiser – as is the case in many African countries – public officials can too easily close the income tap if they are faced with coverage they do not like.”

In the midst of the financial crisis and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, questions linger on whether owners of print media will be able to tackle the problems head on or will end up being forced to accept funding from political and economic entities, which might compromise their balanced news reporting. Since, the political economy approach scrutinises the market structure and commercial support, a question worthy asking in Namibia is whether *The Namibian*, and *Namibian Sun* will still be able to write unfavourable stories about the private sector when it gets most of its advertising revenue from those companies? Collinson (2003) argues that political economy is a useful approach because it explains how political forces influence the economy and economic outcomes including that of print media. Similarly, can the *New Era* and *The Southern Times* publish a negative story about the government if they get most of their operational costs from the treasury? Jin (2018) describes a political economy approach that analyses the power relationships between politics, mediation, and economics. The print media industry in Namibia is torn in between newspapers that are either scrutinising or supporting Swapo and/or the government. This is meant to attract a certain type of customers and advertisers.

The current economic crisis affecting Namibia has severely impacted print media in the country. Kahiurika and Ngutjinazo (2019) confirmed this by revealing that the decline in the economy has had an effect on the day-to-day operations of the print media industry in Namibia as close to 40 journalists have lost their jobs since the start of the economic crisis in 2016. Print media houses like *The Namibian*, *Windhoek Observer*, *Namibian Sun*, and *The Southern Times* have all retrenched workers due to lack of income brought upon by the economic crisis. The findings have revealed that the economic crisis, which is partially blamed on mismanagement by government officials, is no longer conducive for the print media to operate at optimum levels. Whereas a country is facing economic challenges, inevitably the operations of print media are significantly affected. This is corroborated by scholars (such as Ruhanya, 2018; Ekmekçioğlu, 2012; Silva, 2015; Carson, 2014; and Lundén, 2009). Writing in Zimbabwe, Ruhanya (2018) contends that where the government is unfriendly to private press coupled by economic challenges, print media industry often struggles to make revenue, subsequently leading to survival of the fittest.

The findings presented in this study have confirmed literature brought upon by past studies, which have revealed that advertising in the print media has dwindled. This has negatively affected the revenue generation capacity of print media organisations in Namibia. Advertising is the primary revenue generation for all the print media houses, which formed part of this study. Lundén (2009) believes that the global economic downturn, which deepened during the last half of 2008 (and persists at the time of writing) is clearly reflected in the media's advertising revenue. Many scholars (such as Hustad, 2018; Emmott, 2018; Purdy, Wong and Harris, 2017) have cast doubt whether the print media will survive the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis. Hustad (2018) opines that the financial crisis not only had disastrous economic effects but it also impacted the public's trust in the media. The challenges brought onto Namibia's print media sector by the economic crisis are not unique to the country. Ekeanyanwu *et al.* (2008) attributes the cause of this spiralling economic decline in the Nigerian newspaper industry to the reduction in GDP, reduction in consumer disposable income and the rising cost of production.

4.4.1 Technological disruption of print media sector

Apart from the economic recession, there are factors such as the technological disruption and changing consumption patterns that have affected how the six print newspapers mentioned in this study are operating. These factors including the economic crisis have threatened the sustainability of print media. As a result, all these newspapers are now embracing modern-day digital media technologies as tools for enhancing their production, distribution and revenue generation. The importance of embracing digitalisation, Remmert (2019) explains that although it presents a threat to traditional media houses and their ability to remain relevant, it is part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), characterised by a need to provide digital products and services. Edu (2021) defines media convergence as the merging of traditional newspaper, online version, e-paper etc into a centralised portable and distinctively interactive technologies via digital media platforms. Edu (2021) reveals that the most relevant example of media convergence is a smartphone that blends together various media, i.e. print media (e-books, news apps), broadcast media (streaming websites, radio, music apps) as well as new media (the internet) into a single device that performs various functions from calling and texting to photography, videography, gaming and so much more.

The findings from six newspapers indicate that online media is eating into their revenue streams. Some companies no longer prefer to advertise in physical copies of newspapers in the midst of digital technologies. Cronin (2018) is of the opinion that the media – not just newspapers – is still facing a vicious cycle when it comes to generating revenue in the wake of digital disruption and global economic crisis. The technological disruption is not only affecting the local print media. Pech, Cherian, Koutsouvelis, & Papastathopoulos (2019) believes that impressive developments of new media-focused technologies have brought about turbulence and significant problems in the financial performance of the media industry in Greece. The simple fact is that in the years ahead, Purdy *et al.* (2017) warns the newspapers will have to shift most, if not all, of their publications to digital online. Mdlongwa (2021) argues that in the past two decades, technological companies have claimed a market share in distributing news. The technological companies that are now in the journalism mainstream include Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, YouTube and Twitter. This has increased competition for traditional print newspapers.

Collins (2013) believes that the internet, tablets, and smartphones have changed the way audiences consume media and the way advertisers use media to engage with consumers. Print media newspapers such as *The Namibian*, *Namibian Sun*, the *Windhoek Observer*, *The Southern Times* all have retrenched and downsized in order to converge newsrooms. Simons (2017) articulates that it is clear there will be many more smaller newsrooms in the future – including new entrants, non-media organisations touting their wares and the wasted remains of the old businesses. The *Windhoek Observer* has retrenched almost half of its staff members. It has now converged its newsroom whereby journalists have taken on many jobs such as writer, photographer, videographer and so forth. At the *Namibian Sun*, journalists are no longer just required to be writers, they also act as presenters for online shows such as *The Evening Review*.

Simon (2017) asserts that the media in many countries face a deep crisis caused both by new technologies and more general economic circumstances while in others they are experiencing rapid growth. However, some scholars believe that physical copy of the newspaper business has reached its cycle. Some managers working for print media publications in Namibia are adamant that there is still life left in traditional newspapers. They believe that there is a need to balance the physical copy as the core business, and online version to attract young people. Cag´e (2014) argues that while newspaper sales are generally said to be falling, as traditional print media struggle to compete with broadcasting and online media newspaper circulations are growing in many countries across sub-Saharan Africa. Research suggests that the newspaper market expands as literacy steadily increases, whereas other media like television or the internet require capital that most sub-Saharan Africans do not have.

4.4.2 The effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the print media sector in Namibia

As if economic recession, and technological disruption was not already enough to wear the print media sector down, newspapers in Namibia are also feeling the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has exacerbated the effects brought onto print media by the economic crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the print media in a way that many have laid off workers, reduced print runs while some have entirely stopped printing. Ponsford (2020) admits that the coronavirus pandemic presents the greatest threat to the global news industry since the 2008 economic crash. Ponsford adds that the pandemic is happening at a time when there is a real need to differentiate between fake and authentic news. Ponsford (2020) argues that access to information and quality news is now a matter of life and death in the midst of Covid-19.

Newman (2020) argues that the financial impact caused by the coronavirus crisis on the print media sector is a “catalyst for change” in the news industry that has forced publishers to do things they had been putting off – and at speed. All the respondents from the print media houses interviewed for this study concurred with Newman’ observation that the financial crisis brought upon by Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated their plans to further embrace online media. Mayhew (2020) submits that the financial crisis brought about by Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing trends – namely the shift from print to digital – but it is not an “extinction event” for the news industry at large. Mayhew (2020) asks what might the news industry look like once the Covid-19 crisis has eased, and will it ever return to the way it was before? A 2020 report by Print Media Global Market states that the world print media market is expected to decline from US$315.7 billion in 2019 to $289.9 billion in 2020 at a compound annual growth rate of -8.2%. The decline is mainly due to economic slowdown across countries owing to the Covid-19 outbreak and the measures to contain it. The market is then expected to recover and grow at a compound annual growth rate of 1% from 2021 and reach US$299.3 billion in 2023.

Imadalou (2020) reveals that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected so many industries that working hours fell 14% during the second quarter of 2020 - equivalent to the loss of 400 million full-time jobs, globally. The print media was not spared. Kalita & Das (2020) concurs that the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the negative effects that were already brought onto print media by struggling economies. In Namibia, *Windhoek Observer,* which was already facing economic headwinds had seen its operations heavily disrupted by the pandemic so much that it had to migrate fully online. Kalita & Das (2020, p1.) argues that, "unfortunately the present pandemic has posed a huge threat particularly to the print media where thousands of workers have been working at a meagre earnings and with no future economic security. Especially those who are working at different vernacular print media houses having a gloomy future ahead because of the whim of their owners or proprietors."

The Covid-19 pandemic has not only found casualties in Namibia. News UK has warned of job cuts as it speeds up its transition to a "digital future" as a result of the financial impact of the coronavirus crisis (Ponsford, 2020). Ironically, the pandemic, which Silverman (2020) describes as a 'media extinction threat', also simultaneously accelerated the uptake by traditional media of digital and social media in a stampede for economic and financial survival. In India, the print media sector has been one of the most adversely affected sectors due to Covid-19 pandemic, which is now in a deep existential crisis across the country (Kalita & Das, 2020). They further suggest that this unprecedented crisis has affected even top players in the Indian print media publications such as The Times Group, The Indian Express Group, Hindustan Times Media Limited, Business Standard Limited, and Quintillion Media Private Limited (Kalita & Das, 2020). In South Africa, Tech Central (2021) paints an industry whose overall circulation for the 17 daily papers in the country is 60% lower. Tech Central (2021) reveals that eight papers have seen declines of more than 60%, with *Pretoria News* down 87%, *The Star* down 75% and *Cape Argus* and *Cape Times* each down around 70%. The best performing title since 2016 is The Citizen, with a circulation decline of 32%. In Kenya, data shows that in 2018, the number of English daily newspapers declined to 87.1 million from 102 million in 2014. The number of Kiswahili daily newspapers, on the other hand, declined to 37 million copies in 2018 from 58 million copies in 2014.

In Uganda, Kigambo (2020) talks about a pandemic that has thus far stretched everyone beyond their limits. Kigambo (2020) reveals that many such reporters and news companies have been pushed on and over the edge by outright suspension or downsizing of operations and severe wage cuts as few unfortunate workers have had their contracts terminated. For the curve to tilt, Ntibinyane (2020) believes that for the newspaper industry to have a chance of survival post-Covid-19, radical measures must be pursued. First, Ntibinyane (2020) urges the industry to consider migrating online. Second, newspaper owners must engage with the government about economic relief measures, without compromising on sacred principles like editorial independence. Third, the industry should embrace support from 'Big Tech' but should also call for profit-sharing and taxation to support independent journalism. In Namibia, print media owners are not sure when things will return to normal as the country is struggling with Covid-19.

The Namibian government is struggling to procure vaccines while the vaccination programme is also failing to attract the number of people needed to achieve herd immunity. This has left many newspapers on autopilot.

4.4.3 New Business models for the print media sector in Namibia

The term sustainability has formed an integral part of this study. Print media newspapers in Namibia are looking at new models in order to sustain their operations. This is because the traditional way of making money through adverts is no longer 100% able to sustain the operations. For example, apart from moving its core business online, the *Windhoek Observer* is operating from a small office while renting out their main building to generate income. *The Southern Times* has been organising events such music shows, women conference and sports fun day as a way to make up for revenue lost through advertising as a result of the economic crisis. Remmert (2019) highlights Namibia's media's sustainability, which has failed to transform in the midst of digitalisation, tough international competition, and poor economic conditions. The *Windhoek Observer's* future in 2020 is uncertain, *The Southern Times* is struggling to stay afloat, and *The Economist* has already migrated online. Other newspapers such as *The Patriot* and *The Villager* have closed shop. More newspapers such as *Namibian Sun*, *Confidente*, *and The Namibian* have either cut salaries or retrenched workers as the quest for sustainability reaches crunch time.

Wasserman (2018) articulates that in Windhoek, the focus fell on journalism's sustainability in conditions of severe economic uncertainty. The sustainability of the news media, Wasserman (2018) believes that it's a precondition for good journalism in the public interest. The financial crisis challenges that are shaking the sustainability of print media newspapers in Namibia have had an effect on media organisations retaining quality journalists. Beukes (2021) reveals that the media practitioners agree that newsrooms in Namibia are facing unprecedented challenges – declining circulation, declining advertising revenue and increasing printing and distribution costs. He adds that financial pressure has resulted in retrenchments, and the increased use of interns and freelance journalists. Beukes (2021) fears that inevitably, low pay and difficult working conditions will lead to an exodus of journalists from the industry. Namibia's print media sustainability is highlighted better when the country's largest media employer, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation employees were on strike during the World Press Freedom Day celebrations. They were on strike over wages and better working conditions. This happened in 2021 as Namibia - and delegates from all over the world jetted into the country - and celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration and the subsequent establishment of World Press Freedom Day. "Local media practitioners say journalists are overstretched" (Beukes, p.1. 2021).

Based on the data analysed above and in the rest of the study, Namibia's print media sustainability is highly threatened by both the economic recession and the effects brought by Covid-19. For example; the Namibia Media Holdings, which owns print newspapers such as *Namibian Sun*, *Republikein*, and *Allgemeine Zeitung* appeared to have prolonged their sustainability by introducing cost cutting measures such as retrenchments already in 2016. To further ensure sustainability, Namibia Media Holdings cut employees' salaries by 20% in 2020 when Covid-19 continued taking its toll on the industry.

Some print newspapers in Namibia were not as lucky as they had to close down entirely. These include *The Villager* and the *Patriot*. Others such as *The Southern Times*, *The Economist* and the *Windhoek Observer* migrated online as they chased a sustainable model.

As the quest for sustainability intensified, others have either rentreched or slashed employees' salaries or converged their newsrooms by not replacing departed staff. These include *The Namibian*, *New Era*, and *Confidente*. All the newspapers presented as a case study for this research have all embraced online media as an essential tool to ensure sustainability.

However, Moore, Hollifield, Jurrat and De Roy (2020) argue that media sustainability goes further than just retrenching employees, cutting their salaries, reducing print runs or going digital.

Moore *et al.* (2020) assert that the print media put five dimensions into considerations when chasing sustainability. These dimensions are; politics, economics, community, technology as well as content and expertise. Moore *et al.* (2020) explain these dimensions below:

> "Politics dimension, it is important to assess whether the rule of law is supportive of independent and quality media. Does the country have an independent judiciary that applies laws and judgments impartially to businesses and individuals? Are the relations between a government and the news media professional and characterized by mutual respect? And how far do citizens and journalists have access to public information?
>
> The overall strength of a country's economy and the financial stability of news media organisations are of key importance within the economics dimension. However, it also assesses news media's editorial independence from their sources of income and to what extent

competition fosters—or obstructs—the quality of journalism. Another essential aspect is the audiences' demand for quality news content and whether they are willing to pay for it.

Another crucial part of media viability is the relation between news media and their community. Support by communities— whether financial or moral—to a media outlet might be one of the most powerful defenses against political interference. For this mutual support, it is important to have an understanding of shared accepted political and social values within a society, but also what kind of relationship people have with media outlets, i.e., their levels of trust and emotional attachment. At the same time, the level of media literacy among audiences plays an important role.

The ability of news media organisations to fairly access and use production and distribution technology is an essential prerequisite to news media viability. Equally important is the ability of citizens across the country to access this content, and being able to pay for it via trusted digital payment systems. Within the broader context, it should also be assessed to which degree the country and news organizations protect the audience's digital rights, especially their privacy.

The quality of the national, international, and local news content available in the country has a direct effect on media viability—aspects covered within the content and expertise dimension. Do journalists have the necessary skills to produce non-partisan reports based on a number of different sources and also include voices of minorities? Do their working conditions foster or hinder ethical quality journalism? Is media ownership transparent—or does it prevent a diversity of voices and rather serve the business or political interests of media owners? Apart from journalistic skills, media organizations also need to prioritize the business side—this means, among other things, investing in qualified people and setting up effective structures that foster media viability" (Moore *et al.*, p.3. 2020).

4. 5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the data analysis and interpretation with reference to the literature review. The aim of this study is to find out how print media is surviving under contemporary economic conditions. There is a need for the media industry to sit down and come up with a strategy, which would be crucial for the sustainability of this sector for the next 10 years. Based on the answers derived from the respondents, there is a lack of unified voice to uplift the media industry. There is a need to create a fund, which helps newspapers tap into it when the need arise. This can be created via the Development Bank of Namibia or any other institutions. There are a lot of organisations out there that are happy to help but there is a need to go there as one voice. For instance, organisations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), and Google have grants that can be given to media organisations. Namibia is leading when it comes to press freedom now imagine what would happen if media institutions are closing. What press freedom will be celebrated if there are only two organisations left? The study summarised the main findings in each section. The conclusion, recommendations and limitations are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Summary of the Findings and Recommendations

5. Introduction

This chapter discusses the summary of findings and recommendations from this study. The study sought to examine how selected print media organisations in Namibia have responded to the contemporary economic conditions. It did so by examining six newspaper companies in Namibia. This was done first through document analysis - by examining reports, articles etc written on Namibia's print media. In an effort to adequately answer how the print media is surviving, I used qualitative research methods such semi-structured interviews and in-depth individual interviews. This has allowed me to understand the complexities that the economic crisis has brought onto print media. The in depth interviews also brought out the issue of how Covid-19 has exacerbated the effects of the economic crisis affecting the print media. This then led to discussion of media sustainability. How is the print media in Namibia trying to be sustainable in the midst of issues such as the economic crisis, Covid-19, technological disruption and online media?

5.1 The impact of the economic recession on print media in Namibia

The study has established that all six print media newspapers in the country interviewed for this study had taken a huge knock by the economic crisis. As a result, most newspapers had to retrench, cut salaries and reduce print runs. In some cases, the quality of journalism went down because reputable journalists traded the newsroom for political offices where they have become either personal assistants or public relations officers. The economic crisis has threatened print media sustainability in Namibia so much that organisations are focusing on hiring interns instead of fully fledged journalists in order to cut costs. Others are hiring freelancers so that they cut on medical and pension costs. At least 40 journalists have lost their jobs since 2016. The economic recession which hit Namibia since 2016 has been persistent. A 2021 overview by the World Bank indicates that between 1991 and 2015, Namibia had a constant yearly growth of 4.4%. The political stability enjoyed since independence coupled with sound economic management allowed the country's poverty levels to be down and propelled Namibia to become an upper-middle income country. Yet, socio-economic inequalities deep rooted in the country's system by the apartheid government has continued to make few people extremely rich while a large number is languishing in extreme poverty.

Namibia's economy fell into recession in 2016 and has since struggled to recover. As a result, government offices are now facing budget cuts, and as many people try to hold onto the little they have, private companies are no longer making profit. This has created slow cash flows which is affecting advertising revenue - the primary source income for print media. The worse news is that the economic crisis line is not tilting. In 2020, the GDP plummeted by 7.4% year-on-year from quarter one to quarter three as per the World Bank report. In order to offset some of these challenges and be ready for the future, print media newspapers in Namibia are beginning to embrace online migration amid technological disruption.

5.2 Responses by the print media to the economic crisis in Namibia

All the six print media newspapers for this study confirmed that their plans to embrace digital were accelerated by the economic recession and the effects of Covid-19. The economic crisis has already claimed its scraps in the print media industry. Newspapers such as *The Villager* and *The Patriot* have closed shop. Others such as *The Windhoek Observer*, *Economist*, *Informante* and *The Southern Times* have migrated online.

Meanwhile, *Namibian Sun* with the backing of its parent company Namibia Media Holdings have arguably the best online presence compared to other print media houses. The *Namibian Sun* has various shows such as *Good Morning Africa,* and the *Evening Review* etc. *The Namibian* has also introduced various online shows such as *The Heartbeat* and *The Conversation.* The newspaper is also set to introduce an online radio. It also has a podcast that discusses published stories. The *Confidente* wants to introduce an online weekend newspaper to be published on Sundays. All the plans and online measures stipulated above have been in the pipeline for long but implementation has been accelerated by the effects of Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic is set to have an unprecedented impact on Namibia's economy and has exacerbated pre-existing structural challenges. As mentioned earlier, GDP contracted by 7.4% in 2020. The World Bank revealed that this was mostly due to Covid-19.

Sectors such as mining, which bring in a lot of foreign currency contracted by 12.2% due to domestic factors and a reduction in global demand. The tourism sector had the biggest hit at 46.5% in 2020 as Covid-19 restricted travelling. The World Bank (2021) predicts a Namibian economy facing uncertainty due to the persisting economic recession exacerbated by Covid-19.

Structural policy reforms will be required to raise Namibia's growth potential. The effects of Covid-19 had a huge impact on all the six print media houses interviewed for this study. The newspapers had to either lay off workers, reduce salaries and had to reduce their print runs. Just like the economic crisis, Covid-19 has also claimed its scraps in the print media industry. Trusto, which owns *Informante* newspaper, owned by one of the wealthiest Namibians Quinton van Rooyen, has sent 332 employees home, among them journalists.

The *Windhoek Observer* is left with only 50% of its initial staff. *The Namibian* was employing 110 permanent workers and 20 freelancers. However, about half of that were sent home as the newspaper tried to cut costs to 60% and at a minimum of 40%. Printed newspaper copies of *The Namibian* have gone down from a peak of 78 000 in 2016, to 17 000 during Covid-19 lockdown and now are at 28 000. At *Confidente*, no one was laid off, however, staff members had their salaries cut by 20% on average, depending on what the employee earns.

As the government battles to keep the number of Covid-19 infections and deaths low, it means that resources are being reallocated. Government-owned newspapers are feeling the burnt. *The Southern Times* which used to receive over N$20 million only received N$4 million from the state budget in 2021. The *New Era, which* got accustomed to receiving about N$30 million during the golden economic days, only received N$10 million for 2021. Its operational costs are already worth about N$20 million per year. As a result, the company had to get rid of language translators as well as not replacing those who have retired to cut costs. The downsizing of newsrooms is not only having an impact on the organisations but the journalists left behind are underpaid, overworked, underappreciated and over-stretched.

Covid-19 is not only affecting the upstream side of the print media. The downstream is also affected as employees stationed at printing machines are on the verge of being laid off. Many people are avoiding rolling down their cars' windows to buy a newspaper from a street vendor to prevent coming into contact with a Covid-19 positive person. As a result, street vendors are struggling to feed their families due to a reduction in revenue.

5.3 Creativity and innovation in the Namibian print media

The *Namibian Sun* has the best sustainable model, which is backed by its online presence and strategic partnerships with government offices and the private sector. It is closely followed by *The Namibian newspaper*, which has embarked on a multi-media strategy of a story always needing to be accompanied by visuals. The organisation has introduced a broadcasting unit which will also include radio. *The Windhoek Observer* is third as far as sustainable models are concerned. It's decision to entirely migrate to the e-paper and online appears to sustain its operations. As far as weekly news are concerned, *Confidente* has a lot of work on its shoulders as it is the only remaining print weekly newspaper. However, due to the persisting economic crisis and effects of Covid-19, its business model might not be strong enough to sustain it in the coming years. *Confidente*’s online presence is limited. Government-owned *New Era* and *The Southern Times* have the least sustainable new business models. Apart from their social media pages, their online presence is not advanced. At a time when other newspapers are having strategic new models such as sponsored online shows these two papers appear to be content with what they have amid dwindling revenue. *New Era*, which has forged partnerships with young social media influencers who write columns for the paper, will hope for a more increased government subsidy in order to be sustainable. Prior to the pandemic, *The Southern Times* was supplementing its traditional income with revenue generated from events but that has dried up since 2020. By June 2021, a further retrenchment was being mumbled. It would be a miracle for *The Southern Times* to exist beyond 2022 in its current model. The government has since passed a resolution to dissolve *The Southern Times* in November 2021. *(This thesis was updated to capture this development.)*

It is concluded that all the newspapers above are struggling with the five dimensions introduced in chapter two and further analysed in chapter four. The dimensions are; politics, economics, community, technology as well as content and expertise.

In terms of politics while the rule of law in Namibia is intact, the media is still denied access to information. For more than five years, the media industry is still waiting for the Access to Information Bill to be tabled in the National Assembly. Sometimes private owned newspapers complain that they learn about certain information from government -owned publications. However, it is worth mentioning that media freedom in Namibia is highly rated. Press freedom has a firm hold in Namibia, Africa's best-ranked country in RSF's World Press Freedom Index since 2019, and enjoys solid guarantees. On 3 May 2021, Namibia also hosted World Press Freedom Day.

Regarding the economics dimension; it has been concluded that the national economy alone is not strong enough to make news media organisations financially viable. This has led to print media newspapers not being 100% stable. Amid increased competition, the situation has made some print newspapers to partly constrain their editorial independence.

The community dimension is concerned with many elements such as engagement, social cohesion, citizen education, audience data, credibility and trust. Based on the responses from the multiple case study, it has been established that only a few citizens are able to consume and evaluate the quality of news and information content across multiple platforms disseminated by print newspapers. Social cohesion is made difficult not just by the economic recession but also by the rampant corruption in the country. Namibians have a high level of confidence in the credibility of news media organisations and their content according to respondents interviewed for this study. The audience data is measured by how many copies were sold and also by a number of viewers who watched a particular online show.

The technology dimension encompasses production and distribution resources, access to technologies, and audience access to technologies, digital expertise, and citizens' digital rights. The study has concluded that production and distribution resources for Namibia's print newspapers are heavily affected by the economic recession and by the disruption brought by the pandemic. As a result, many newspapers have stopped printing and gone online. Online comes with challenges that require the readers to have access to smartphones and data. While digital rights in Namibia are guaranteed, the audience's access to technology depends on their income but that has been affected by the economic recession. This means that some people are missing out on news.

The last dimension discussed and relevant to this study and to the Namibian media industry is the content and expertise - which looks at elements like quality content. Some newspapers in Namibia are now focusing on content paid for partnership, which can compromise on quality. Some believe that they have no choice because advertising revenue has dried up.

This dimension also involves journalism expertise; print media organisations in Namibia have the necessary structures but some lack professionally educated and trained journalists to produce high quality content that meets international standards. This is because quality journalists have traded the pen and notebook for high paying political and public relations' jobs.

The content and expertise dimension also includes the ownership of the media organisation, business structure and business expertise. The ownership of some of the print media newspapers is compromised as some private publications are biased towards a certain political party. Government-owned newspapers are of course biased towards the political regime. According to what the respondents said; many print newspapers in Namibia were so comfortable when the economy was performing at optimum level so much that they are only introducing new sustainable business models now.

5.4 Recommendations

As advertising revenue continues to dwindle, print media houses are encouraged to introduce and embrace new sustainable business models. For the print media context, the sustainability of the sector will have to center around technology and digital media. Young people want information but they don’t want to pay for it. It is recommended that the Editors' Forum of Namibia approaches the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology to fight for the ailing industry. The Ministry can facilitate a process that allows print newspapers to be given tax breaks or reduce levies on printing during the pandemic. It is also recommended that newspapers temporarily put competition aside for a few hours, sit at one table and figure out how they can create a Fund that can be used when similar challenges occur in future.

Based on what was investigated, analysed and information from various scholars, this is what the Namibian print media is further recommended to do:

- **Construct extensive connections**

Media organisations have the privilege of influencing how consumers view a product. In the same line, print media have the luxury of building a relationship with their readers to have faith in the content, value and credibility of the publication. Publications such as magazines of different interests such as bridal and fashion have adverts that are well valued by the consumer because the medium they appear in is trusted. It’s true the Namibian print newspapers have sections tailed for politics, general news, business, entertainment and sports etc. but most of these segments are not tailored to the consumer’s needs. Sometimes the stories are not unpacked well for the client/consumer to understand and be attracted to advertise. Also some of these segments lack consistency. Indeed, it is the quality of media companies’ branded environments around targeted interest areas that makes print media valuable for advertisers.

- **Tapping into new revenue streams**

It is now obvious that a lot of companies would want their adverts not to appear only in the physical copy of the newspaper but also on the online version. Sponsorship will be an integral source of revenue for print media in the coming few years. Newspapers are recommended to strike the right balance not to focus on just one sponsorship, which can lead to notions that a media organisation is captured. Similar to how print media in this modern age is striking a balance between readers accessing content for free and paying for it, organisations can search for revenue sources from sponsorships, adverts and in the digital arena. This should be done, however, with the consideration that newspapers could lose out on some audience if content is paid for. They do not face all-or-nothing choices between ad-supported and paid content models, provided they slice up their content in ways that entice customers to pay for some of it.

- **Modifying the content Model**

Adding revenue generated from online arena to the existing traditional advertising and copy sales is just one element of print media sustainability. Things are not the way they were; economic recession is persisting, while Covid-19 effects continue to cripple businesses with no end in sight. The truth is, there is a need to drastically lower their costs. Many newspapers have already begun to do so, but much more aggressive action is required. The advertising decline of the last decade is difficult to just offset it with a once off 10% or 20% annual cost reduction. This is because advertising in print newspapers is still expected to continue decreasing as literature is not suggesting when the recession is ending.

A more tailored approach is necessary that re-looks the way print media newspapers apply content development. Newspapers must employ a range of efforts, but to be more specific they need to push 60% of their resources on their profitable core business and restart from that base. Think of an airline operating on losses. It must abandon loss making routes while retrenching redundant staff. For print newspapers, the profitable core business is centered by tailored content which will drive readers' engagement to the both print and digital platforms of the publication. It is only on those distinctive content assets that a media company can build a "right to win," competing for attention against marketers, user-generated content, and other media companies. It's easier said than done but coming up with the profitable core business requires one to think and make unpopular decisions. For example the management can decide what kind of sections to cut out of the newspapers even though they are popular but they don't bring in money. This will mean re-assigning, reducing salaries or letting go of those workers responsible for that section while moving the resources to the profitable core sections. A significant example is that of *The New York Times*, which slashed the physical sections in their print version. They merged the business and sports sections to save print costs. Meanwhile, The Detroit News no longer does home delivery every day. It's a decision that results in a reduction of advertising revenue from the eliminated days but this can't be compared to the costs saved.

It is recommended for the rationalisation approach to focus more on targeted set of website pages while continually tracking and evaluating areas of focus to profitably serve selected interest areas. The sustainability of print media should not be limited to a small time debate. To a greater extent, a country can only perform at its optimum level if the media sector is holding the government accountable. Newspapers, televisions, magazines and radio educate the masses and ensure the running of economies and communities.

5.5 Areas for further research

While this study investigated a lot of possible scenarios, an array of possible further research has come to the fore. As mentioned earlier, the study investigated how print media in Namibia is surviving under the contemporary economic conditions. It also looked at how newspapers are faring during the Covid-19 peak. It did so by first analysing documents and reports about the whole sector. It then narrowed the study by research specific publications, and interviewing correspondents from six print media newspapers namely *The Namibian, Namibian Sun, Confidente, New Era, The Southern Times* and *Windhoek Observer*. This study has shown that the print media sector is on its knees and needs saving. It has also established that Covid-19 effects have accelerated the problems in the print media sector. The study further concluded that all print media houses have embarked on new models as they continue to chase the sustainability model.

In light of the above, further research can be done to investigate how the broadcasting sector is surviving under the contemporary economic conditions. A full blown investigation into how Covid-19 affected both the print and broadcasting media could also suffice. At a time of doing this study, print media houses were busy implementing what they term as sustainable models. It would be good to do research after five years to see how these models sustained the media or not. Since many newspapers have migrated online while others have embraced digital media, a research on how online media is surviving under the contemporary economic and Covid-19 effects will give a clear picture of how sustainable it is to migrate online. This can look at the effectiveness of online media in the midst of challenges. Are online media organisations sustainable? Are they making money?

5.6 Conclusion

In short, Namibia's print media sustainability is heavily threatened to the point that many industry players believe there won't be a lot of publications remaining if the current curve doesn't tilt. At the moment, it's not clear when the curve will tilt because the printing process and advertising revenue continues to be affected both by the economic recession and the Covid-19 pandemic. It's thus advised that media organisations should implement new sustainable models as fast as they can because challenges are enormous. This is because the Namibian government is not only facing a huge task of growing the economy back to the expected levels of at least 5% per year but it also has to grapple with the issue of Covid-19 which has led to the closing down of many businesses. Closing down businesses means one more advert off the market. One advert is too many which can lead to employees being retrenched. Retrenching of employees will leave many newspapers without quality journalists. Lack of quality means compromised content and loss of public trust. Loss of public trust in the country's media can lead to increased corruption in the country. The longer the economic recession persists the more the print media sustainability is facing extinction.

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APPENDIX 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

- What do you understand by the term economic recession?
- How have the current economic challenges impacted your operations as an organisation?
- What are the main challenges brought upon onto your organisation by the contemporary economic crisis?
- Did you ever imagine that your organization would have to deal with the current economic crisis at some point?
- Has your organisation been affected by similar economic challenges before?
- What coping mechanisms has your organisation put into place to counter these challenges?
- How useful have these mechanisms been in ensuring financial sustainability in the face of these economic challenges?
- Would you say the mechanisms have been able to help your organisation wither the challenges brought upon by the economic crisis?
- What assistance does your organisation need in order to offset the impact of the economic recession?
- What are some of the new business models your organisation has put in place in an effort to sustain the operations in the midst of an economic crisis?
- How effective have these new business models been thus far?
- For how long can the new business models help sustain the operations of your organisation in the midst of the current economic crisis?
- What's the way forward in your organisation's quest to mitigate contemporary economic crises?
- Would you attribute the challenges faced by your organization to the economic recession or there are other factors like technological disruption and changing consumption patterns of newspapers?