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Dissertation topic: TAMING THE 'DIGITAL LEVIATHAN': A STUDIY OF THE DIGITAL STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE HERALD.

BY

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Abstract

Digital media in Zimbabwe came about at a time media trends were changing the world over as a result of the advent of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs). However, the situation in Zimbabwe was rather unique in that the evolution coincided with a deteriorating socio-political economic situation which resulted in a sizeable population of the country migrating to South Africa, Britain, Australia and the United States among other territories. The media landscape in Zimbabwe was characterized by drastic media laws like the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) among others which resulted in the closure of *The Daily News* and its sister weekly *The Daily News on Sunday* in 2003. *The Daily Mirror* and *The Sunday Mirror* also closed in 2007 due to financial stress and this resulted in several local journalists going into exile. The situation meant a contracting media landscape in a country where dissenting voices were getting louder against the deteriorating political and economic situation. Thus *The Herald* subsequently became the more dominant media player, more so as a government propaganda tool. This study therefore explored qualitatively the digital strategies adopted by *The Herald* in taming the dissenting voices coming through digital alternative channels by way of being a player. The study also looked at user-generated-content (UGC) management techniques deployed by *The Herald* and the challenges the newspaper faced in the implementation of these and the extent to which readers exercised the power to refuse to be passive. The study employed Habermas' theory of the Public Sphere and McQuail's Alternative Media theory in exploring the contestations around exclusion and inclusion of the general public from the media space whilst Gramscian lenses were used to explore the nature of *The Herald's* dominance whilst pushing government propaganda.

ACRONYMS

AIPPA	–	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AMH	–	Alpha Media Holdings
ANZ	–	Associated newspapers of Zimbabwe
BAZ	–	Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe
BBC	–	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSAC	–	British South Africa Company
CCOSA	–	Christian College of Southern Africa
CDA		
CEO	–	Chief Executive Officer
CNN	–	Cable News Network
CUT	–	Chinhoyi University of technology
ICT	–	Information Communication Technologies
ISP	–	Internet Service Provider
MBN	–	Mobile Breaking News
MDCT	–	Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai
MISA	–	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MMPZ	–	Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe
MNS	–	Mobile News Service
MSU	–	Midlands State University
NMG	–	Nation Media Group
NUST	–	National University of Science and Technology
POTRAZ	–	Posts and Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
RF	–	Rhodesia Front

SEO	–	Search Engine Optimization
SMS	–	Short Message Service
UDI	–	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UGC	–	User Generated Content
VISA		
www	–	World Wide Web
ZAMPS	–	Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey
Zanu-PF	–	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZARF	–	Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation
ZBC	–	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
Zimpapers	–	Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980)
ZIMSTAT		
ZMC	–	Zimbabwe Media Commission
ZMMT	–	Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust
ZSE	–	Zimbabwe Stock Exchange
ZTE	–	Zhongxing New Telecommunications Equipment

Contents

Chapter1. Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The global media terrain has shifted over the past decade causing a significant print-to-online migration, with the evolution having started in the West and with the developing world rapidly catching up due to globalization trends whose new technologies in communication and transport allow multidirectional movement of people, ideas and cultural goods (Breton and Reitz, 2003).

In Zimbabwe the arrival of digital media was more pronounced around 2000 when the country experienced an economic downturn that saw the migration of hundreds of nationals including journalists, politicians and activists into foreign land. As many left the country, so was the internet becoming a significant medium not only for the migrants but for several other constituencies at home who could now openly discuss political and economic issues (Moyo, 2009; Mano and Willems, 2010). All along Zimbabwean media space had largely been dominated by Zimpapers, publishers of *The Herald* and *Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation* (*ZBC)* which enjoyed a near monopoly of the media space (Chari, 2014; Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1991). *The Herald* thus saw the need to register its presence on the web. The state-controlled daily did not necessarily abandon its own print and initially it tentatively duplicated itself, carrying the same print content online. This study therefore explored the digital strategies employed by The Herald in the fight for space in view of internet-aided global media liberalization.

1.1 Background to the study

Up to the period of this study *The Herald* has maintained its dominance as the oldest and largest daily in Zimbabwe (Chari, 2014; ZARF, 2014). In post-independence Zimbabwe this dominance was first significantly shaken at the establishment of *Daily News* in 1999 together with its sister weekly, *The Daily News on Sunday* which were owned and published by Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ). The titles however had a brief stint before their closure in September 2003 following a brush with the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act of 2002 (AIPPA) (Chiumbu, Minnie and Bussiek, 2000).

The arrival of *Daily News* and *The Daily News on Sunday* happened at a time *The Herald* had suffered from a negative image as a propaganda mouthpiece for the Zanu-PF government, with

the Ministry of Information exercising direct influence of editorial appointments and operations of the newspaper (Rusike, 1990); Saunders, 1991). The country's poor economic performance and a tight legal operating environment, as Chari (2009) cited in Mabweazara (2010) assert, increased "the unprecedented mushrooming of (alternative online newspapers)" focusing on Zimbabwe. The digital platforms posed increased competition to the mainstream media through their wide approach to news gathering techniques and coverage of political issues. They promised to expose corrupt tendencies and human rights abuses by President Robert Mugabe's government (Mabweazara, 2010; McGregor, 2010). Thus, the need for alternative interpretations of the political realities in the country grew, duly coinciding with the arrival of the digital wave.

What made the situation more difficult for *The Herald* as posited in Mabweazara (2010:144) quoting a senior writer at the government owned newspaper was the continued lambasting of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) by the mainstream daily, resulting in the loss of readers as well as news sources. This would not come as a surprise as *The Herald's* editorial policy was to "serve government interests" (Rusike, 1990:80). However this policy extended to the magnitude of its editors failing to find any wrong in what the government or any Zanu-PF official said or did. This became an entrenched tradition up until the era of Zanu-PF's factional fights which became glaring during the run-up to the party's December, 2014 6th National People's Congress and after, as figures such as vice president Joice Mujuru, Ray Kaukonde, former spokesperson of the party Rugare Gumbo and former administration head Didymus Mutasa were demonized by *The Herald*.

Many events happened which showed how dangerous it could be for *The Herald* editors who did not tow the line of the ruling Zanu-PF government. These events include the expulsion of Ray Mungoshi in September 2000, just seven months after his elevation to the position of editor (*New Zimbabwe.com*, 2011). *The Herald* editor at the time of this research, Caesar Zvayi was suspended for two weeks in December 2013 after being attacked by then Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo over his publication of a story that alleged fury by Zanu-PF officials over former Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono's engagement of Tendai Biti as his lawyer in a court case over allegations of looting funds from the central bank as alleged by his former advisor at the bank, Munyaradzi Kereke. Biti was still secretary general of the opposition MDCT then (*NewZimbabwe.com, 2013*). In March 2015, *The Herald* senior assistant editor George Chisoko

was also sent home for two weeks for publishing a story that described Zimbabwe's inflation rate as indicative of a dying economy (*The Herald*, 2015).

As the country's socio-political turmoil continued up to the period of this study, the result was people finding solace in the other news platforms which were largely online where critical comment against government could be found. This study therefore seeks to explore the digital strategies adopted by *The Herald* to remain the dominant voice in the face of growing dissenting ideological voices speaking through digital platforms. The researcher is interested in exploring how the newspaper has harnessed digital platforms in its fight against dissenting voices, and how also it has managed to strike a balance between user-generated content (UGC) critical of the government on its platforms and its mandate of supporting the government of the day. Could this be a shift by *The Herald* from its policy or it is giving people a false sense of freedom of expression? Whether this is the position or not, little is known at the present moment about *The Herald* accommodating dissenting voices.

1.2 Problem statement

Following the phenomenal rise of digital media in 2003 (McGregor and Primorac, 2010:23) new media platforms became the most important weapons used by Zimbabweans, both at home and in the diaspora to resist news churned out through state-controlled mainstream media (Moyo, 2007 in McGregor and Primorac, 2010; Moyo, 2009; Murithi and Mawadza, 2011). Given that new media technologies are viewed as counter-hegemonic and fundamentally interactive (Kellner and Kim, 2009; Lievrouw, 2011:1992) it would appear that adopting the digital technologies would not serve the best interests of *The Herald* in playing its role as an ideological propaganda tool for the government of the day. It is in this context that this study seeks to explore how *The Herald* has co-opted and domesticated perennially radical digital technologies and maintained a balance between critical reader comments whilst managing to meet its mandate of serving the interests of the government of the day.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

- establish *The Herald's* response to digitalization imperatives.
- establish how new ICTs have affected the news production processes and practices at *The Herald*.
- establish whether *The Herald's* online newspaper serves or undermines the paper's hegemonic role.
- establish practical measures that were put in place to filter out more subversive and critical comments from the reader-comments section of its online edition.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main Research question

- How has *The Herald* adopted and adapted to new media technologies to suit its editorial commitment to support the government of the day?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- What challenges have *The Herald* faced in the implementation of the digital strategies?
- What were some of the reasons of establishing online editions
- To what extent is *The Herald* promoting agency participation and free expression by its readers on its digital platforms?
- What measures did *The Herald* put in place to moderate user generated content (UGC) published on its online edition?

1.5 Research assumptions

Assumptions in research are broad generalizations of what could probably be true in relation to the research problem, and they help put the research questions into context. Assumptions are boundaries of a research study (Carson et al, 2001:42). This study holds the following assumptions:

- *This study is premised on the assumption that a big newspaper like The Herald is a paper run and produced along professional and ethical standards.*

1.6 Justification of the study

Existing research work on the operations of *The Herald* has focused on the history of the newspaper and its political economy in view of government's role in the appointment of key staff like editors and desk editors and the resultant influence on content (Gale, 1962; Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1991; Chuma, 2004; Nyarota, 2006). Contemporary studies have also explored the operations of *The Herald* in post independent Zimbabwe with emphasis on competition from digital media as alternative channels of communication during the era of socio-political crisis which in 2009 gave birth to a new coalition government between Zanu-PF and two MDC formations, one lead by Morgan Tsvangirai and the other one by Arthur Mutambara (Moyo, 2009; Murithi and Mawadza; 2011; MacGregor et al, 2010; Chiumbu et al, 2009).

A milestone research on the operations of *The Herald* is Mabweazara's (2010) ethnographic study on how new Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are affecting newsroom trends in the country. The study gives insights into the adoption of new ICTs in the production of news by journalists as well as the inroads made in the use of the mobile phone in the gathering of content as well as challenges faced by the older generation of scribes in the adoption of new ICTs. However these studies have not broadly dealt with how newspapers have managed to domesticate digital media, more so for a newspaper like *The Herald* which carries with it the responsibility of being a government propaganda mouthpiece. Thus this study seeks to explore the knowledge gap that exists on what digital strategies *The Herald* has adapted and adopted in view of growing dissenting views owing to the deteriorating socio-political situation up to the period of this study.

ICTs adopted across newsrooms include news websites; and these allow the creation of user-generated content through comments platforms where readers can post their reactions to published stories (Mabweazara, 2010). These digital platforms are also fundamentally interactive, counter-hegemonic, immediate and ubiquitous (Kellner and Kim, 2009; Lievrouw, 2011:1992). Whilst Mabweazara (2010) conceive as key the creation of user-generated content on *The Standard* and *The Zimbabwe Independent* websites, this researcher is interested in the little-known area of how *The Herald* has managed to deal with dissenting user-generated content on its digital platforms without compromising its policy of serving the interests of government. How has *The Herald* managed to grow reader-traffic to these digital platforms when it is biased

towards government in its reportage? What systems has the newspaper put in place in order to continue satisfying its editorial policy and at the same time giving platform to divergent opinion? What challenges has the newspaper faced in the appropriation of these digital technologies?

1.7 The mobile phone as an ICT

The mobile phone as a new ICT is viewed as emancipatory on the part of the journalist in terms of converged news gathering as scribes can do their interviews using the gadget, access internet and e-mail as compared to the fixed phone. The mobile phone can also solely rely on the availability of mobile telecommunications network and still fulfill the needs of the user. In Zimbabwe the mobile phone has been of use to both journalists as a news gathering tool as well as the general public since activist groups like *Kubatana.net* have used the 'short-message-service' (SMS) facility in giving news alerts to selected audiences. The mobile phone is also posited as an emerging outlet for the suppressed voices as well as a new mode of engagement of the authorities by civil society (Mabweazara 2010:196-197; Obadare, 2006:94).

Although the mobile phone can be viewed as unaffordable in most parts of Africa and regarded as primarily a basic portable tool for voice communication (Mabweazara, 2013:06), the situation is rapidly changing in Zimbabwe where the mobile phone penetration rate as of 2013 stood at 104 per cent according to the 2014 Posts and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) report (TechZim, 2014 in Scheiffer et al, 2014). Penetration rate is defined as the number of mobile phone subscriptions expressed as a percentage of the population. Therefore in the case of Zimbabwe the mobile phone penetration rate is indicative of a growing sector worth exploring in the context of its appropriation by *The Herald* not as a mere technological development but rather as a hegemonic tool.

The mobile phone has also been researched upon in the African context with focus on its uniqueness as a less sophisticated communication gadget that facilitates participatory journalism on the continent (Paterson 2013:2 in Mabweazara 2013:6). As a tool for participatory journalism, the capacity of the mobile phone in Zimbabwe is more visible during the pre and post 2008 election period when *Kubatana.net*, a local civic group exploited the bulk short-message-service (SMS) facility, a move widely viewed as having contributed significantly to the democratization of the communication process (Mhiripiri and Mutsvairo, 2014:1291-1292). The political situation during this period saw President Mugabe concede to pressure to form a coalition

government with two MDC formations, one led by Morgan Tsvangirai and the other one under Professor Arthur Mutambara. Through the mobile phone, members of the general public were able to receive the various political messages sent out by *Kubatana.net* on current affairs, whilst they also pushed content from their experiences. As posited in Mabweazara (2013) in reference to the affordability of the mobile phone, the digital tool is also convenient as it can, from home at any time serve the same purpose that would require a user to visit an internet café for example. The mobile phone cut across race, gender and class in an effective way than other digital tools like satellite television. *Kubatana.net* did not charge for this service as the organization believed information was being shared as a need (Atwood, 2010:102).

A study gap therefore exists on how *The Herald* tamed the mobile phone as an alternative mode of communication and appropriated it to further its own hegemonic dominance. Have the voices been tamed or the adoption of the mobile phone by *The Herald* is the birth of a new information order in Zimbabwe where the state controlled title is opening up to criticism? If the mobile phone is so much interactive (Atton, 2010), to what extent has *The Herald* exploited the mobile phone in its operations both in the newsroom and as a news dissemination platform? This researcher is interested in pursuing how *The Herald* has made use of the feedback from its readers, most of who could still send back opposing views.

1.8 Social Media and blogs

Amongst the digital tools adopted by *The Herald* are social media. Recent works on social media have explored the use of Face Book, YouTube and Twitter in newsrooms as well as the dilemma of moderating UGC as audiences engage with media managers. Social media are as well explored within the context of the Arabic uprising in Tunisia and Egypt dubbed the 'Arab Spring' in 2011. These new digital media tools are also studied in their context as tools for mass mobilization and protest (Mabweazara, Mudhai and Whittaker, 2013). In 2006 the biggest social media platform Facebook was just two years old with 12 million subscribers across the globe whilst Twitter had just been created the same year when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) used social media for the first time to gather content in the coverage of the Myanmar insurrection. BBC journalists had to rely on the account of events as shared by both anonymous and non-anonymous Facebook and Twitter subscribers (Belair-Gagnon, 2015:27).

Social media are so interactive and viral due to their ubiquitous nature. With reference to the Arab Spring, Alahmed (2014:04) posits that social media networks have become alternative an source of information that enables audiences to exchange ideas, participate in democratic processes as well as civic engagement. However Lim (2012) in Alahmed (2014) argues that it is important to explore the history of social movements in the absence of social media, and the belated intervention of digital social media. Zimbabwe has been cognizant of the influence of social media in view of the Arab Spring as expressed in President Mugabe's Heroes Day holiday speech of August 13, 2012 where he noted the threat to peace and stability posed by unemployment among the youths. Although President Mugabe did not make a direct reference to the Arab Spring, the context of the speech would easily relate to what was then going on in Egypt and Tunisia (Chikuhwa, 2013:228). This research is therefore interested in exploring the gap on how *The Herald* has domesticated social media and how it uses them to remain dominant in the wake of their adoption as alternative interactive source of information by the public.

Is *The Herald* reactionary in its adoption of digital strategies or it is conscious of the global technological revolution taking place? *The Herald* is present on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube and this researcher is keen to explore to what extent the state controlled newspaper has adopted and adapted to these digital social media platforms.

1.9 Delimitations of the study

This study focuses on *The Herald* only for feasibility purposes and its thrust is on the digital strategies adopted by the newspaper in order to maintain its hegemonic dominance of the public space. The study will take place at the Herald House, the newspaper's headquarters where the researcher is stationed (Refer to section on Self Reflexivity).

The study also looks at the digital strategies adopted by *The Herald* from January 2013 to August 2015. The time frame is significant in that it is during this period that the Zanu-PF 6th National People's Congress of December 2014 was held after the party won the July 2013 elections which brought to an end the 2009 coalition government. The Zanu-PF congress was substantially indicative of the political direction of the party and an exploration of the role the digital platforms of *The Herald* played would be worth noting. The above reasons make the time frame adequate and more feasible.

1.10 Limitations of the study

The present study is limited in its scope to *The Herald*, which is a publication owned by Zimpapers whose other publications might have more or less the same editorial policies. Therefore the findings of this study shall be confined to *The Herald* and shall not be transferable to other titles under the Zimpapers group.

The researcher is an employee of Zimpapers, the proprietors of *The Herald* and is involved in some digital duties of the newspaper under study. This scenario might result in superiors treating the study with suspicion and influence their objectivity during data collection. The researcher is also conscious of the subjectivity with which the findings of this study could be viewed and how they might be perceived as not entirely neutral. This scenario needs to be taken note of upfront.

1.11 Conclusion

Chapter 1 of this study introduces the topic under research, research objectives, research questions and the background to the study. The Chapter also explains limitations and delimitations to the study. **Chapter 2** presents the literature review which is capped by a section on theoretical framework. The gist of this chapter is a review of what has been said and produced by other scholars on the subject of 'digital media' in Zimbabwe, and formed the basis upon which a research lacuna of this study was premised. That is, since the advent of digital media has been covered so much, with all other subsequent developments like digital newsroom dynamics as well as the participatory nature of ICTs, a gap appeared on how mainstream state-controlled media had adopted strategies for their appropriation in order to counter dissenting voices consistent with these new digital media.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.0 Introduction

The dissertation thus has so far introduced the topic of the study, the problem statement and the justification of the study as guided by the research objectives and questions. Chapter 2 presents a critical discussion of the available literature on the topic under research briefly touching on the origins of the hegemonic role of *The Herald* from the newspaper's establishment days into post-independent Zimbabwe. Particular focus will be on literature that deals with the newspaper's transition into the digital era and the emancipatory promise of digital media and finally the participatory expectations of digital media. Briefly explained are a few cases of the hegemonic tendencies of the paper during the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and Rhodesia Front (RF) colonial years before a detailed review of the subsequent events.

This Chapter also discusses the theoretical framework used to make sense of the research findings. Theories are ways of analyzing and describing a phenomenon from a particular paradigm (Fourie, 2001:230). Media theories are also developed by scholars in order to address particular issues and they are understood better when used within a context (Baran and Davis, 2015).

2.1. Review of related literature

Literature review in a study assists in justifying a research topic and ensures the "researchability" of a topic at the commencement of the full research (Hart, 1998). Literature review is made up of past works of scholars, published or unpublished on the research area from which a study topic is being derived. The literature reviewed in this Chapter does not only dwell on what other scholars said about the field under study but it also explains why it is important to pursue the topic that is being studied and in what way the new study is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Brennen, 2013).

The fields of alternative media and digital media have been over-trodden mainly because the digital communication technologies wave continues to influence the information world order. This researcher therefore contextualizes literature related to this study into three broad areas which are (1) the hegemonic role of mainstream media, (2) the emancipatory promise of user-genarated content (UGC) and (3) participatory journalism and the threat of de-professionalization of news production.

2.1.1. The hegemonic role of mainstream media in Zimbabwe

The hegemonic dominance of mainstream media in Africa has its roots in colonialism with some governments having simply inherited repressive colonial systems previously used to silence liberation movements in order to further the interests of the colonial regimes. During the colonial era the liberation movements in Africa in some cases may have been getting sympathy from such countries like Russia, China or North Korea, a situation that explains the inspiration of Marxist ideologies in these new post-colonial states (Ronning and Kupe, 2000:138). Zimbabwe is a perfect example of this situation with regards *The Herald* newspaper whose digital strategies in the face of alternative digital media are the essence of this study.

Zimbabwe's mainstream media had largely been dominated by *ZBC* and *Zimpapers*, publishers of several other titles and their flagship, *The Herald* which is the title whose digital strategies are under study. The dominance of *The Herald* dates back to the colonial era when the newspaper was still known as *The Mashonaland Herald and Zambesian Times* under the proprietorship of the Argus Press and Publishing Company of South Africa. The Argus Board had just invested in a new company to be known as "Rhodesia Printing and Publishing Company, among whose shareholders was John Hays Hammond, Rhodes' American mining engineer, while Rhodes himself took up shares through his nominee, E.R. Syfret" (Gale, 1962:24).

Interference by authorities in the newspaper's business during those early days of colonialism marked the newspaper's journey as a government hegemonic tool. The history is traceable back to September 1891 soon after the establishment of the newspaper when Rhodes in one incident threatened William Ernest Fairbridge, the newspaper's agent in Rhodesia with expatriation following the latter's wholesome coverage of the criticism of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) by pioneer settlers over the provision of basic amenities by Rhodes soon after they had landed into the new land, which is present day Zimbabwe (Gale, 1962:13). It can be argued that

Rhodes' threat in the incident cited above against Fairbridge were tantamount to the first attempts by the ruling authority to maintain hegemonic control over the newspaper as this was meant to influence what the *The Mashonaland Herald and Zambesian Times* was supposed to filter out. The media culture during this era was to advance European cultural standards while stories on native Africans "were largely, if not exclusively, negative and demeaning" (Mukasa, 2003:172, Saunders 1999).

To understand the contemporary hegemonic role of *The Herald*, this section briefly dates back to how it all started after the pioneer colonial settlers and the subsequent ownership transformation of the newspaper over time. Whilst government's interference in the affairs of *The Herald* might have appeared to be minimal during the formative years of the first colonial national government to mark the end of the BSAC reign, direct manipulation by government came to the fore in 1962 when the Rhodesia Front (RF) came to power and explicitly indicated its interest to firmly control the media. The party claimed it was necessary to have firm control of the media in order to maintain Christian values of the new society and deal with communist terrorists, in reference to the native black liberation fighters (Saunders, 1999).

RF's perception was that *The Herald* and other titles that had been established later were too liberal in their reportage of political issues. That was when RF propagandist Ivor Benson made his infamous statement that, "the press must be free-no one denies that-but it must be OUR press, promoting OUR values and OUR interests. Only such a press has any claim to the freedom to govern itself in OUR society" (Saunders, 1999:06). Subsequently in November 1965 the RF government after its unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) under the leadership of Ian Douglas Smith stationed its censors directly into the newsrooms of *The Herald,* thereby laying the hegemonic bedrock upon which *The Herald* exists today (Saunders, 1999). Therefore this study interrogates the newspaper's digital strategies from the perspective of hegemonic dominance whose roots is not anything new.

It is of interest to note that the hegemonic dominance of *The Herald* grew with the new government of independent Zimbabwe under then Prime Minister Mugabe in 1981 with the creation of the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) to take charge of Zimpapers after acquiring a controlling stake in the newspaper company from the South African based Argus Press and Publishing Company. The objective of the ZMMT was to provide a buffer against

interference with the paper's editorial independence by state and commercial interests. This move was described as "landmark in media management in developing countries" as government would have no role in the appointment or firing of the ZMMT board members let alone editors of *The Herald* (Saunders, 1999; Rusike, 1990).

The new government however realized the importance of media as an influential tool to achieve political influence, and the manipulation of *The Herald* moved from the tutelage of the ZMMT to that of the Ministry of Information and the result was skewed political coverage that favoured Zanu-PF (Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1999: 22; Ronning and Kupe, 2000:160).

The media environment took a nosedive in 2000 as the "executive restlessness and paranoia that characterized the UDI in the '60s and '70s reproduced itself in the independent Zimbabwe of the 21st century" when the government abolished a full-fledged information ministry to replace it with a lean Department of Information and Publicity in the President's Office (Chuma, 2004:133). This meant closer control of *The Herald* by the government with direct influence on the appointment of editorial staff at the newspaper.

The advent of new information and communication technologies at the turn of the century began to transform practices of media production, distribution and consumption of information throughout the world. The issue is not about digital media being new in the literary sense but it is about their relationship to users characterized with *interactivity, socialization*, *communication* and information *sharing* (Karoova, 2010). Digital media are also regarded as a form of 'alternative media' due to their interactive nature as they give audiences the power to speak back, generate their own content based on what mainstream media publish as well as participate in democratic citizenship and developmental processes (Hamilton, 2000 & Pickard, 2007 in Murithi and Mawadza, 2011:233; Logan, 2010:08).

Digital media ride on digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) and they have taken the media landscape by storm redefining how news is gathered, packaged and distributed. Digital media concern specific ways of "registration, storage and distribution of information in the form of digital binary code" and these media are not completely independent of traditional media as they act as an extension of the latter (Lister et al, 2009:12).

Digital media generally ride on internet and include such platforms like the mobile phone, the World Wide Web (www), social media and web applications among others. Digital media define online media which is described as journalism meant for the World Wide Web (Deuze 2003; 206 in Mabweazara et al, 2014:03). While studies by Mabweazara (2011) have focused on changing newsroom practices associated with news gathering, processing and dissemination, there remains a gap of knowledge on how news organisations manage the transition in such a way as to maintain their hegemonic role in the interests of the power blocks that they have traditionally served. It is against this background that this study sets out to explore the various digital strategies that *The Herald* adopted and adapted in order to maintain government hegemony in the face of various digital media platforms that swamped Zimbabwe's media terrain as alternative channels of communication.

The year 2003 is cited as the landmark era in which the dominance of mainstream media and *The Herald* in particular was tested to the core through the arrival of digital media in Zimbabwe (McGregor and Primorac, 2010). This was at a time when the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) as a strong opposition party had just been born. On the other side former Minister of Information and Publicity Professor Jonathan Moyo working from President Robert Mugabe's office in 2004 had just reaffirmed the hegemonic dominance of *The Herald* by declaring that the newspaper was expected to "protect, preserve and project . . . regime values" (Mabwezara, 2011: 150). This, Moyo claimed was a reaction to government attacks by foreign media owing to the political crisis bedeviling Zimbabwe at the time.

The arrival of the digital media in Zimbabwe heralded the mushrooming of news websites such as *Zimdaily.com, ZimOnline.co.za, Zimbabwejournalists.com, Nehanda Radio, SW Radio, Kubatana.net* among several others around the year 2000 soon after the formation of the opposition MDC as people searched for alternative channels through which to discuss issues affecting them socially, economically and politically as well as vent off their feelings.

These websites presented a unique challenge and threat to *The Herald's* dominance by unearthing corruption and human rights abuses by President Mugabe's regime as well as publishing 'uncensored' news. Some of them were funded by foreign governments, for instance the *Voice of Zimbabwe-Studio 7* which was financed by the United States government

(McGregor and Primorac, 2010). Meanwhile mainstream media in the country were influenced by a culture of the existing political polarization with privately owned media demonstrating sympathy towards the opposition party whilst the mainstream state-controlled Zimpapers and ZBC openly demonstrated its biased support of the government of the day (Mabweazara, 2011:105). Thus the need for alternative channels manifested both in the print through the privately owned media as *The Herald* continued to uphold its editorial commitment to support the government of the day.

The establishment of the new digital media can be said to have come at a time space for divergent opinion had been constricted due to restrictive media laws by the Zimbabwe government following the closure of *The Daily News* and *The Daily News on Sunday* in 2003 after a brush with the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA 2002). This was coupled with the continued harassment of journalists as recorded by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) whilst later own *The Sunday Mirror* and *The Daily Mirror* also folded citing escalating debts and the controversy surrounding their alleged take-over by state security agents (Chiumbu, Minnie and Bussiek, 2009; Murithi and Mawadza, 2011; Mabweazara, 2010). The only alternatives to *The Herald* and a hoard of its sister publications were *The Financial Gazette*, *The Standard* and *The Independent* (Chari, 2013: 383). Several journalists after having been fired from the state-controlled ZBC and with others coming from the closed privately owned publications, Zimbabwe ended up with an estimated 90 journalists in exile (Nyakunu, 2005:n.p, cited in Chari, 2013:383) the majority of whom went on to establish own media ventures in order to provide an alternative eye of the Zimbabwe narrative.

With 'interactivity' being the key characteristic distinguishing the digital media platforms from traditional mainstream media (Baran and Davis, 2015:363) pressure mounted on *The Herald*. This study therefore sought to explore the extent to which *The Herald* was challenged by the new privately owned digital media before its adoption of the same technologies in order to remain relevant as a government propaganda mouthpiece. Was the reaction by *The Herald* to adopt digital strategies a realization of the exposure posed by digital media or it was just a decision to move with the times?

The dominance of *The Herald* however has also undergone some evolution with threats not only coming from digital media but from newly established privately owned newspapers like *The Daily News* re-launched in 2010 as *daily news*, *NewsDay, The Weekly Worker, The Zimbabwean* (print and online) and those that have been in existence before like *The Standard, The Financial Gazette* and *The Zimbabwe Independent*. After the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2009 between Zanu-PF and two MDC formations following the disputed 2008 elections, these titles were expected to increase alternative platforms mainly for the urban residents (Atwood, 2010). However the digital 'ghost' remained to haunt mainstream media; a situation which created a study gap to investigate the results of the adoption of digital strategies by *The Herald.* This follows studies by various scholars (Mabweazara, 2010; 2011; 2013; 2014; Moyo 2009; Murithi and Mawadza; 2011) on the adoption of digital media by mainstream media, including *The Herald* since 2010. This study thus sought to establish the types of digital media adopted and their success, challenges encountered and the level of investment by the publishers of the title under study. This is be done with a view to establish how the paper managed to adopt technologies associated with openness, and empowerment of the reader without compromising or sacrificing its pro-government stance. The research is thus interested in finding out how the paper successfully turned an emancipatory technology into a hegemonic tool, thus taming the digital leviathan.

2.1.2 The emancipatory promise of user-generated content (UGC)

The digital media's critical element of 'sharing' is significant in the way these new types of media operate. It is through sharing and exchanging of ideas as readers interact with texts that user generated content (UGC), which is also known as Consumer-Generated Content (CGC) or User-Created Content (UCC) is produced (OECD, 2007). UGC is defined as content that is made available publicly on internet which is reflective of an effort of creativity and is generated outside professional procedures (OECD, 2007:4). The users themselves are members of online audiences who are active contributors to the online platforms thereby earning themselves hybrid names such as 'prosumer', 'produser' and 'co-creator' (van Dijck, 2009:41-42). Put simpler, readers have become players in the production of content on digital platforms owing to the interactive nature of digital media. Professional mainstream media producers stand to benefit in various ways from UGC as noted in the acquisition of UGC channel YouTube by Google for US$1.6 billion in 2006 (van Dijck, 2009).

What attracted Google was not the creative technology on which YouTube was built but the audience community built by the latter which meant much more in terms of "vertical integration of search engines with content, social networking and advertising" (van Dijck (2009:42). However it is also argued that the notion of UGC focuses on content whilst that of 'prosumer' and 'viewser' focus on the subjects (Cornelio and Cruz, 2014:4). This argument emphasizes the point that UGC takes two to create, the user and the media company; two users collaborating in the production of content. An example is how members of a social network group add own content online with the help of software developed by the owners of the social network platform, for example Facebook. The generated content is sharable throughout social media platforms and usually ends up reaching a much wider audience. This study, thus explores the extent to which *The Herald* allowed readers to share the newspaper's content amongst themselves as well as allow them to create and share their own content on its social media platforms during the period under study, given the inherent danger of content subversive of dominant interests also finding its way onto the pages of *The Herald* online platforms.

Social media are defined as "web-based tools for interaction that, in addition to conversation allow users to share content such as photos, videos and links to resources" (Gould, 2013:3). Social media are also known as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" using web-based tools (Kaplan and Haeinlein, 2010:60 in van Dijck, 2013:4). These media include YouTube, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Google+ and many more. This study therefore explores the various types of social media platforms that *The Herald* exploited and how the newspaper allowed the creation of links to different resources from its platforms by readers. Links allow readers to wonder elsewhere from a single site and be able to compare information and create their own meaning. The study also explores the technical tools adopted by *The Herald* to manipulate or liberate the content sharing process on its website, for example features like social media share buttons or easy downloading, printing or offline viewing of content.

UGC is a result of technological opportunities made possible by the interactive nature of digital media and it is also a sign of "diverse palette of voices" as noted in Deuze (2007) cited in van Dijck (2009:43). The result of UGC is participatory and allows audiences to exercise some form

of power in negotiating their relations with mainstream media. This study therefore analyzes how *The Herald* accommodated the diverse voices that are consistent with social media and at the same time managing to remain a government hegemonic media tool.

Content that is co-produced is usually a contribution of two parties, the media producer and the audience. This study examines how power between *The Herald* and its audiences was negotiated and with what influence on digital platforms during the period under study. The research also analyzes whether *The Herald* followers online were prosumers, produsers, viewers or were treated as "passive" audiences who did not fully enjoy the emancipatory nature of digital media. The study also examines whether or not *The Herald* used readers' views from its social media discussion platforms to create new content thereby giving readers a louder voice.

Mainstream media in Zimbabwe have mixed feelings towards embracing the diverse voices of audiences. As such comments posted on newspaper websites or social media platforms are subjected to some form of filtering (Mabweazara, 2011). However a change of attitude towards gatekeeping of UGC is observable among mainstream media although there is still hesitancy in newsrooms for total embracing of UGC (Hermida and Thurman, 2007 in Mabweazara, 2011).

The filtering of news content is a result of the inequality of wealth and power that exists in society and its influence on what the media can publish or not. This gatekeeping process, explained through Herman and Chomsky's (1988:2) 'propaganda model' has five categories through which content can be filtered which are ownership and control, source, advertising, flak and anti-communism (relevant during the cold war period) days of communism in Russia). The coming of digital media into the country and the subsequent creation of UGC can therefore be likened to the birth of a vibrant working class media in Europe which the ruling elite regarded as a threat to their hegemonic dominance. Although Herman and Chomsky (1988:2) assert the filters as built into the media operating-system in a way that makes alternative news bases hardly imaginable, the arrival of digital media has redefined the power base to an extent which this study examines in the context of *The Herald*.

Of the five filters, 'ownership and control' and 'source' have often influenced what is deemed news by the state controlled newspaper. *The Herald* in post-independent Zimbabwe was state-owned through the ZMMT, an ownership structure which Rusike (1990) contends failed to create

a buffer between the newspaper and the government following the latter's direct influence on the goings-on at Herald House. The government of Zimbabwe continued with its grip of *The Herald* up to the period of this research as noted through dismissal or reassignment cases involving editors who include Farai Munyuki, Tommy Sithole, Ray Mungoshi, Innocent Gore and William Chikoto among others for failing to tow the line through ministerial directives (Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1999; *The Herald*, October 18, 2013). As such, this research also analyzes how *The Herald* managed UGC with regards what to allow or keep out of its discussion forums in line with the demands and expectations of its owners and without necessarily shutting out its online audiences completely.

Mainstream media fall under the Althusserian notion of ideological state apparatuses that are used by the ruling class to maintain their hegemony. They are also systematic in their reinforcement of vested interests through discourses of dominant ideologies. What makes mainstream media ideological is their propensity to substantiate the agenda of the dominant powerful by reproducing the power of the elite.

Apart from mainstream media being ideological in their representation of the interests of the status quo, they also carry assumptions that are influential about whose voice should be heard and on what issues (Fleras, 2011:12-13; Conversi, 2011). *The Herald*, relating to its history with regards government control and its representation of certain political discourses is a perfect fit in the mould of mainstream ideological state apparatuses. An example is how the newspaper constructed images of opposition parties as sell outs as well as the labeling of perceived enemies of the government (Chingono and Eppel, 2011). However digital media are argued to wield emancipatory possibilities in their nature as they render obsolete issues like space and time.

Digital media also decentralize production and consumption of news as users can also determine to an extent what to read or publish as they can also participate through UGC. Digital media are also liberal in the generation of content as it is not entirely up to mainstream media producers to determine what goes online (Lister et al, 2009; Kavoori, 2010:10).

A digital migration in mainstream media is noted from around 2000 in Zimbabwe with Zimpapers having followed in the footprints of AMH in terms of upgrading their sites to incorporate interactive features in 2010 following international trends and the interactive

practices that had been born out of news websites (Mabweazara, 2014). *The Herald* had started with a rudimental website which did not bear any interactive features. This study therefore seeks to analyze the extent to which *The Herald's* digital platforms were tolerant of UGC that was critical of government criticism.

Globalization is generally understood to refer to international integration of communities and it hinges on effective information sharing. Those with access to certain information at international level are able to participate in various fora. Access however depends on the available type of media and the relevant technologies. Digital media allow people to communicate directly and with a high degree of immediacy without space or time constraints (St.Amant, 2011). The digital divide is a three-dimensional matrix encompassing three aspects which are the *global divide*, *social divide* and the *democratic divide* (Norris, 2001:04).

Global divide is about internet divergence between the super-rich and the developing countries. *Social divide* centers on the information gap between the rich and the poor in each nation. The *democratic divide* concerns the use of the various digital resources available to engage in public life. In this whole digital matrix the issue of 'access' becomes key as those without access to the various digital communication technologies may end up lagging behind those who have access to information at global level (Murelli, 2002). Zimbabwe, like many so called developing countries is still in the digital periphery globally although domestically the internet penetration rate is positive at 45 percent at the time of this research, with at least 5,9 million people subscribing to internet through various service providers (POTRAZ, 2015) in a nation of 13 million people.

However by nature the 'digital divide' is pervasive and does not spare low-income groups who have limited access to the necessary digital resources like the gadgets, internet connectivity and equipment. As such digital technologies while they become the daily routine, they may not lead to a total transformation of approaches to journalism by traditional media (Mabweazara, 2014). That being the situation, this study explores how *The Herald* fared at global level in terms of digital presence since internet is ubiquitous and the newspaper is not spared from global information competition where foreign-based and better resourced players are participating.

Foreign-based Zimbabwean journalists have invaded the cyberspace running their own news-websites and in most cases breaking stories ahead of mainstream media in Zimbabwe

(Mabweazara, 2011:147-148) thereby setting the agenda on topical issues. This puts pressure on mainstream media and therefore this study seeks to establish how *The Herald* strategized digitally against foreign-based media outlets like *NewZimbabwe.com*, *Kubatana.net* and others who by virtue of being hosted in the developed parts of the world had the digital resources at their disposal at the time of the study. The study also analyzes how much *The Herald* invested in its digital operations in terms of expertise, capital and infrastructure in order to withstand competition posed through the global divide.

The Herald's participation on the digital terrain implies a wider approach to its market. *Social divide* concerns the information gap between the rich and the poor in each nation (Norris, 2001:04) and Zimbabwe's internet penetration rate at 45 per cent as discussed earlier implies that not all have access to this digital resource in the country whose population at the time of the study was 13 million (POTRAZ, 2015). Digital exclusion does not only occur between the rich and the poor since the element of age also plays a key role. Even in developed countries on the forefront in terms of technological development, some communities are left behind owing to various factors that affect access. These affected communities may include remote rural areas, the elderly, the working class, low literacy level sections of society and other minority groups (Norris, 2001:11; Murelli, 2002: xxiv).

Although national governments have realized the challenge of digital social divide and have started adopting various strategies in order to minimize or eradicate the phenomenon (Norris, 2000), there are hurdles which are most likely to be encountered within developing countries. These include but not limited to the cost of digital equipment like computers, laptops, lack of access to the technology itself like "voice and data", electricity shortages, inadequate internet bandwidth, existing regulatory frameworks guiding the operations of telecommunication companies and lack of expertise in terms of digital platforms development (Ndlovu, 2009:01).

 In the case of Zimbabwe the poor economic performance during the period under study was an inevitable challenge although government introduced an ICT policy with the objective of turning the country into a technological hub by the year 2020 (Chari, 2013:384). The country also had a fully fledged ICTs ministry at the time of this study. The government embarked on a programme dubbed Community Information Center Initiative whose objective was to set up information communication technology access centers in rural areas as a way of ensuring equitable access to

21

information (*Newsday*, July 12, 2014). However, issues of distance, power outages and limited equipment present challenges in the execution of such initiatives. This study thus analyzes whether *The Herald* ever considered the new rural-based digital audiences being created through government efforts and to what extent the newspaper allowed their participation on its digital platforms.

The closure of companies due to financial stress also resulted in the widening of the digital gap in Zimbabwe (Ruhode, 2013:92). The noted 45 per cent internet penetration in the first quarter of 2015 was actually a result of a 2.5 per cent drop from the last quarter of 2014 (POTRAZ, 2015). Although Zimbabwe enjoys a literacy rate of 98 per cent (ZIMSTAT, 2015), not all of its subjects naturally would have access to digital resources due to challenges noted in Ruhode (2013:92). This study thus seeks to establish strategies adopted by *The Herald* to cater for the various communities in Zimbabwe as defined by the existing social divide in the country up to its audiences in the diaspora who enjoy more digital resources than their counterparts at home.

In the case of the mobile phone network, the study also takes cognizant of the fact that the gadget is an emerging digital interactive communication tool in Zimbabwe which is capable of using SMS as well as internet (Mabwezara 2010:196-197). It is therefore prudent to note the growth of the mobile phone market in Zimbabwe whose penetration rate as of 2013 stood at 104 per cent according to the 2014 Posts and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) report (TechZim, 2014 in Scheiffer et al, 2014). Although the performance declined in the first quarter of 2015 to 90.3 percent (POTRAZ, 2015), the figures remain significant for this study. This study also researches on how much of the mobile phone market *The Herald* exploited as it strategized against adoption of the mobile phone by other digital competitiors. The study also enquires whether *The Herald* allowed feedback and UGC on its mobile phone platforms the same way *Kubatana.net* had made use of UGC through its Kubatana Freedom Phone initiative (Atwood, 2010:26).

2.1.3 Participatory journalism and the threat of de-professionalization of news production

Journalism, a term whose definition has roots in the Italian word 'diurnalis' which means 'daily' from which the former evolved over time to mean a recording of daily events (Singer et al, 2011) is undergoing various transformation stages owing to the advent of digital technology. Although

traditional print newspapers are still in existence the majority of them have become fluid by going digital. Over the past years the advent of digital technology in media production and distribution has created new ways for the participation of members of the general public whom Rosen (2007) cited in Singer (2011) prefers to call "former audiences". All interested parties from professional journalists to audiences are forced to adapt to the changing environment (Scott, 2014; Gillmor, 2006).

Without adopting and adapting to the dynamics taking place as a result of digital media, professional journalists risk being condemned to history. However core journalistic values of fairness and accuracy still remain key thereby ascertaining a degree of gatekeeping by professional journalists in newsrooms (Gillmor, 2006:xxv). Participation by the audiences in the production of news has been described variously by scholars. Among the common terms are 'participatory journalism', 'citizen journalism', 'user-generated content' and 'produsage' (Bruns, 2008;2005 in Singer et al, 2011), a term that attempts to capture the production and consumption aspect of the phenomenon that citizen journalism involves.

The participatory nature of citizen journalism attempts to explain the involvement of non-professional players in the production, shaping and usage of media content. Participation digitally is happening through micro-blogs which are mini-websites run by individuals and regularly updated, social-networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest among others as well as discussion forums and comments platforms on websites among many including (Singer et al, 2011). Whilst various studies (Singer et al, 2011; Gillmor, 2006; Lievrouw, 2011; Wall, 2012; Mabweazara, 2014; Moyo. L, 2009) have explored the advent and the development of citizen journalism owing to the birth of ICTs others have focused on what Lasica (2003:72 in Campbell, 2014) described as the extent to which readers' contributions often amount to "random acts of journalism", indicating the skepticism with which participatory journalism has been accepted in newsrooms.

It is therefore necessary to explore how *The Herald* embraced participation by other players from the primary audience, independent bloggers and politicians as sources who carry different opinions. Digital media technologies have allowed readers "who until recently were imaginary

figures in the minds of the journalists" (Mabweazara, 2014:2) to significantly and openly show themselves in determining what ought to be defined as news of the day.

The audiences manifest themselves through creation of own blogs on internet where they regularly run stories in their areas of interest. Professional journalists naturally cannot ignore such content as some or most of it would be first hand, for example the soccer updates carried on the Dembare.com Facebook page which is a social site created by Zimbabwe's Dynamos football club fans for sharing online (Mushohwe, 2013). Some of the information would be by experts in certain areas like human resources management, technology or political analysis.

However another argument asserts that participatory journalism has always existed and that it dates back to the eighteenth century when in Britain newspapers would leave blank spaces on specific pages for reader comments (Hermida, 2011). Another argument is that the much discussed 'participation' on digital media is abstract as audiences have always participated even through old media (van Dijck, 2009:45-46). The issue in fact should be the definition of the participants according to their different levels which vary between 'spectators' and 'inactives' (ibid). The analysis of the participation process is further expanded in Domingo et al (2008) cited in Scott et al (2014) to include 'closed', 'slightly open', 'moderately open' or 'very open' platforms with regards UGC moderation. These participation levels are also defined further (Scott et al, 2014:6) to embrace participation by staff who are in charge of the content within the mainstream media organization, participation by those who pay for access like subscribers, privileged participation by those who have free access to content, participation by members registered with a site and public participation which comes through open access to all.

In analyzing the above levels of power, Scott et al (2014) argue that they ignored power at technical level on the assumption that newsroom staff had control over moderation by virtue of being in charge of the technological infrastructure. However this assumption by Scott et al (2014) creates a research lacuna with regards the power of the audience where website or online content security is concerned. This takes this discussion further to arguments on power relations between users' possible manipulation of content against the power mainstream editors enjoy in moderating user content. The power exercised by editors is on the other side demonstrated in

their privilege to suggest content to readers by way of codes which pull preferred information to the pages being browsed by readers. Technically suggesting what readers can look at on websites as "related articles" can be argued to be a way of agenda setting using technical means in exposing on the website only what editors deem fit for the audiences. These privileges by editors can be argued to be a way through which journalists demonstrate skepticism over embracing reader participation for fear of losing it to the subalterns. This means readers may be limited in their participation as long as they are given stories to debate or discuss on by editors (Mabweazara, 2014).

However, technology as much as it has brought a new culture of journalism practice in mainstream newsrooms, issues of content security continues to be valid. Therefore, the research further pursues the readers' power over content at technical level which Scott et al (2014) ignored on the assumption that only editors enjoyed that privileged by virtue of being in charge of the digital infrastructure. This brings the discussion to the issue of security with regards 'website hacking', which is defined as violation of a website by which one makes illegal changes to content pages after infiltrating a victim's website server (Maurya, 2009:133). The objective of this kind of attack is to manipulate one's content by replacing or changing the original intent of the published texts. The motivation of hackers varies from loneliness, a feeling of failure by individuals who feel confident only when social-networking online discussing about technological systems, obsessive traits by those who seek media attention and those who seek the thrill that comes from the danger of being caught hacking (Taylor, 1999; Wentworth, 2002; Van Beveren, 2001 cited in Shore, 2011). *The Herald* has suffered some successful hacks and several more hack attempts are recorded daily. Thus this study seeks to examine the level of the banality of power with regards content from *The Herald* manipulated technologically as readers attempt to speak truth back to power as defined by Achille Mbembe (2001) in *On The Post Colony*.

It is also argued that readers' comments are capable of generating emotionally strong alternative discourses on issues deliberately omitted by editors in mainstream media (Mabweazara, 2014). This suggests that audiences can influence mainstream ideas deliberately omitted by editors. In the same context, Scott et al's (2014) analysis of the extent of moderation of user input and its conclusion that mainstream media journalists are reluctant to release moderating authority, and

that this is consistent with previous research, creates a study gap on how the so much guarded mainstream media content can be pirated and or plagiarized and reproduced elsewhere, or simply get shared on individual social platforms-where un-moderated debate would fire up. The study in this particular case therefore analyzes the power of the 'produser' or 'co-creator' (van Dijck, 2009) in reproducing, reshaping meaning and redistributing the newspaper's content beyond Staurt Hall's theory of representation in the context of "creation of meaning through language construction" (Hall, 1997:15).

An example in this regard is how image texts can be manipulated and appropriated through technical editing solutions to recreate totally different meanings as a way of protesting against mainstream content. It is also important therefore to explore the terms of *The Herald* in trying to tame the digital Leviathan considering the possibilities of the newspaper's content violation as some digital users are not without recourse as they can take the newspaper's content for discussion and debates elsewhere.

Digital plagiarism is another aspect that can be argued to demonstrate the power of digital platform users in their various classes as defined by Domingo et al (2008) in Scott et al (2014) to include 'spectators' and 'inactives'. Plagiarism implies lifting and using someone else's academic work presenting it as one's own. Plagiarism also involves the submission of people's thoughts, ideas or words as yours. Plagiarism is rampant in digital media than in traditional print and offenders can easily get trapped (May and Lake, 2013: 35; Carroll; 2010:280). Piracy also exists in the digital media industry, probably more than in traditional print media. Piracy involves the reproduction of someone's digital work for use elsewhere with the objective to generate money through search engine optimization (SEO) and when this happens on internet, the pirates would generate advertising revenue using other people's work (Piracy Trace, 2014). SEO is the act of promoting a website using digital technical tools so that when readers search for a particular site on, say Google, their website would be ranked higher and it would most likely show on the first results displayed (Prusty, 2014).

Digital platforms of *The Herald* which include its website, its Twitter and Facebook social platforms as well as the mobile platform are not immune to plagiarism and piracy just like any other electronically published information. This research examines the extent to which *The*

Herald might have lost control of the content it has so much invested in thereby threatening its hegemonic dominance as a government propaganda tool as well as its business as a professional content producer.

Journalists not only can they moderate user content, but they also rely on online information for news diary ideas. Active participants on user discussion platforms may set the agenda on issues and dominate certain topics much to the exclusion of potential voices yet with little knowledge of the issues under discussion (Mabweazara, 2013; 2014). However, the participants can also dominate issues avoided by mainstream media in the same way. Nevertheless, traditional media retain authority where citizen journalism lack authenticity, professional journalistic editing touch and proof reading of the UGC (Wall, 2012), more so when professional journalists make effort to redefine content by going beyond breaking news and adopting interpretive reports for print (Akinfemisoye (n.d) in Mabweazara, 2014). This study therefore examines the strategies adopted by *The Herald* print in order to retain its mainstream print version as a relevant vibrant option.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Theories help to explain and understand a phenomenon. They can also predict outcomes (McQuail, 2010). In this research this section looks at the media theories that are applicable to the context within which the study is located. Below are the four theories used in this research:

2.2.1 Jurgen Habermas' theory of the Public Sphere

The theory of the public sphere propounded by Jurgen Habermas' (1962) confirms the privacy nature of the bourgeoisie public sphere as "the sphere of private people come together as a public" and articulating the needs of society with the state (Habermas, 1962:27). The early European public sphere thus can be argued to have been an exclusively for Europeans who owned property although access was supposed to be for all. Issues under discussion in the public sphere areas like clubs, salons and coffee shops had to do with the needs of the people in the bourgeoisie society of early European history. The characteristics of Habermas' public sphere include seeing it as a "realm of freedom and permanence" where issues were made topical and ideas formulated. The public sphere was "constituted in discussion" (Habermas, 1962:3). Access in the public sphere was guaranteed to all citizens and it was a sphere for rationale discussions characterized by reason. Participants interacted as equals.

However Habermas (1989) bemoans the corruption of the public sphere and that its function has become less important. Habermas contends that this manipulation of the public through the commercialization of the public sphere undermines the latter. The growth in literacy and the development of the press widened the public sphere platforms before their decline, and later their commercialization which shaped the direction of journalism. Public relations at this juncture set in (Dahlgren, 2010).

Habermas' public sphere work in 1962 grounded the theory in Europe's historical tradition of liberal capitalism yet in discussing Karl Marx he delineated the concept of post-bourgeoisie public sphere where participation would not be bound to private property institution (Calhoun, 1992:99-100). With the advent of new ICTs and globalization, the public sphere theory thus best explains issues of participation and inclusion in global communication thereby allowing for identification and criticism of repressive systems (Crack, 2008:15-16).

Thus the public sphere theory was used in this study owing to the nature of digital platforms which bear the element of networking due to their ubiquitous nature despite the criticism in Ayish, (2008:40) that the public sphere theory is difficult to apply to authoritarian systems that by their nature are bound to constrict platforms of public participation. The argument is further affirmed that "In countries with state dominated media, the concept of the public sphere seems a stranger to local political cultural norms, and hence, has been precluded as irrelevant to scholarly investigations (Ayish, 2008:40).

The researcher however in the context of this study argues for the application of the public sphere theory on the basis that although Zimbabwe has some traits of authoritarianism demonstrated in the Zanu-PF government's nostalgia for a one party state, its attempt to manipulate history in its favour and the introduction of such policies as the national youth service which is criticized by some as meant to create a party militia, opposition parties do exist and participate in regular elections. Zimbabwe also has a broadly represented parliament with independent, opposition and ruling party legislators all working together (Sheehan, 2004:34; Dowswell, 2009; Tendi, 2010:). As such the country cannot be classified in the same boat as North Korea, China or Russia. In the context of this study, therefore the public sphere theory is deployed to understand the accessibility of *The Herald* digital platforms. It explains the accessibility of *The Herald* digital platforms as public spheres for rationale discussions on

28

political and social issues, taking note of the extent of government's hegemonic influence in the newspaper's editorial affairs.

The public sphere theory is essential in the evaluation of communication practices and media structures towards achieving a democratic society (Price,1995:24 in Moyo, 2009). Through this theory assessment of the digital media platforms of *The Herald* and their ability to prove themselves as true market-places of ideas as well as their contribution toward an informed, enlightened and democratic society will be made possible.

2.2.2 McQuail's Democratic Participant Theory

Media studies had often focused more on the traditional theories of the press propounded by Siebert, Schramm and Peterson (1956) until McQuail added the 'democratic participant' and the 'development media' theories. Of relevance to this research is the 'democratic participant' theory one of whose basic principles is the public's reclamation of their right to media access (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White, 2009).

The theory emphasizes the right of citizens in small-scale communities, interest groups and subcultures to media access and participation for the promotion of democracy (McQuail, 1994:132 in Atton, 2002). The researcher applies the democratic participant theory to explore the role played by *The Herald* in extending the reach to its readers as well as framing the level of participation achieved. It is argued that *The Herald* is pro government (Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1999; Chari, 2013). However, being a publicly owned newspaper as it is, the democratic participant theory is applied to help assess the level of participation in democratic processes such as elections and parliamentary debates.

This question of participation remains valid for as long as the government retains the ZMMT as the majority shareholder in the newspaper, yet its existence as a buffer between *The Herald* and the authorities now remains vague after it allowed the Ministry of Information to literary take over its role (Chuma, 2004:128). The application of the democratic participant theory therefore helps place into perspective the role played by the government in being the referee of people's participation in democratic processes through *The Herald.*

2.2.3 The theory of hegemony

Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony explains the social dominance of a certain class of society over others. Gramsci is a neo-Marxist Italian scholar whose theory of hegemony sought to explain "spontaneous consent granted by society to the dominant group." The dominance according to Gramsci is renewed and negotiated time and again, through persuasion but also coercion by employing repressive state apparatuses as defined in the Althusserian theory of ideology (Storey, 2009). However, the definition of hegemony varies with historical and intellectual contexts (Laclau and Mouffe, 2002:138). From this explanation of hegemony, the key characteristic of the phenomenon though is the continued dominance of the subaltern groups through a manipulatively persuasive system.

This study puts *The Herald's* digital platforms into the theoretical perspective of hegemony as the research explores how the newspaper manages its readers online during the period under study. *The Herald* had largely dominated the print media industry in Zimbabwe (Chari, 2013) whilst its digital platforms remained popular as asserted by ZAMPS (2014) in the section outlining the background of this research. Hegemony is seen as a continuous creation process as it yields counter-hegemonies time and again to remain relevant and effective. As such Laclau (2002:328) notes that hegemony is bound to leave room for dissent which can manifest itself through some negative cultural developments. In this perspective the theory helps assess the extent to which negative UGC to the status quo is tolerated on *The Herald's* digital platforms. The theory also places into perspective the negotiation and persuasion strengths of the digital platforms in winning consent in an environment characterized by ever increasing dissenting voices due to the political pervasion subsisting in Zimbabwe during the period of the study.

2.2.4 Alternative media theory

The theory of 'alternative media' has roots in Dennis McQuail's 'democratic participant' theory after the scholar (McQuail, 1987 in Atton, 2002:08) suggested on the need to develop a theory for alternative and radical media outside the realm of the existing dominant mainstream media, but rather in account of media oppositional to mainstream (Atton, 2002). Alternative media are regarded as media engrafted in society rather than just being media (Downing, 2001 cited in Fuchs, 2010:183); grafted in society in the sense that they are expected to be the platforms for the insurrection of the voices of the subalterns, carrying radical content. It should be quickly

noted that the alternative media theory does not only consider alternativeness of the channels in question in the context of political resistance only, but is also applicable to artistic and literary works including music, creative writing and so forth (Atton, 2002:08).

The subjugated are expected to participate in media without the prerequisite of formal education or news production expertise as is the case with professional journalists. However, the conditions under which alternative media journalists work should also be of concern as it should not be assumed that they wield the independence consistent with alternative media (Atton, 2008:213). For example, if *Kubatana.net* is regarded as alternative, it does not necessarily follow that the journalists it employs enjoy more freedom than those at *The Herald*, for its owners also hold their own beliefs not necessarily in line with those of its employees.

In the same vein, participatory media is expected to be open in terms of content production for the benefit of the subjugated participants who should enjoy dialogue and exchange of ideas as they also join in the production of content (Sandoval and Fuchs, 2009). Therefore, this study used the alternative media framework to interrogate whether the digital platforms of *The Herald* were really alternative on the basis of their participatory nature since they possess feedback and UGC facilities for readers to add their own thoughts.

2.3 Conclusion

Chapter 2 introduced and explored literature relevant to this study with focus on the advent of digital media in Zimbabwe and its adoption by *The Herald*. The literature works used herein were drawn from various scholars who researched on media in Zimbabwe on various fronts from history of the newspaper industry in Zimbabwe, the hegemonic dominance of mainstream state-controlled media up to the advent of digital media. The section on theoretical framework looked at four applicable theories used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodologies

3.0 Introduction

This Chapter presents the research approaches, research design and research methods which form the plan under which this data was gathered, presented and analyzed. Also presented in this Chapter is the statement of reflexivity which is an element of autoethnography as the researcher was still employed by the organization under study at the time of this research. The research explores the digital strategies employed by *The Herald* to maintain its commitment to its editorial charter of supporting the government of the day. The strategies were implemented by the Zimpapers Digital Department of which the author is a part. The study also analyzes the performance of these digital platforms and the extent to which they were embraced by readers. Also under study is the extent to which these strategies embrace readers as well as the threats they pose to the mainstream news production processes.

3.1 Research Methodology

Research methodology explains how a study is done and the rationale behind the steps taken. Methodology helps justify decisions taken in conducting a research. Methodology also explains why certain methods of data gathering are employed against others. It also assists other scholars to evaluate one's research findings (Kothari, 2004). There are two major types of research methodologies; these are quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

Quantitative research methodologies are those methodologies theoretically framed by positivist and empirical social-scientist approach to measurement. Quantitative approach is concerned with numbers and statistics in its presentation of data. Data under the quantitative approach is subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in order to reach at some empirical findings. (Kothari, 2004; Gupta and Gupta, 2011:13). However this study adopts qualitative research methodologies which are those methodologies that are theoretically framed by 'critical' paradigms that emphasize interpretation over measurement. An example of where this is applicable is a situation characterized by findings that can be difficult to quantify and this is typified by such methods of data gathering like observation and interviews (Gunter, 2000:23).

In adopting qualitative methodologies this research takes cognizant of how such phenomena like hegemonic tendencies cannot be quantified, but are observable through behaviour displayed by, in this case the personnel at *The Herald* in their treatment of UGC in terms of comments moderation and other gatekeeping strategies.

Qualitative approaches are also concerned with opinion and attitude assessment by the researcher. Qualitative research usually is not subjected to quantitative data analysis and "research in such a situation is a function of researcher's insights and impressions (Kothari, 2004:5). This study sought to examine the extent to which through its digital media platforms *The Herald* embraced its followers through participatory journalism also known as citizen journalism. The behaviour or attitude of *The Herald* in its accommodation of readers online could be analyzed through the observation of who got the opportunity to be heard and with what kind of opinion in the newspaper.

In the era of digital media, those keen on engaging qualitative research methods involving digital media are enthusiastic of the advantages of online research which include the convenience of engaging with respondents across the globe defying the distance and time barriers. Another cited advantage is that research subjects tend to open up where they are not facing the interviewer face-to-face (Keagan, 2009:85). This study since it is focusing on digital media strategies extended the qualitative approach to digital data gathering and analysis as explained in the following sections on data gathering techniques used.

3.2 Population

Unit of analysis is what or who is being studied and in social sciences the most typical unit is the individual person although there is virtually no limit to what can be studied (Babbie, 2008:104). That means in media research even texts, newspaper titles, media organizations and similar items can be studied. This study researches on digital media strategies adopted by *The Herald* to suit its editorial commitment to support the government of the day. The units of analysis therefore are the digital platforms.

There is need to be clear of the "general body/collection" of communications or people a researcher intends to focus on in order to come up with a manageable sample of the subjects under study (Hansen and Machin, 2013:22-23). Population refers to the group of people or objects from which research data is gathered. Generally, in social science research, data is not obtained from each and every single member of a population of units of analysis. Instead of a population census kind of research, a representative sample is drawn from which study respondents are selected for investigation (Hanneman et al, 2013:14). The objective of defining population is to be specific as much as possible in identifying who the study is focusing on, and the justification. The study therefore deals with different sets of population which include media professionals, all readers who participated on *The Herald* digital platforms, digitally archived documents on UGC as well as the actual content created by users on the newspaper's digital platforms. (See Appendix 7 for more reader comments).

3.3 Sampling techniques

Sampling is a way of selecting a representative number of respondents from the population to be used in a study. This sample should have the same characteristics of the larger group. Sampling should ensure every subject from the "predefined population" being studied has an equal chance greater than zero and is measurable (Hansen and Machin, 2013, Emmel; 2013:1). The following sampling methods were used in this research

3.3.1 Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling is a qualitative sampling technique which rides on the convenience posed by the availability of respondents and their willingness to be engaged (Hansen and Machin, 2013). Convenience sampling is also known as haphazard sampling as it involves general access to the subjects because of their availability as noted above (Jackson, 2015:121). Convenience

sampling is sometimes confused with cluster sampling which is a kind of sampling that involves the identification of clusters or groups representative of the population. Instead of therefore treating the Zimpapers Digital Department media professionals as a cluster, convenience sampling picks them on the basis of their availability. The researcher did not need to travel or approach them the way outsiders would be approached.

3.3.2 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling technique is a qualitative non probability sampling technique in which respondents are chosen according to a specific criterion (Jensen, 2002:216). This criterion, for example would consider certain aspects the researcher is aware of about the sample population. This sampling technique is also known as judgmental sampling (Babbie, 2008:208). This study thus purposively picks on stories known to have generated interesting debates thereby creating more comments due to the nature of the subjects under focus. From these debates, comments would most likely be diversified with some being against and some for the issues under coverage thereby allowing for a better observation of the level of openness of *The Herald* digital platforms.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Data collection in research is classified under three common techniques which are questionnaires, interviews and observation (Powell, 2004:89). This study used two data gathering techniques which are autoethnography and interviews as discussed in the sections below.

3.4.1 Autoethnography

Autoenthnography is a data gathering method with a unique ethical approach as it presents the author as both the researcher and the source of information (King and Horrocks; 2010). Autoethnography takes into consideration the researcher using personal experience to critique beliefs, experiences and practices. It also calls for the valuation of the relationship between the researcher and society and takes into consideration self-reflection as the researcher has to remain as neutral and rationale as much as possible (Adams et al, 2015:1-2). Thus in this study recognition of the unique role of being an autoethnographer was a constant reminder not to abuse authority or position as this would compromise findings.

The term 'reflexivity' in qualitative research explains how "researchers and the methods they use are entangled in the politics and practices of the social world" (King and Horrocks; 2010:125-

126). Reflectivity also means sensitivity to a researcher's political, cultural and social context. Thus social researchers should be thoughtful of the implications of their "methods, values, biases and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate" (Bryman, 2012:393). An autoethnographer therefore is ethically expected to undergo a process of 'self-reflection' before, during and after the field in order to self-interrogate as a way of safeguarding findings against the influence of self-opinion (LeCompte, 1999:66). The process of reflexivity involves the researcher managing personal opinions, expectations, conclusions, beliefs and this is also known as "disciplined subjectivity" (Erikson, 1985; 1986 in LeCompte, 1999:66).

Therefore this researcher had to consider the issue of self-reflection with regards the collection of data on why *The Herald* adopted the digital strategies they have implemented and how they have used them to maintain their hegemonic dominance. The danger would have been an assumption of the reasons since the researcher was a fulltime employee of the Zimpapers Digital Department which managed the digital affairs of *The Herald* before and during the time of the study.

The researcher by being part of the Zimpapers Digital Department, was privileged to have access to various resources necessary for this research. Such resources included free unlimited internet access at a situation other departments were not even allowed to log on to social media like Facebook or YouTube during working hours. For the researcher, internet access was part of the job although it took meetings to justify why unlimited internet access was necessary. The availability of a fixed landline phone, a dedicated work space and furniture all contributed positively to the completion of this study as the early years of the Digital Department were characterized by lack of recognition of the department's importance to the whole media organization.

The researcher, being an administrator of the platforms under study, also meant some data that could have been difficult to acquire were easily accessible for this research. Digital archival research therefore was made possible and easy where it would have been far expensive being conducted in an environment where internet access was paid for. Therefore data acquired through digital archival research in this study is not secondary; it did not require a secondary administrator to avail it.

However, the research was not without its own challenges as encountered in the structuring and restructuring of the Digital Department, mainly because at three to four years, it easily passes for a new project where many would have wanted to be in control. The most challenging period of this study was between August and October 2015 which coincided with the phase when critical field work was in progress for this research. The redeployment of senior staff in the company meant that the Digital Department was not spared and the researcher had to deal with a new Editor in the department who was not keen on proffering assistance. The researcher had to circumnavigate the Head of Digital Services in the Digital Department to complete his field work. Not to celebrate the demise of another man, the unexpected departure of the new digital Head at the end of August was a relief for the researcher.

However this did not signal the end of an era as concerns were immediately raised by the Group Human Resources Manager's office that the researcher's studies at the Midlands State University (MSU) were eating into working hours and that this warranted investigations and a solution. Sleepless nights continued with divided attention which could have easily spoiled this research. Fortunately a relief this time came through the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services, who on learning that the researcher was studying the digital strategies employed by *The Herald* in the face of dissenting voices congratulated the researcher and wished him well in his study. At least for now the study was steadily back on track.

The meeting with the Permanent Secretary was one of the usual "meet the editors" sessions facilitated by government as a way of cultivating a sound relationship between the parties. Such meetings were also a privilege for the researcher as through them policy direction for *The Herald* editorial was usually conveyed. The researcher also attended meetings of strategy formulation and implementation at senior and middle management levels. This participation in these operations and policy meetings required self-reflection in order to avoid assumptions based on personal experience as an employee of *The Herald*.

3.4.2 Unstructured face-to-face interviews

Interviews allow the researcher to broaden the scope of questions as the interaction can develop into a discussion with an opportunity to seek clarification of vague areas. Interviews are one of

the best ways to extract data from people (Hansen and Machin 2013:22). Interviews can be unstructured face-to-face, over the phone or through more contemporary digital media means. Unstructured interviews do not necessarily follow laid down questions as in formal interviews. This study used unstructured face-to-face interviews to engage with the Managing Editor of *The Herald*, Victoria Ruzvidzo, Simiso Mlevu the Social Media Writer and the Online Sub-editor Shingirai Huni. Engaging Ruzvidzo in the interview presented a small challenge especially with regards questions to do with policy on the issue of content for online which would have presented the whole interview as a discussion on what she was expected of doing in ensuring that the Digital Department got the necessary input from her department, something that was never easy. The researcher being junior to Ruzvidzo would have seemed like he was tacking to task his superior. However being cognizant of the relationship with the superior helped the case as the researcher remained mindful of the fact that this was an academic interview and as such the Managing Editor had to be comfortably made aware of this and that the superior needed not necessarily stick to the order of the questions in order to enrich the interview.

The situation between the researcher and the Social Media writer and Online sub-editors was more or less the same as in the interview with the Managing Editor as interviews could have easily degenerated into kind of directives for data requests, but the incumbents being university graduates understood how the power dynamics had to play out. This helped to relax the situation and extract the necessary data for this research.

3.4.3 Structured face-to-face and e-mail interviews

Some skeptics believe the use of digital means of data gathering detach the researcher from the subjects where face-to-face interviews may have been employed. Some of the disadvantages raised by critics of digital media interviews are that these lack the element of body language which is considered key in interviews. Digital interviews are also argued to be difficult with regards verification of the physical participants (Keegan, 2009:85). However enthusiasts also believe that digital interviews make respondents feel relaxed as they will be responding from their own natural environment yet connected to the researcher. Respondents are also most likely to be more honest and open. The issue of distance or time becomes a non-issue as it is made possible to communicate in the virtual world (Keegan, 2009).

This research thus employed the use of digital media interviews that included e-mails and via Google Chat in engaging respondents from the Digital Department who were not present due to night shift duties or some other reason. These are Online News Editor Costa Mano who had taken days off for exams and another Online Sub-editor Musa Gwaunza who had been on night shift starting work at 12 midnight for the better part of the data gathering period. For the structured face-to-face interview, William Chikoto the Editorial Executive responsible for Training and Convergence was available, and the fact that the department still regarded as being in its infancy stage also needed constant internal research made this particular research also relevant as the interviewee expressed keenness on the findings which he indicated would probably be helpful in the development of the Zimpapers Digital project. This helped the researcher put across questions which would have been difficult for a subordinate against a superior in a normal situation.

3.4.4 Digital archival research

Digital archives are repositories systematically designed to store, locate and provide access to digital materials that can date back several years The objective of digital archives is to standardize access as well as to preserve material in digital format such that it is also accessible globally via the internet (Kaleva; 2015, 27-28). As new information communication technologies continue to evolve globally, there are now new electronically based methods of data gathering. Internet-based databases are some of the sources of information that can be of use during studies (Malcolm (2004:1).

This researcher thus used digital archival research in accessing the performance reports of the various digital platforms of *The Herald* in order to establish the extent to which these had developed over time in terms of their accommodation or non-accommodation of reader-generated content online. Also accessed where stories that generated more comments necessary for this research as well as those comments which were deleted but whose archives the researcher was privileged to have access to.

3.5 Methods of data analysis

Data analysis is concerned with identifying and summarizing key trends, patterns and relationships of data collected. Qualitative data was explored for meaning in terms of language

use, signs, discourse and themes (Hansen and Muchin, 2013:27). This study used critical discourse analysis (CDA) and semiotic analysis methods of data analysis.

3.5.1 Critical Discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis underscores the role played by language as a power resource in relation to ideology and social-cultural change. Meanings of a particular phenomenon are explored by relating history of a particular discourse to its current status as well as how discourses give meaning to social life and makes certain activities possible, desirable or inevitable (Bryman, 2012:536-537). CDA is the search for meaning in language in relation to practices and norms that habour political power and ideology. CDA further studies the way "social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijck, n.d). Critical discourse analysis seeks to read between the texts in search of the covert meaning as it analyzes language texts to explain how power plays out (Fairclough, 2013:6).

For example, the use of demeaning nicknames by readers against certain political or prominent figures perceived to be inclined to *The Herald* and or the status quo would indicate ideological contestations on the comments platforms between the newspaper and these readers. Thus CDA is used to unpack some of the messages posted on the digital platforms of *The Herald* in order to assess the general feeling of the readers and their ideological differences to the newspaper as a propaganda tool for the government. CDA analysis was also used to examine the opinion of readers towards content published by *The Herald*.

3.5.2 Semiotic analysis

Semiotics concerns the study of signs. Propounded by Swiss scholar Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), semiotics is defined as "the science of signs", and it centers on the meaning making process using signs. American scholar Charles Peirce (1839-1914) coined the term "semiology" through which the phenomenon is also known. However semiotics also owes its meaning making process to culture with regards interpretation of various signs to deduce meaning. Certain signs may not mean anything in certain communities. Language can also be used to speak truth back to power as a sign of protest (Mbembe, 2001).

Thus this study used semiotics to analyze certain textual and visual messages also posted on the digital platforms of *The Herald* by readers in order to measure the level of acceptance of the

newspaper's digital platforms as media that are there to serve the interests of the people or the government.

3.6 Methods of data presentation

Presentation of data in media research is rooted in textured analysis of content which is usually expressed through narrative analysis. The narrative style of data presentation in qualitative research can also be used to present data gathered through interviews, observation or textual analysis (Silverman and Patterson, 2015:110). To accompany the narrative analysis are the relevant screenshots of digital reports by Google, screenshots of stories bearing reader comments and tables showing the digital platforms of *The Herald* and their audience as well as a pie chart showing the distribution of the newspaper's mobile audience. These data include that which explains the volume of traffic to the digital platforms of *The Herald* and other necessary reports obtained through open sources on internet like Google Analytics. This study also uses the narrative style of data presentation in order to capture data observed during the autoethnographic research in a story-telling way.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The issue of ethics in media studies is of essence considering the influence media have in society. Ethics hinge on honesty. Ethics give norms that guide the researcher (Tettey, 2005:61). Whilst in academic institutions approval may not be required in advance, it is considerable to "obtain informed consent" from members who might be implicated in the study (Chang et al, 2013:131). The process of reflexivity also takes into consideration personal relationships with part of the population in the field as the research should not be conducted in a manner where the researched become suspicious or feel intimidated of the researcher (Takhar-Lail and Ghorban, 2015: 27). Thus the researcher had to explain the scholarly nature of this research bearing in mind the political sensitivity of the organization under study. The issue of ethics therefore bears the "self-reflexivity" statement below in section 3.9.

3.8 Self reflexivity

I, Happiness Chikwanha, the researcher and author of this study have been involved with Zimpapers Digital department as Online Editor of *The Herald* since 2011 when the publishing company decided to internalize its online operations. Previously the services were externally

managed at Cyberplex, a Harare-based Internet Service Provider and web-hosting company that handled both content and the digital platforms.

My responsibilities as online editor included:

- assist senior management in online policy enforcement
- supervising reader comments-moderation for the group's titles online
- supervising the production of breaking news for *The Herald* website and on other digital platforms
- aggregation of print content onto the online platforms
- supervising mobile news production and distribution
- assist the Social Media Editor in supervising *The Herald* social media management

For this research, I advised my principal supervisors of my intention to research on the digital strategies adopted by *The Herald* in the face of completion from dissenting voices which threatened the mainstream newspaper's dominance of the public.

I am positive the idea of researching on *The Herald* was and will not be viewed negatively as the digital department was still fairly new at the time of this study, having been reconstituted between 2013 and 2014 in order to create new structures to enhance operations. In business research has always been ongoing and I firmly believe that this academic research will at one point also help *The Herald* to self-introspect and evaluate on the digital strategies adopted so far and whether these are ideal or not.

I did the best I could to guard against the interest I wield as an employee of *The Herald* in order not to influence the outcome of my research so that it remained highly relevance to the academic body of knowledge to which it seeks to contribute. Objectively conducting this research also cleared my conscience as an ambitious university student in contributing to the academia.

3.9 Conclusion

Chapter 3 outlined the research methodologies used in this study as well as the research design which guided this study to the findings later presented in Chapter 5. Since autoethnography which means "studying self" (Chang et al, 2013) is unique by exploring issues that touch on personal experiences, Chapter 3 also carried the Self-Reflexivity statement in which the

researcher declared himself and reflected on issues to guard against during the research so as to protect findings from influence through personal opinion.

Chapter 4 Organizational Analysis: Zimpapers Digital with focus on *The Herald*

4.0 Introduction

The study so far has laid out the literature review, focusing on what other scholars have studied on the dominance of mainstream media in Zimbabwe, which for a long time had been largely dominated by *ZBC* on the electronic side and *The Herald* on the print. Existing literature also heavily trod on the advent of digital media in Zimbabwe and their adoption by *The Herald* later with focus on the changing news production processes and new revenue streams. The gap which this study narrowed on concerns how *The Herald* appropriated these new digital platforms to strengthen its hegemonic dominance as a government propaganda tool considering the argued emancipatory nature of these new digital platforms. Chapter 4 therefore unpacks the complex matrix that the organizational structure of Zimpapers is with regards appointments, dismissals and vagueness of some existing posts in the group. The Chapter explains the Digital Department in relation to *The Herald* as it was mandated with the implementation of digital strategies to counter dissenting voices in order to maintain the newspaper's dominance.

4.1 Historical background

Zimpapers is listed on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE) with the ZMMT being the majority shareholder with 51.09 per cent. A stock exchange is an organized market place where shares, bonds, stocks and other securities are traded by members of the exchange acting as both brokers or agencies and principals (Gomes, 2008:105). Old Mutual Life Assurance Company is the second majority shareholder with 10.24 percent whilst the remaining eighteen shareholders share the rest of the remaining shares (Zimpapers, 2014). Thus the ZMMT remains the majority shareholder with government as the single investor in it as advised by the Permanent Secretary for Information, Media and Broadcasting Services, George Charamba (*Chronicle*, 15 August 2015) and Daphne Tomana, the Company Secretary and Group Legal Services Manager in an unstructured face-to-face interview during the course of this study **(See Appendix 1 for the complete Zimpapers Shareholding structure).**

Zimpapers is a printing, publishing and broadcasting company with three distinct units which are the newspaper division, the printing division and the broadcasting unit which runs Star FM and Diamond FM, a Mutare-based radio station which, at the time of this study had just been

awarded a broadcasting license with confirmed reports to start operations before the end of 2015. For the full business operating structure of Zimpapers, please see **Appendix 2**.

The current structure as explained above with regards the position of the ZMMT has allowed the Minister of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services to appoint directors to the Zimpapers board who in turn appoint editors who go on to appoint their own subordinates. However in some cases the appointment of such subordinates as desk editors can come as directives from the Ministry with notable cases in the appointment of Political Editors although such appointments are given to the Editor to announce.

Naturally such key editorial appointments are reflective of the relationship between the ruling party, Zanu-PF and the appointed members with dismissals of the latter where they fail to tow the line of the government of the day. Examples of such dismissal cases include the sacking of the first black editor of *The Herald*, Farai Munyuki who stayed for three years before being dismissed in 1983 for publishing a story critical of the Botswana government, a move which was deemed embarrassing on the part of Zimbabwe. Munyuki was replaced by Tommy Sithole, who served up to 1998 before paving way for Charles Chikerema following a power struggle between the two. Chikerema died shortly after appointment. Bornwell Chakaodza, a former director in the Ministry of Information subsequently took over the editorship of *The Herald* (Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1999).

Chakaodza marked the beginning of a series of dismissals after the appointment of Jonathan Moyo as Informartion Minister in 2000. Chakaodza's successor Ray Mungoshi only lasted seven months and was replaced by Pikirayi Deketeke who served up to 2009 before being elevated to the post of Group Editor-in-Chief, a position which currently looks dormant after the elevation of the latter to the position of CEO in 2015. Since then and up to the end of this research no communication has ever been served to clarify whether the position still exists in the group or not, with members of the executives refusing to be drawn into discussion over the executive structure of the company.

After leaving *The Herald*, Deketeke was replaced by William Chikoto who had a three-year stint paving the way for Innocent Gore in 2012 who was moved from *Chronicle* to take up the editorship of *The Herald*. Gore lasted only a year following visible fallout with Moyo. Gore was

succeeded in October 2013 by Caesar Zvayi who was still in charge up to the time of this study (Saunders, 1999; MMPZ, 2011; *NewZimbabwe.com*, 2009; *The Herald*, 2012; 2013).

4.2 Organizational Structure

Karl Marx and Max Webber are credited with the first writings on how industrial work is organized in their scholarship on British factories in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile the assertion is that the rationale behind organizing work is for it to get accomplished. Organizational structure therefore is defined as the division of labour in reference to the formal pattern of relationships that coordinate and command the activities involved in an organization (Bratton and Chiantamore, 2007: 458).

Thus *The Herald* and the Zimpapers Digital department have a defined relationship where each unit has its responsibilities that feed into each other to achieve the group's common objectives, yet there is a thin line between these two editorial departments which makes it difficult not only for outsiders but internal staff to distinguish between the two. The Zimpapers Digital Department is centralized in its operations, taking care of all the company's digital platforms, including *The Herald*, which was up to the period of this study the cash-cow for Zimpapers.

Although *The Herald* had registered probably its first ever online presence as early as 2004 as asserted by the company's Chief Marketing Officer Tapuwa Mandimutsira, its website could be argued to have been rudimental with no extra features other than the basic interface that carried text only and nothing else. A more significant step forward was taken by first establishing a Digital Department in June 2010. The Digital Department however kicked off operations in September the same year with the creation of a placeholder website under the web address *zimpapersonline.co.zw*.

The new website incorporated all *The Herald's* sister publications to the daily for six months until the platform was disintegrated in February 2011 following the creation of individual sites for these various sister titles. *The Herald* became *herald.co.zw*. The Digital Department generates own revenues from managing and executing digital strategies on behalf of *The Herald,* and other newspapers. *The Herald*, under the Editor Caesar Zvayi, is mandated to produce content through the main newspaper's conventional newsroom. The Digital Department then

manages the newsroom content on digital platforms (See **Appendix 3 and 4** for the organizational structures of *The Herald* and the Zimpapers Digital Department.

4.11 Key Staff in the Digital Department
Staff in the Digital Department largely comprises internet and computer-savvy journalists drawn from the various newsrooms of the Zimpapers Group. These hold different portfolios as discussed below.

4.11.1 Group Digital Editor
The Group Digital Editor heads the Zimpapers Digital Department and the duties include overseeing the overall implementation of policy from a digital perspective. The Group Digital Editor is also responsible for administrative issues which include recruitment and procurement of resources for digital operations. At the time of this research, the position of Group Digital Editor was vacant after the departure of the incumbent.

The position of Group Digital Editor was created in 2013 two years after the establishment of the Digital Department. The appointment of the Group Digital Editor was announced by Deketeke in his capacity as the Group Editor-in-Chief whilst he announced subsequent appointments of Deputy Editor of *The Herald* among other editorial appointments in 2015 in his capacity as Group Chief Executive Officer. The statements of appointments were silent of the position of Editor-in-Chief seemingly indicating the unimportance of the position or condemning it to an honorary kind of post as compared with the power *The Herald* Editor wields.

The position of Group Digital Editor during the period under study had largely been a ceremonial post following tension with *The Herald* editor over content control. Eventually *The Herald* Editor triumphed leaving the Group Digital Editor with no say on issues of content destined for digital platforms. This automatically makes the position largely complicated since all digital platforms are essentially content platforms. Up to the period of this research it was unclear whether this position would be given 'life' and in what context as it remained vacant.

4.11.2 Online Editor
The Online Editor manages the production and maintenance of websites, mobile news, and social media platforms with regards content uploading as well as management of UGC. The complexity of the relationship between *The Herald* and the Digital Department in this respect is that the

Online Editor on issues of content destined for digital platforms is not supervised by the Group Digital Editor, who happens to be his immediate boss according to the Digital Department structure. On other administrative issues to do with procurement of internet bundles for mobile operations, procurement of gadgets and administration of leave days, the Online Editor reports to the Group Digital Editor. Thus instructions on content come as directives from *The Herald* Editor to the Online Editor, yet the latter has autonomy on UGC, albeit within the parameters of the company's website Terms and Conditions of Use (See **Appendix 6 and 7** for the Terms and Conditions of use) which were developed in accordance with the National Constitution as well as expectations of the company's editorial charter.

Thus the existing relationship between *The Herald* Editor, the Group Digital Editor and the Online Editor is a matrix which is rather complex. When the Online Editor requires internet payments done, the signature to the requisition memos is appended by the Group Digital Editor. On the types of stories to feed onto the digital platforms, authorization comes from *The Herald* Editor. On UGC to keep or filter out on *The Herald* digital platforms, the Online Editor has autonomy. However, the political economy of *The Herald* at the end determines what kind of content sees the light of the day. *The Herald* Editor and the Online Editor on issues of policy direction as advised by the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services attend sessions together.

4.11.3 Online News Editor

The Online News Editor is responsible for liaising with fellow news editors of *The Herald* print paper in negotiating what can be considered for digital platforms whilst print journalists develop indepth articles from the same issues. The Online News Editor consults with the Online Editor on the agreed stories. The overall diary from which all stories are drawn would have been approved by *The Herald* editor. The Online Editor is also the 'super-administrator' who creates user profiles for the Digital Department staff.

In liaising with fellow news editors, thus the Online News Editor directly supervises reporters from whose assignments multi-media content suitable for digital platforms is expected. The Online news editor also intervenes and assists with social media management as well as UGC management on *The Herald* website. He also attends public events like political rallies or parliamentary sessions for live coverage on the website.

4.11.4 Social Media Editor

The Social Media editor manages all social media platforms which include Facebook and Twitter among others. The duties include sharing content on social media platforms and reacting to reader feedback where necessary as well as track debates among participants. The social media platforms are expected to re-direct readers to the website for enhanced traffic which would be advantageous in terms of advertising revenue. The Social Media Editor also handles UGC on these platforms and shares the feedback through the Online News Editor for further content development. In some cases, where necessary, the Social Media editor conducts "live tweets" of events on Twitter with the idea of psyching up readers for more news to follow on the websites and indepth pieces in the print version. Thus the duties involve more of teasing and appetizing readers for more to come on the rest of the digital platforms including the print paper.

4.11.5 Online Sub-Editors

The Online Sub-Editors are responsible for the execution of manual work which includes uploading websites, editing still images, audio and visual materials as well as moderating comments under the supervision of the Online Editor. Online sub-editors also re-write copy for the mobile platform as well as uploading adverts on *The Herald* website and others. The Online Sub-editors are the 'foot soldiers' when it comes to activating the digital platforms into live channels. These troupes thus work through shifts which make the whole operation live 24 hours a day.

The first to come in starts work at 3pm and works into the night up to 12 midnight. The next on duty takes over from 12 midnight to 8am whilst the News Editor and the Online Editor intervene from 8am going forward. Thus the supervisors also regularly work into the wee hours of the days throughout the work.

4.12 Links with other organizations

The Herald has several other organisations and individuals it deals with as a publication of a listed media organization and these define its publics. Publics are the recipient of an organization's message from a public relations perspective. For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused only on the external publics of *The Herald*.

4.12.1 Government institutions

The Herald is a strategic publication to the government of Zimbabwe by virtue of the former's interests through the ZMMT. However government through the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services has developed a peculiar interest as manifested in its appointment of key editorial staff at *The Herald* (Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1999). *The Herald* thus can regard government as the employer of its people rather than the ZMMT.

The Herald through its parent company Zimpapers, also interacts with government institutions which are Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ and the Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ). ZMC is the authority that grants media operating licenses to media organizations and also accredits journalists to practice lawfully in the country. BAZ is the licensing authority for radio stations whilst POTRAZ presides over the issuance of 'short-codes' which are used by mobile phone subscribers to receive news on request. A short code is defined as a short thread of numbers, usually shorter than a country's standard mobile phone number through which a mobile phone subscriber can request relevant information from an information service provider.

4.12.2 Academic Institutions

The Herald Zimpapers has also fostered relationships with educational institutions in the country notably Midlands State University (MSU), National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT), Christian College of Africa (CCOSA) and Harare Polytechnic among others. The media organization provides industrial placement opportunities to students from these institutions and in many cases employing some of them when vacancies arise. MSU actually provides several journalists from Zimpapers the opportunity to further their studies through a favourable block release arrangement that allows them to study whilst they are working.

4.12.3 Business partners and service providers

The Herald, through its parent company Zimpapers has links with several other companies within and outside Zimbabwe from which the publication gets either raw materials or technological services. For the purposes of this study, the researcher did not include companies

to do with the production of the print version of *The Herald*. Companies linked to Zimpapers through the Digital Department include Zimbabwe's three mobile telecommunications companies which are Econet, Telecel and NetOne, Afrosoft, WebDev and Liquid Telecom Zimbabwe. The three telecoms companies have ventured into mobile news production with *The Herald* whilst Afrosoft provides technical support in the mobile news venture between NetOne and *The Herald*. Webdev is the host of *The Herald* website whilst Liquid is the company's internet service provider (ISP).

Globally *The Herald* has relations with US-headquartered Google, which is the newspaper's search engine and global advertising agency for the newspaper's website. *The Herald* also has links with a Chinese telecoms technology company Zhongxing New Telecommunications Equipment (ZTE) which is a technical partner in the mobile news venture between *The Herald* and Econet. *The Herald* also has links with South African-based digital publisher PressReader for its presence on the company's digital platforms. Disqus Inc is a social media company which provides blogging services and has links with *The Herald* for the latter's comments moderation requirements. Also in the same category as Disqus are social media companies Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

In Africa Zimpapers has links with Kenyan media organization, the Nation Media Group (NMG) from where *The Herald* has borrowed a few ideas in how to implement digital strategies across various platforms. In December 2012 William Chikoto and then editor of *The Herald* Innocent Gore led a four member team drawn from radio station *Star FM* and the paper's Advertising Department on a familiarization tour of NMG headquarters in Nairobi in order to have firsthand experience of how the group had rolled out its own digital strategies.

4.13 Conclusion

This Chapter looked at the organizational structure of *The Herald* and its Digital department which is a centralized organ in Zimpapers with the responsibility of leading with innovations and the execution of various digital strategies which are discussed in Chapter 5 according to the findings of this study. The Chapter also discussed the ownership structure of *The Herald* and its relevance to the government of the day. Also discussed was the ownership structure of the Digital Department in relation to *The Herald* newsroom with regards the extent to which the

former can make decisions on content supplied by the latter as well as the level of involvement in the management of UGC. Chapter 5 therefore presents data findings and analysis in order to see if this study answers the research questions as raised in Chapter 1.

Chapter 5: Data presentation and analysis

5.0 Introduction

This Chapter presents and analyzes the research findings. The study sought to establish how *The Herald* adopted and deployed digital technologies in a way that suited its editorial charter to support the government of the day. The study also sought to establish how the news production processes and practices at *The Herald* were affected by new ICTs as well as whether the newspaper's website served or undermined the publication's hegemonic role. The research also sought to establish the extent to which *The Herald* promoted reader participation by looking at the moderation measures put in place in order to manage UGC in line with the newspaper's editorial policy. The study was informed by Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Habermas' theory of the public sphere, McQuail's democratic participant theory and Chris Atton's alternative media theory.

5.1 *The Herald* goes online

Zimbabwe's mainstream media despite the political and economic challenges the country faced in the past few years up to the period of this study are argued to have remained vibrant platforms in the struggle for control of public discourses between the opposition and the powerful elite (Mabweazara, 2010:672). This fact is buttressed and discussed further in line with the findings of this study beginning with reference to the establishment of *The Herald Online* in 2011. At the beginning the objectives for establishing *The Herald Online* included:

- fostering the editorial policy of *The Herald* through internet resources
- providing a platform for constructive and objective debates on issues that would promote national unity, peace and development and in turn generate traffic to sustain the site
- forming a newshub for the African region and the world at large
- generating revenue through monetization of various products online and to serve as a social platform for the newspaper's readership.

The researcher observed that in the first two years, *The Herald* website entirely replicated the newspaper's print version as a policy issue in order to inform on an equal basis Zimbabweans abroad on the goings on at home. Key among the diaspora audiences were Zimbabwe's various

embassies and their staff as noted by William Chikoto, the Zimpapers Group Editorial Executive in charge of training and convergence:

> *The Herald* is a national paper and it is strategic in terms of conveying government policy to the world out there. Therefore we cannot allow primarily Zimbabweans abroad, more so ambassadors and their staff to hear about developments in their own country from adverse secondary news sources- (William Chikoto).

Thus *The Herald* among its targeted readership are those it considers strategic from an international political perspective than from an ordinarily business perspective.

5.1.1 Regular updates and 'Day 2 Journalism'

The study observed that *The Herald Online*, two years after the establishment of the Zimpapers Digital Department upped the game in terms of creating new content throughout the day as a way of retaining audiences 24-hours as affirmed by Chikoto:

> The idea to have *The Herald Online* updating stories throughout the day had been on the plans right from establishment since digital media by nature are supposed to be "live" . . . a website is not supposed to go to sleep like the print paper around which a proverbial saying has developed over time with regards the paper 'going to bed' in reference to going for print on or before deadline. With online publications the deadline is 'now' (William Chikoto).

Chikoto was quick to point out that the late adoption of new content updates on *The Herald Online* was not a sign of the organization being a laggard, but attributed the delay to bureaucratic tendencies consistent with large organizations, more so related to government. Chikoto further notes that the introduction of new content updates could not immediately take off without the necessary training and procurement of the required gadgets to carry out the duties. Most important, he says was reorientation of both management and journalists on the importance of such kind of updates.

The Herald   Saturday, 24th October 2015   Search

Home   Top Stories   Local   Africa   International   Business   Opinion & Analysis   Crime & Courts   Entertainment   Sport   Advertise

⊝ Breaking News: Mavhaire, Mutezo fired

Sampras rules out immediate American resurgence ⊜

BREAKING NEWS: VP Mujuru bites the dust

December 9, 2014   Headlines, Top Stories

VP Mujuru

Herald Reporter
Vice President Joice Mujuru has been fired from the Government along with eight other ministers as President Mugabe reshuffled his cabinet today.

Other ministers fired from their jobs include Cdes Webster Shamu (Minister of ICT, Postal and Courier Services), Simbaneuta Mudarikwa (Minister of State for Mashonaland East Province), Francis Nhema (Minister of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment), Olivia Muchena (Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development), Nicholas Goche (Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare), Didymus Mutasa (Minister of Presidential Affairs), Dzikamai Mavhaire (Minister of Energy and Power Development) and Munacho Mutezo (Deputy Minister of Energy and Power Development).

Details to follow....

Like 934   Tweet 94   G+1 0   Pin it   Share 17

Popular Posts

1   Sharuko on Saturday
23/10/15   57 hits

Sponsored Links

Airtime   For Sale
Accommodation   Home, Office
Auto Parts   Jobs
Broadband   Property
Cars   Services
Classifieds   Web Design
Cell Phones   Web Hosting
Electronics   Online Payments
Prepaid Electricity   Pay TelOne ADSL

Polls

ZIMBABWE PREMIER SOCCER LEAGUE RACE: Who will carry the day?

○ Chicken Inn
○ Dynamos
○ FC Platinum

Vote   View Results

The application plans and any special conditions which the Local Authority is likely to impose in the event of this application being favourably considered may be inspected at the address below during normal office hours.

Any person wishing to make objections or representations relating to the application must lodge them with the undersigned within a month of the date of the first insertion of this notice.

Bindura Municipality

The Town Clerk
P.O. Box 15
Bindura

Figure 1 shows a story published by *The Herald Online* as "breaking news" on December 9, 2014 on the dismissal of former vice president Joice Mujuru from government.

Just as it was the case during the US elections pitting George Bush and Al Gore where regular web news updates were key in the reinforcement of opinion through regular updates online (Bimber and Davies, 2003:49), there was no better time to experiment with the idea of regular
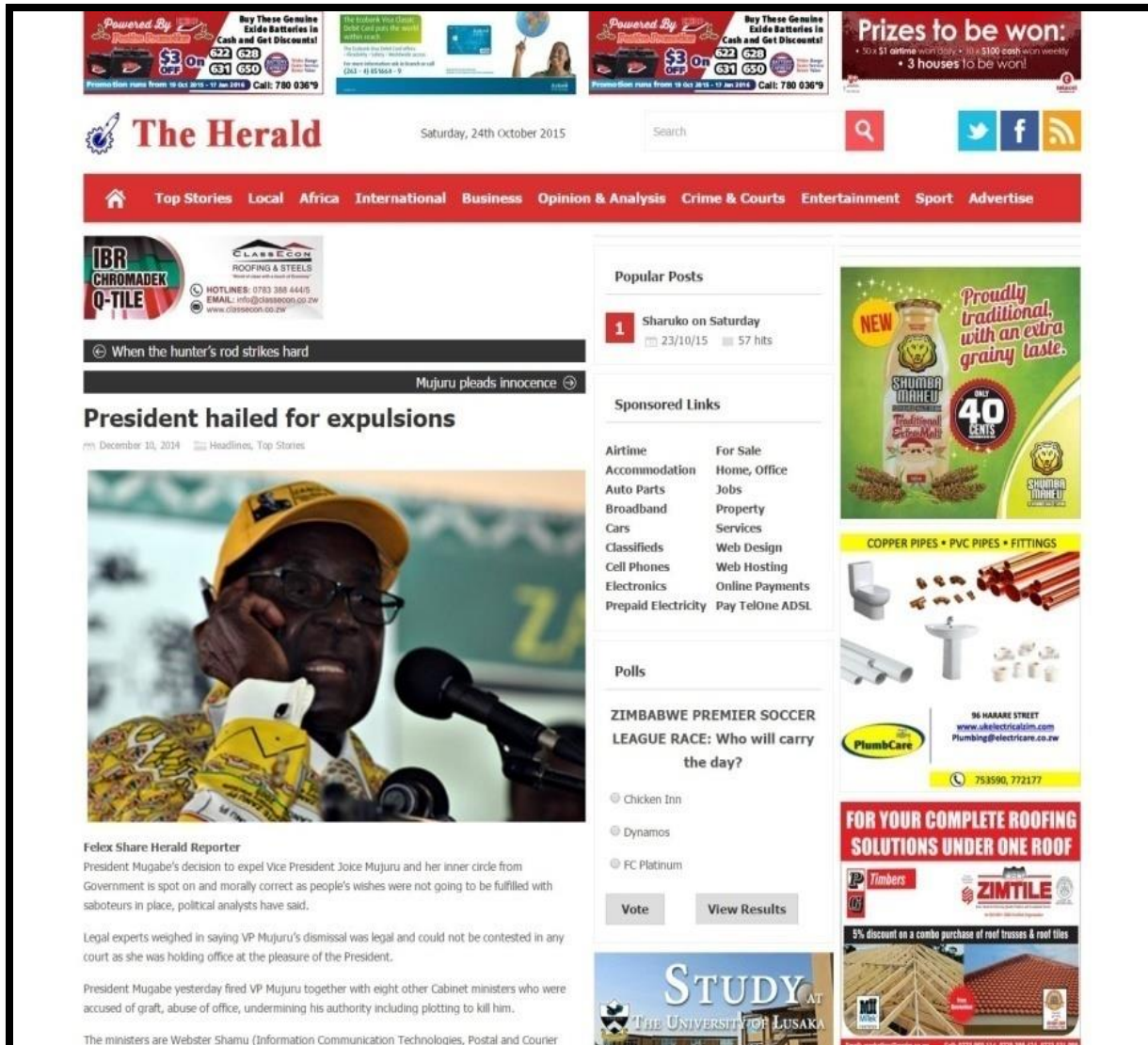
updates than during the July 2013 elections in Zimbabwe for *The Herald Online* as noted by Costa Mano, the Online News Editor:

> The 2013 elections were a blessing for us the Digital team. That was when we could run with the ball as it was very easy to demand and get all the attention in order to get resources that we required to carry out regular news updates. However it was for that period only that we managed to be consistent until 2014 when we emphasized the importance of *The Herald Online* to be consistently at par or most importantly be above other players in the industry especially *New Zimbabwe.com* and its likeminded allies in the demonization of Zimbabwe (Costa mano).

The researcher also observed the need for *The Herald* to go regular online not only as a feature of digital media but as a response to both the demands of the readers and the need to counter

competition from other web-based publications in direct competition with *The Herald*. Earlier research works noted how the diaspora-based news websites reporting on Zimbabwe had always been the first with the news relegating to the bottom *The Herald* and other mainstream media (Mabweazara, 2011:147-148).

For the regular updates, not all copy would be posted online. The Online News Editor would attend the main morning news diary of *The Herald* together with other desk editors where they would agree on certain stories to run online. Such stories would be based on courts, sports or any public domain events like accidents or public announcements. *The Herald* Managing Editor, Victoria Ruzvidzo notes the rationale behind this kind of online diary selection:

> It is easier to give the Online team (Digital Department) stories that would not directly conflict with tomorrow's main paper. We still need to sell the paper and recover production costs, so we cannot give away everything. However we should also not lose public domain stories to foreign websites when we are closer to news events here in Zimbabwe, so we let you Digital guys run with that and generate us readers' views and opinion. We need that for further development of our stories (Victoria Ruzvidzo).

Figure 2 shows an analysis of the dismissal of Joice Mujuru published on December 10 in the print paper and also on *The Herald Online*.

The Herald Managing Editor also emphasized how they struck a balance between breaking news online and analysis in the following day's newspaper in a bid to retain the print market whilst running with the ball online **(See Figures 1 and 2)**. This indicated an attempt to maintain a delicate balance between online and print interests with the latter not comfortable to give out all to Digital. The Group Editorial Executive in charge of Training and Convergence, Chikoto added that the strategy to balance the online platform and the print paper was possible through "Day 2 Journalism":

> Day 2 Journalism implies carrying out analyses the following day, of stories that we break on our digital platforms. By their nature digital platforms may not immediately carry detailed accounts but they are pretty much capable of breaking news immediately so that we do not come second and then the print editors go deeper the following day as long text is easier on newsprint than on the screen (William Chikoto).

Day 2 Journalism is a concept *The Herald* borrowed from Kenya's Nation Media Group (NMG) where Chikoto led a team from Zimpapers on a digital media familiarization tour in December 2012.

The Herald website thus registered a gradual increase in site visits during the period under review, and this improvement is attributed to the strategy of regular updates. A random comparison of the statistics obtained through digital archival research **(See Figure 3)** shows that visitors to *The Herald* website over a period of three months (July to September) increased in 2015 to 1.319 million as compared to the 1.2 million registered over the same period in 2014 when the Digital Department had just started regular and real time updates on the website. This would be argued to confirm the assertion that readers value latest news disseminated faster in the most reliable way (Kolodzy, 2013: 44).
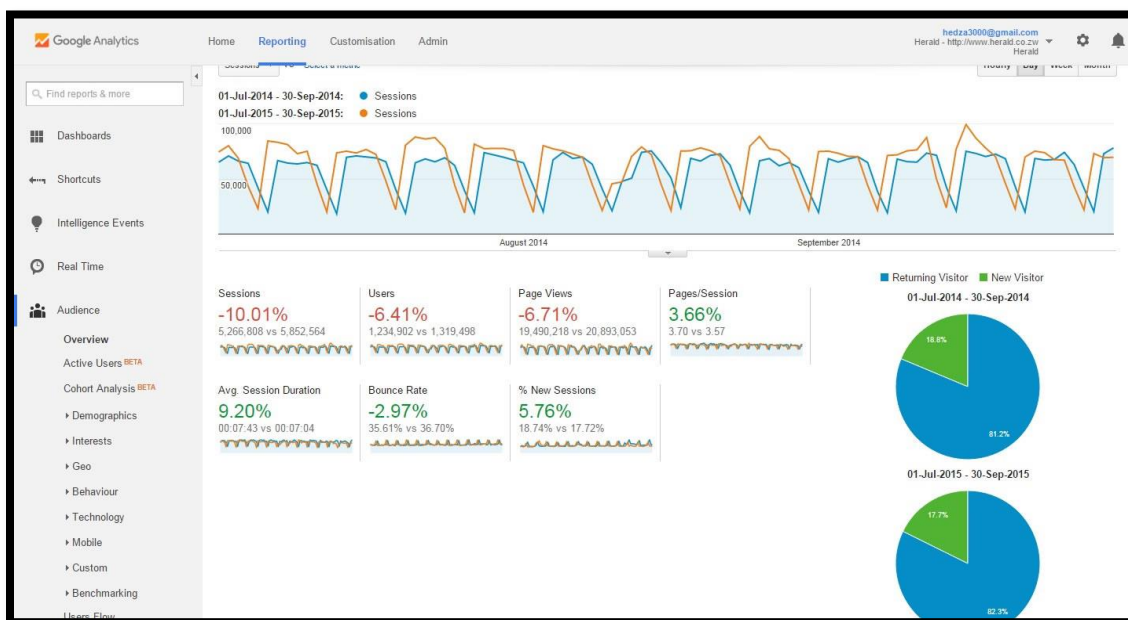
Figure 3 shows increased retention of visitors at 82.3 percent of total visitors between July and September 2015 as compared to a visitor-retention of 81.2 percent over the same period in 2014.

5.1.2 Real time site updates

From regular daytime updates on the website, *The Herald* strategized further to capture certain events in real time by providing live coverage rolled out through minute by minute updates. These events may not have been fully captured every minute, but the effort was observed over

the research period, though with interval delays of up to five minutes or more in some cases attributed to poor internet connection. Such events included swearing in of legislators in parliament and new ministers in cabinet, official opening of parliament by the President, burial of nationalists or any other public figures and so forth. Also included via social media like Facebook and Twitter which fed into the main website were real time updates of high profile soccer matches.

This study observed *The Herald* gradually adapting to world trends in its adoption of digital strategies to counter dissenting views, and one of these online strategies was its response to the "politicians' rapidly expanding use of Internet" (Seib, 2002:10) as noted through its coverage of certain political events in real time. *The Herald* also followed the few politicians in Zimbabwe who have gone digital in order to capture both the newsmakers and their online followers. However it is also observed that *The Herald* in providing live coverage online concentrated more on Zanu-PF related personalities than just public figures per se.
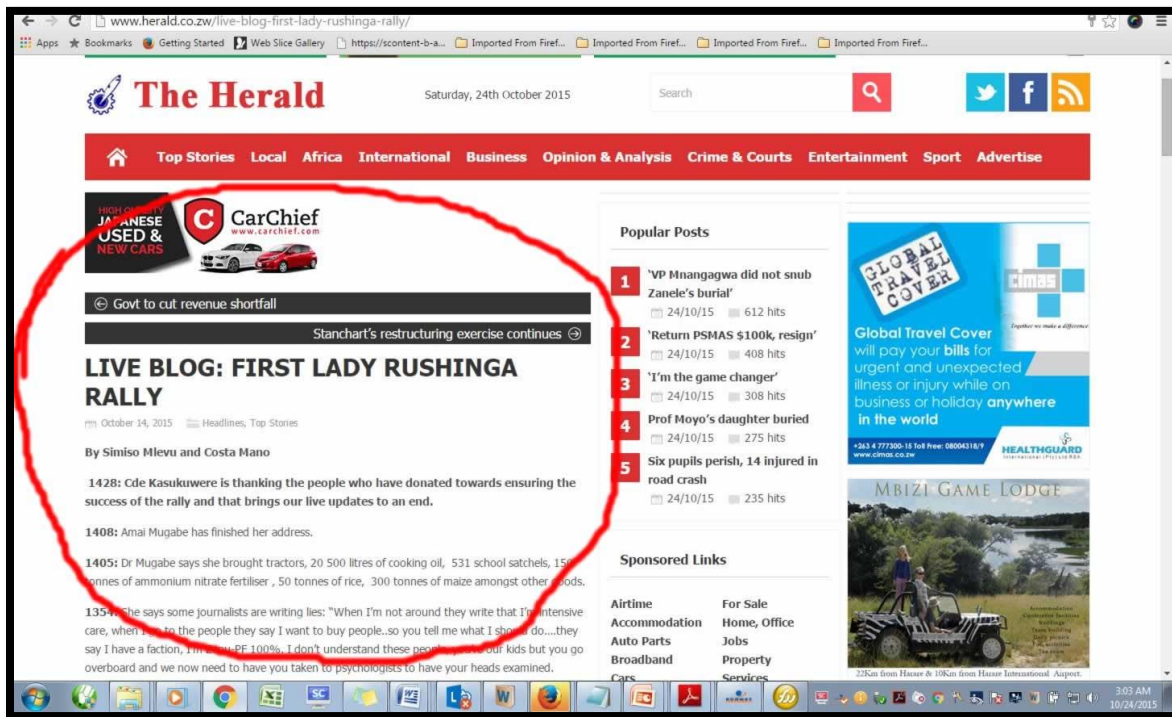
Figure 4 shows a screenshot of a Live Blog on *The Herald* website to cover the First Lady Dr Grace Mugabe's rally in Rushinga on October 14, 2015.

The few politicians followed on internet by *The Herald* included Saviour Kasukuwere, Nelson Chamisa, Supa Mandiwanzira and most notably Jonathan Moyo who up to the period of this study was also quite active on Twitter and Facebook.

5.1.3 *The Herald* online and reader agency, participation

The Herald online opened the UGC floodgates by creating an account with Disqus, a San Francisco-based social media company which offers discussion platform services on internet. This enabled readers of *The Herald* online to be able to post comments in reaction to stories posted by the newspaper online. Whilst this has been studied (Mabweazara, 2014) and is a finding consistent with any interactive website, of interest in this study were the mechanisms put in place by *The Herald* in order to control the opinion of the readers. Whilst it would appear comments come in their raw state on competitor websites such as *New Zimbabwe.com* and other similar sites classified as alternative to Zimbabwe's mainstream media, *The Herald* did not hesitate to activate extreme moderation options that come with the Disqus programme.

Through the Digital Department, *The Herald* developed 'Terms and Conditions of Use' (**See Appendices 5 and 6**) of the site which is based mainly on the constitution of the country. The Digital Department delegated the gate-keeping duties to the department's three online Sub-editors, the Online News Editor as well as the researcher who headed the moderation team up to the period of this study.

These staff members were made administrators of the Disqus system in order to have full rights to blacklist or whitelist comments using the source of Internet from which the comment is generated, using e-mail addresses used to send comments through, using user names as registered with Disqus or simply delete comments if they were deemed out of sync with the newspaper's editorial policy. Comments usually blocked out would either be mocking government officials, inciting violence, subversive, tribal, insensitive to children's rights or gender insensitive. It was also observed that users would quite often create usernames with deeper embedded meaning in them.
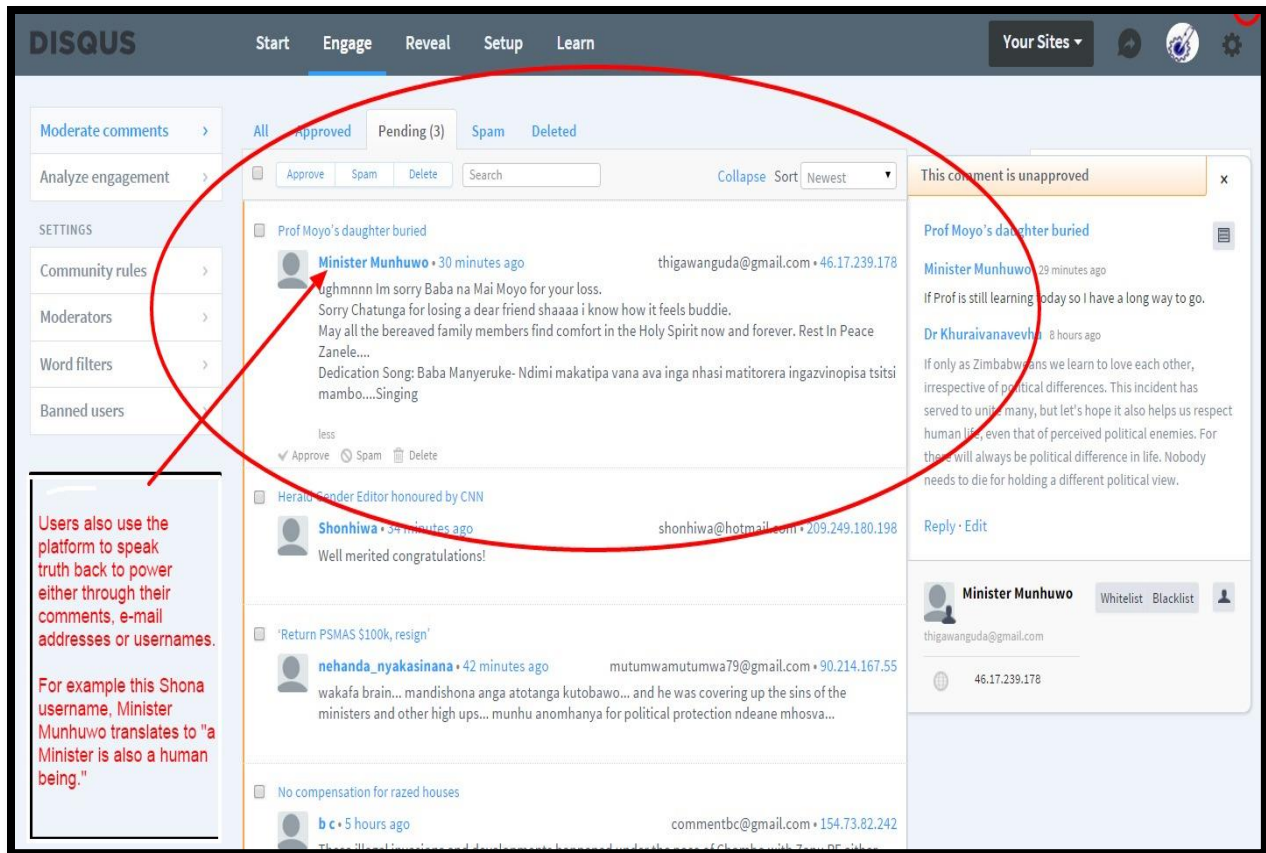
For example, in **Figure 5** above, the highlighted reader opted to call himself "Minister Munhuwo" whose English translation from Shona means "a Minister is also human". The comment had been posted on a story about the burial of Professor Jonathan Moyo's daughter who was suspected to have been murdered in South Africa where she was studying. This particular comment did not see the light of the day on *The Herald* website as the name of the reader was deemed insensitive. The researcher, privileged to have access to comments for moderation was in a position to view all comments in their raw state as indicated in Figure 5. **See Appendix 7** for more illustrations of commentators whose usernames were more than just names.

Apart from commentators whose names were more than just names in an effort to express themselves or vent off their emotions, readers also communicated through images which would probably require a semiotic reading. These comments would either be approved or disapproved on the basis of their consistency or lack of it with the expectations of ownership and structure of *The Herald*. Semiotics, it is argued does not assume the presence of a common structure on

which signs and codes are based. The signs and codes denoted by semiotics are historically and culturally specific (Strinati, 2004:99). During the period under study, with privately owned media awash with speculation that the First Lady Grace Mugabe was pitting herself against Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa in the race to succeed President Mugabe, a reader under the name "We Luv Amai" probably in reference to the First Lady posted on the latter's live blog on *The Herald* website a YouTube video link of a huge snake constricting and swallowing a crocodile.

Vice President Mnangagwa is nicknamed "Ngwena" in Shona meaning "Crocodile" in English. A semiotic reading of this video within the context of Zanu-PF succession politics would most likely have the snake representing the First lady Dr Grace Mugabe, depicting a cold war between the Vice President and the former. This message would be too suggestive considering the ownership and structure of *The Herald*. As such the comment in question, illustrated in **Figure 6** below, did not see the light of the day for it was perceived to be instigative from a government perspective, yet elsewhere it could have furthered debate on the subject of Zanu-PF succession politics.
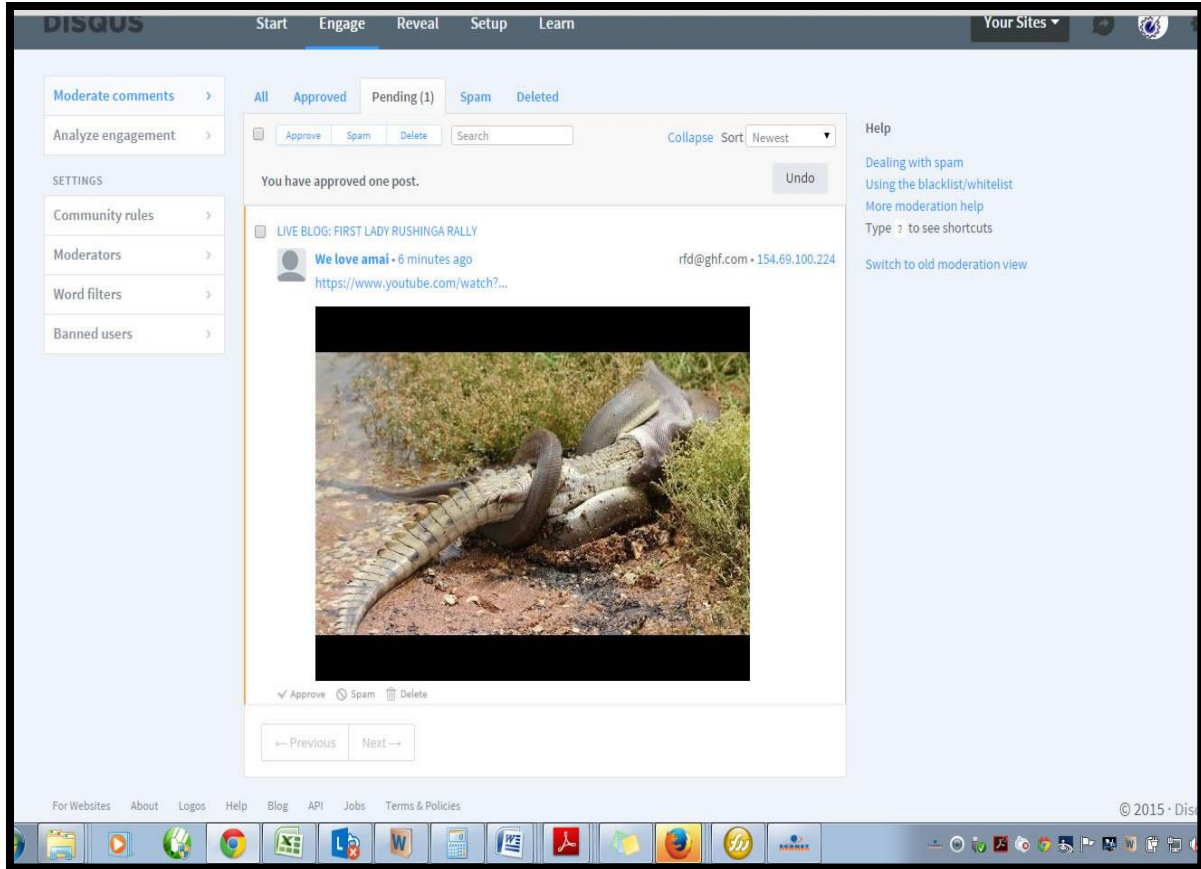
The Herald moderation system indicates the level of power the newspaper's readers would have on the paper's digital platforms and the extent to which they would be able to exercise it in demonstrating their participation in debates under consideration. The study therefore observed that on *The Herald* digital platforms, readers were guaranteed the room to have unlimited participation for as long as they were in sync with the editorial policy of the newspaper. To attempt striking a balance, some selected critical comments would also get published to avoid annoying those against the system (See also **Appendix 7** for more comments that could easily pass as commenting against the status quo, approved in order to strike the balance discussed above).

5.1.4 Comments moderation, a futile exercise?

The power of the readers from the position of participating on *The Herald's* digital platforms could be observed to have been limited. The moderation of comments demonstrated *The Herald* denying readers the power of autonomously participating in the creation of UGC, a strategy that could be far more damaging than do good. However in deducing their own meanings, readers

could not be ruled out on the basis of Stuart Hall's theory of reception (Hill and Fenner, 2010:59) which concludes that audiences are not passive recipients of news.

This led to the observation that what *The Herald* thinks is doing smart in terms of the strategies employed in moderating comments might actually be a futile exercise. The comments moderating strategies in use included outright deletion of comments, blocking users by way of temporarily blacklisting their internet source from which they would log in for discussion, censoring inappropriate words, whitelisting favourable users for automatic publishing of their comments and the permanent ban on users on the basis of continued contravention of the 'Terms and Conditions of website use' code. The Disqus system apart from internally developed policies of deleting comments provides an option of highlighting words that would be classified as restricted. The system therefore automatically censors such words as people try to post comments. The challenge however with the Disqus restricted word censor as was observed, is its failure to recognize offensive words in any local languages like Ndebele, Shona or Venda other than English. The Online Sub-editors confirmed that they would be called for to intervene;

> The system assumes all comments to be in English, so local languages are not recognizable. As such we make it standard to just scan through comments for offensive words in local languages. Another challenge with that is *The Herald* website allows people to comment in English and any of the local languages. So we consult with our friends who are multi-lingual whenever we confront comments in languages that we are not conversant with. – Musa Gwaunza (Online Sub-Editor)

The researcher concurs that the issue of multilingualism is one that needs address as the local constitution recognizes all local languages. Of the current Digital Department members, two are conversant in Shona and Ndebele outside English, whilst one is conversant in Venda apart from English and Ndebele with the rest being conversant in English and Shona only. However it was observed that dominant comments were in English, Shona and Ndebele. In some cases readers commenting in local languages suspected discrimination whenever their comments were deleted.

Whilst *The Herald* employed the above strategies in trying to term the Leviathan and safeguard its editorial charter in playing the hegemonic role of being a propaganda mouthpiece of the government, readers were not without recourse as this study found out how audiences stopped worrying about arguing with the newspaper on its digital platforms and took the debate elsewhere. Inspite of these attempts and measures that *The Herald* put in place to moderate

people's comments, readers found many other ways of circumventing the barriers to the extent that it can actually be argued that *Zimpapers* would be better off leaving comments raw as they come.

Readers not only did they manage to take the debate away to more independent social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, but would go further to appropriate content by way of reproducing images to either talk truth back to power or simply mock authorities. The appropriated content would go viral mainly on WhatsApp. The study therefore also discovered that *The Herald* had not taken steps to exploit WhatsApp as a social media platform despite it being an almost free platform. In one incident involving President Mugabe falling at the Harare International Airport in February 2015, *The Herald* duly carried the story with an exclusive image of the Head of State taking a tumble. However in no time had the image gone viral on WhatsApp after users mimed the image recreating it using picture-editing software to create completely new images that caricatured the President. The original picture of the President falling had been published by *The Herald* Online on February 5, 2015 and the event at the airport had been characterized with allegations that state security agencies had coerced several of the photographers present to delete all the images taken at the time.

The Herald — Monday, 26th October 2015

President in carpet mishap

President Mugabe yesterday tripped over a poorly laid-out carpet at Harare International Airport

Editor

PRESIDENT MUGABE yesterday tripped over a poorly laid-out carpet at Harare International Airport, but remarkably managed to break the fall before walking to his car, evidently unscathed.

Figure 7 is a screenshot of *The Herald Online's* story about President Mugabe in a carpet "mishap". **Figure 8** is a screenshot of a summary of images caricaturing the President that did rounds on social media worldwide immediately afterwards. *NewsDay* carried out a story of the acculturation of President Mugabe's picture on social media. **Appendix 8** illustrates a series of caricatured images of the President falling as obtained through archival digital research conducted online by the researcher. It is interesting to note here that the debate or kind of conversation *The Herald* was trying to manipulate was louder on WhatsApp beyond the newspaper's intervention. Also important to note is that the memes were reproduced immediately after the incident with *NewsDay* running a story of the caricatures on February 5, the same day *The Herald* had published the original image. The Poke later ran the series of pictures reproducing at least 20 caricatures in a day **(see also Appendix 8)**.

 It could therefore be argued that *The Herald* is losing the discourse wars in contexts such as politics while user participation would be to the advantage of the newspaper on social matters

66

like entertainment, sports and tourism. Tourism stories although in some cases they may not generated much UGC, the coverage by *The Herald* of Cecil the Lion that was killed in Hwange by an American dentist in 2015 was a hot topic of discussion on the newspaper's reader comments platform.

Figure 8 showing memes of President Mugabe fall at the airport after recreation using picture-editing software.- Source, NewsDay, 5 February 2015.

5.1.5 *The Herald* going liberal?

The Online Sub-Editors who are the foot soldiers in the implementation of the digital strategies concur the heat is on against *The Herald* with UGC based on the newspaper's content being appropriated by other digital media with more liberal editorial policies;

> Well, we do not know to what extent our principals can liberalize the digital platforms, but it is clear that once you are on internet, you have joined a global war and you cannot afford to restrict yourself to your own little shell. It pains to see our stories being debated elsewhere generating cash for other people who survive on other organizations' UGC. – Musa Gwaunza (Online Sub Editor.

However columnist Nathaniel Manheru had different views with regards his column, The Other Side which runs in *The Herald* on Saturdays. The column is reproduced on *The Herald Online* and is equally promoted via *The Herald's* social media pages in order to psyche up readers to go for the full column on the newspaper's website. Nathaniel Manheru is a pseudonym under which the writer contributes to *The Herald* touching mainly on the goings on in Government. He appealed strongly against moderation of comments meant for his column saying he wanted them "raw and hard tackling" in order to fully understand what people's perceptions and expectations were on the issues he raised. Manheru also touched on the issue of debate sliding away from *The Herald Online* especially on his column to other websites like *New Zimbabwe.com*.

Manheru's sentiments could be signaling the beginning of a more liberal approach by *The Herald* maybe not in terms of the actual editorial policy but with regards UGC although it is clear the freedom is confined to his column up to the period of this study. The researcher could not rush ahead and ask if this policy on The Other Side would have to be spread to other sections of *The Herald* since the conversation clearly indicated that "for my column" comments needed not to be moderated.

The researcher, although privy to the identity behind Manheru, cannot divulge the real name of the person for ethical reasons as permission was not sought prior to this research with regards identity revelation. Also asking for such kind of permission would mean the death of the column since columns under pseudonyms thrive on anonymity. However Manheru was informed of this study and wished the researcher well on the project. On that juncture, the researcher can only say Manheru is one of the principals who give policy direction to state-controlled media, *The Herald* in the lead.

Figure 9 illustrates the moderation tool *The Herald Online* employed in order to manage users on its platforms.

5.1.6 The challenge of piracy

The opening of the comments platforms on *The Herald* website faced serious challenges during the period under study considering that pirate-websites literally uplifted content from the website and pasted on to their sites. With no gate-keeping in place, these sites would generate more comments than *The Herald* on content originated by the latter. This would render comments moderation irrelevant on *The Herald* website. The same content on *The Herald* would be debated elsewhere. However in this sub-section, focus is on the issue of piracy whereby the researcher observed the lifting of content which would be reproduced in its entirety elsewhere without credit.

Thus the research findings on this issue was that *The Herald* could not charge for content on its website because this was a strategy which many global players had not seemingly decided on. Therefore pirates had the same access to the content.

We are competing on the same market with other major players; talk of your BBC, CNN or Al Jazeera. They have the same story with us in several cases mainly because they have correspondents all over. So charging for content online is tricky. We would rather charge for it on mobile (for SMS) because the market different altogether – Chikoto.

In the lead of lifting content from *The Herald* were *Bulawayo24* and *Nehanda Radio*. These websites by taking the debate away from *The Herald Online* also generate advertising revenue for themselves through Google adverts placed on their websites on the basis of higher visits. By losing the debate to 'pirate' sites, *The Herald Online* could be argued to be breathing life into some of these digital alternative channels.

Figure 10 illustrates a screenshot of a page on *Bulawayo24* bearing a story from *The Herald* online with the byline of *The Herald* staff writer Innocent Ruwende, but without proper attribute to the media organization which employs the writer.

5.1.7 The tussle for content

This study also observed a cold war between the conventional newsroom of *The Herald* and the Digital Department whereby content meant for digital platforms was not easily available.

Although great improvements were noted with regards the speed with which *The Herald* Editor cleared copy for online, suspicion still manifested whereby the print editors did not show total commitment to the digital needs:

> The fact is the print paper is still the cash cow and therefore whatever is done online must not directly compete with the mainstream newspaper. Sometimes it is not that we will be unwilling to release content, but we will be busy doing indepth stories for tomorrow's paper. However I strongly support the idea of us breaking stories on our social media and website, then the print paper runs with more details the following day. It might be taking time but hopefully it works out because the future is in internet (Victoria Ruzvidzo).

Lack of fresh content online sometimes can be glaring as decision makers in the newsroom consult with each other without the urgency consistent with digital media. This is regardless of the Online News Editor having agreed with his fellow News Editors for the print on what stories to carry online. Delays were mainly cited on political stories which were the Editor's main area of concern;

> Anything else is not really an issue as the assistant editors can assist with clearance. However on politics they need to clear with me before releasing copy to Digital. There is need to clear some issues even with principals on political stories. So, those ones we jealously guard – Caesar Zvayi, Editor, *The Herald*.

The situation on delayed content for online was made worse by reporters some of who openly defied instructions to submit copy on the basis that they did not have the requisite gadgets and as such could not use their personal equipment. Sydney Kawadza, a senior writer for *The Herald* concurred that the issue of gadgets selectively issued out was a divisive challenge:

> When we are considered senior writers but not being recognized when it comes to smartphones yet we are still expected to contribute audio visuals then the vision of the company becomes a bit blurred. We get forced to assume that only the few selected are the ones expected to contribute towards the well being of *The Herald Online*. However personally I am keen when it comes to digital media, so whether I have a company smartphone or not, I find my own ways, but obviously not all can afford to do that (Sydney Kawadza).

In this regard the research found out that Zimpapers had initially invested in online gadgets prior to the July 31, 2013 elections and the scheme fizzled out afterwards.

> The issue of cashflow has not spared Zimpapers. We therefore have not done our best so far as we still have people who have not yet received equipment, but we

71

are on track because we expect to generate at least 10 per cent of our revenue for 2015 from digital initiatives. – Chikoto

The research brought out how *The Herald* operated on a shoe-string kind of budget on digital issues. For starters members of the Digital Department are scattered on different floors of Herald House with Online Sub-editors operating from *The Herald* main newsroom in the third floor together with the Online News Editor. The Social Media Editor operates from the second floor in the IT Department whilst the Online Editor is housed in the Research Department on the second floor. The office of the Group Digital Editor is on the fifth floor and the whole team interacts more through their internal WhatsApp group named Zimpapers Online News. They rarely physically gather for meetings as most of the issues are discussed on this WhatsApp platform.

> Personally I feel free meeting online than physically because our night shift duties would never allow us to come back to the office just for meetings and go back home only to come back later for the night shift. Online platforms are not restrictive. As for being in the same office, that is another issue because what matters most is internet connection and the right tools when we are working – (Shingirai Huni, Online Sub-editor)

The researcher concurs with the idea of being united online more than physically as meetings would chew into production work unnecessarily. Meetings can still take place online for as long as all members are able to log in either from their homes or from their current bases within Herald House. The only time it is really necessary to attend to certain offices physically is when attending *The Herald* main morning news conference from where the day's diary is shaped. Thereafter the only other time is to the office of the Editor, Caesar Zvayi to chase on stories that need clearance for online. The content tussles are solved in this office, but it is a busy office which is difficult to regularly patronize.

5.2 Social Media

Mainstream media in Zimbabwe generally adopted the use of social media, mainly Facebook in order to strengthen their relations with readers on social network platforms (Mabweazara, 2013). *The Herald* did not remain behind in this development as the study observed that the newspaper was present on Facebook and Twitter through a combined account which makes it possible to automatically share on Facebook whatever is tweeted via Twitter without necessarily logging onto Facebook. Silence Mugadzaweta an Online Sub-editor with the Digital Department also

responsible for executing social media duties confirmed that posts on social media no longer needed to be ordinary. *The Herald* is also present on Pinterest.

> Social media is the primary digital platform and therefore anything destined for the website has to immediately go on social media first, and the idea to synchronize social media platforms is the best as it serves time when breaking news (Musa Gwaunza-Online Subeditor).

Social media audiences are automatically redirected to *The Herald* website on clicking any post, thus the online journalists would be out to promote stories they deem juicier in order to capitalize on traffic to the website. The research also observed a drive by the Social Media Editor Delta Ndou between March 2014 and March 2015 when she went on a spree to help fellow journalists create social media accounts. Also included in the programme were members of senior management who were not too internet savvy but saw the need to upgrade themselves since they were employed by a mainstream media organization that had just adopted digital media strategies. Ndou says it was disheartening that the majority of senior journalists were not too keen to be active on social media yet internet was the in thing.

Social media use by *The Herald* was mostly used by the editorial departments and less by the Marketing Department, where Social Media Writer Simiso Mlevu felt the tool was a necessity in order to "move with both the audiences and the advertisers." *The Herald* up to the time of this study had generated an average of 157 000 likes on its Facebook page whilst it had 55 000 followers on Twitter, all generated between 2011 when the social media accounts were created and the period of this study.

Figure 11 illustrates the capabilities of Facebook and Twitter as exploited by *The Herald* in promoting its content.

The Herald's performance on Facebook was through posts shared everyday unlike instances where a website can actually pay for sponsored promotion to Facebook. *The Herald* could not go for this kind of sponsorship due to lack of coordination between the Digital Department and the Finance department with the latter remaining adamant that Zimpapers could not immediately acquire a corporate VISA card to make international payments for this purpose. Mlevu, the social media writer reckons that the attitude displayed by the Finance Department reflected the level of ignorance in the company at a time the Digital Department was expected to contribute at least 10 percent to the total revenue of the Zimpapers group in the year 2015.

The research observed that UGC on Facebook and Twitter was not seriously considered as opinion in terms of further development of original content. Mlevu believes *The Herald* was concentrating more on content sharing as a way to promote stories from *The Herald* than making use of people's views for analyses. Also on Facebook and Twitter UGC was found to be moderate in terms of emotions, mainly because these platforms require authentic log-in credentials for readers to participate.

5.3 Mobile news

The study observed an enhanced exploitation of the mobile platform by *The Herald* as the newspaper strategized to widen its reach of the mobile market. The newspaper had adopted the mobile phone in 2012 when it launched its Mobile News Service (MNS) on the Econet platform.

However in 2014 the newspaper launched the Mobile Breaking News on mobile after running trials in 2013. The Mobile Breaking News service (MBN) is more of a refined product from the ordinary SMS-based MNS as it only sends out breaking news alerts as events happen. The objective of MBN was to initially give added value to already existing MNS subscribers, however technical partners ZTE and the telecoms partners, in particular Econet pushed for the service to be charged. Up to the time of this study, no concrete agreements had been made, but *The Herald* kept disseminating at least two breaking items per day under MBN. The newspaper spread the service to NetOne mobile platform with Telecel being left out on this particular service of the MNS owing to limited SMS sending capacity.

Whilst earlier scholarship proved the permeation of the mobile phone into the mainstream media newsrooms and the mobile gadget changing news gathering practices in Zimbabwe (Mabweazara, 2011:693-694), this study observed the appropriation of the mobile phone by *The Herald*, not in terms of news gathering but in terms of news dissemination. The research discovered that instead of just using the mobile phone as a news gathering tool by its journalists, *The Herald* had targeted the "offline" market made up of subscribers with at least US$0.35 (35 cents) in their phones over a period of three days and within range of mobile telecoms net work.

The researcher acknowledges the research carried out by ZTE on behalf of Zimpapers prior to the launch of the MNS in order to ascertain the areas which were not accessible by *The Herald* delivery vans in Zimbabwe for the print paper but had mobile network coverage. Although the researcher can not divulge the exact statistics of the ZTE research on ethical grounds, the basic outcome was that the majority of people especially in the rural areas could not get *The Herald* print newspaper and had no internet access but subscribed to any of the three mobile telecoms companies which are Econet, Telecel and NetOne.

That rural market together with the urban market consisting of those not newsprint-savvy is what this researcher found out to have been exploited significantly by *The Herald* at a lower cost than an almost similar service operated by *Kubatana.net* under the banner Freedom Fone (Atwood, 2010: 6-7). Whilst *Kubatana's* SMS service had a limit of 160 characters, *The Herald's* MNS was further modified for the mass market accommodating 4000 characters, which is enough to carry at least up to 20, two-to-three paragraph bulletins which come as a single message per day. The message would be categorized into four sections which are main news, business news, sports news and entertainment news. These 20 stories per day would cost at least US$0.88 cents per week as compared *to Kubatana.net's* service whose calls would cost US$0.25 per minute. In this regard it could be argued that *The Herald* successfully managed to turn the tables against alternative media channels like *Kubatana.net* in the appropriation and exploitation of the mobile phone as a digital tool. *The Herald* achieved an average of 350 000 mobile phone subscribers since inception in 2012 across all three mobile telecoms service providers.

5.3.1 Agency participation on the mobile platform

It was observed during the study that *The Herald's* MNS was more of a unidirectional service which did not allow reader participation despite this being a key characteristic of digital media.

Instead, *The Herald* further refined the service on the Telecel platform in August 2015 for starters by whittling down the content to specific sections from which readers would request for business and sports news combined by replying to 701 after getting initial content through short code 34445. Therefore it is unlikely that *The Herald* would get to know exactly what the readers preferred and this might have contributed to the challenges discusses in the next section.
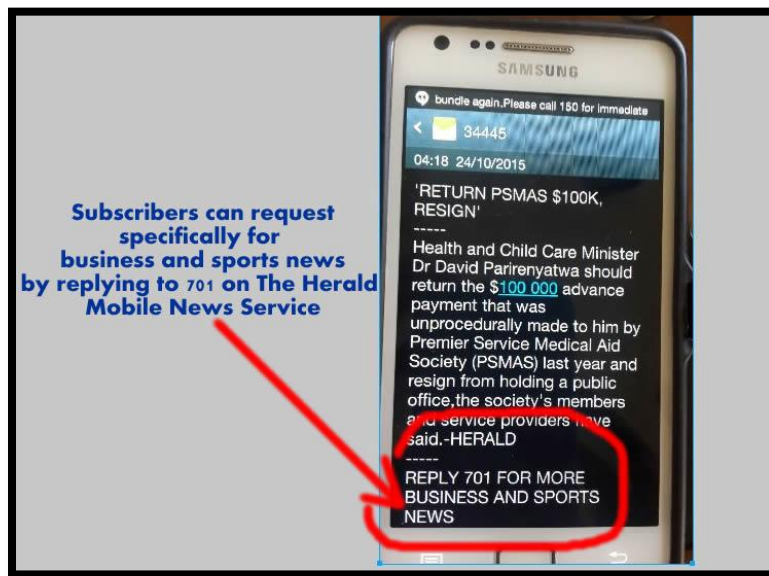
Figure 12 is an auto-ethnographically obtained illustration of *The Herald's* Mobile News Service feature for subscribers to select business and sports news other than main news on the Telecel platform.

5.3.2 Challenges in the implementation of the MNS

Despite *The Herald* reaching high levels of 350 000 subscribers on the combined MNS platform, the service has had its fair share of challenges as observed during the autoethnographic study. The challenges centered mainly on technical and political economy issues with regards certain decisions on tariffs, the quantity of content to disseminate as well as the delivery time. POTRAZ in June 2015 (*NewsDay*, 2015) directed all mobile telecommunication firms to reverse the automatic renewal of value added services on mobile and the subsequent unsolicited tariff deduction for such value added services. The directive resulted in all mobile telecommunications companies taking heed and this had a negative impact on the subscription base as subscribers no longer took interest in following the re-registration process each time they wanted to renew for the service.

The mobile news market has had its own fair share of ups and downs, from an average of 350 000 subscribers for the 'short message service' (SMS) to less than 3000 mainly due to regulatory measures by POTRAZ. Subscribers on mobile phones are not fond of going through a taxing process for the mere reason of renewing the MNS. It was easy before when renewal would happen automatically although sometimes the subscribers would be caught unaware and lose the only few cents they had for airtime to mobile news (Costa Mano).

5.3.3 Political Economy of the mobile phone

The other challenge that was observed mainly on the Telecel and Econet platforms was more to do with political economy. Not to demean the significant scholarship that looked at the adoption of the mobile phone as an alternative medium in Zimbabwe (Mabweazara, 2010; 2011, Atwood, 2010, Murithi and Mawadza, 2011; Moyo 2009), this study pursued the gap on political economy of the mobile phone as observed in the challenges faced by *The Herald* as it rolled out its MNS.

This study found out that the decline of *The Herald* MNS from a subscriber base of 350 000 to less than 2000 from June to July 2015 might not have just been due to regulatory issues by authorities as telecoms companies immediately prioritized their own value added services in terms of promoting content contained in such services. Telecel immediately launched TeleNews whilst Econet launched its own general mobile news service available through short code *717# in several categories that include sports news, international news, business news and much more.

The price range at launch in June 2015 was US$0.75 cents per month as compared to *The Herald's* US$0.88 cents per week. Essentially the subscribers belong to the mobile telecoms service provider whilst content belongs to the mainstream media organization. Political economy thus can determine the outcome of news regardless of the power the journalist or the media organization producing the news wields (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Whilst Telecel directed *The Herald* to whittle down their content to just 1200 words per message per day as compared to Econet's 4000 characters, the mobile service provider gave the excuse of low capacity in terms of the infrastructure used to send out these news messages. However the Chief technology Officer of Zimpapers remains positive that at least by December 2015 the figures should be back to 350 000 after on-going negotiations with the telecoms companies.

5.4 Discussion

The research findings show that *The Herald* deployed digital strategies that include registering its presence on the web through a website, taking to social media as well as appropriating the mobile phone as a communication tool that is affordable to many and thereby appealing to the mass market. In adopting these strategies *The Herald* sought to safeguard its hegemonic dominance of the media landscape as well as remaining faithful to its editorial charter of supporting the government of the day. This is evident in its adoption and deployment of UGC management tools like the Disqus comments moderation. However the adoption of the digital strategies was not only for the maintenance of the newspaper's dominance as the newspaper's digital operations were expected to generate revenue and achieve self-sustenance. *The Herald's* adoption of digital strategies was observed to have been triggered into overdrive by the "digital Leviathan" driven by mainly exiled Zimbabwean journalists (Willems and Mano, 2010).

However, analyzing *The Herald's* adoption of the digital strategies from its editorial policy's perspective, the move concurs with the assertions of Gramsci's theory of hegemony which explains the continued social dominance of the subaltern classes by the ruling elite. This is in view of *The Herald's* opening of the UGC platforms such as the Disqus comments platform in a way observed as giving a false sense of inclusion to participants; false in the sense that participation is not absolute due to the moderation mechanisms put in place by the newspaper. By allowing readers to participate but not absolutely, *The Herald* is observed to be playing the hegemonic role consistent with the Althusserian theory of ideology (Storey, 2009) which explains how persuasion can be achieved by way of persuasion through ideological state apparatuses which include the media.

The persuasion which gives the readers a false sense of recognition and inclusion was spread to social media and the mobile platform. However, for the mobile platform the strategy did not consider audiences as rationale actors who had to participate in the communication process as *The Herald* did not have feedback facilities to allow readers to air their views on the same platform. Instead *The Herald* turned the gadget to a truly mass market platform. The research findings however show that readers are not passive and somehow exploited the same gadget to speak truth back to power by responding to the SMS-based news texts by way of adding images and meme certain political figures before unleashing the messages back through the viral

WhatsApp social media platform as observed in the mimed pictures of President Mugabe taking a tumble at the Harare International airport.

The behaviour demonstrated by *The Herald* in the manipulation of its digital platforms to the extent of denying some readers the opportunity to be heard closely ties with Habermas' theory of the Public Sphere as ultimately the newspaper would be comfortable with participants echoing the newspaper's expectations as a hegemonic tool of the Zanu-PF government. Habermas' (1962:27) Public Sphere theory confirms the privacy nature of the bourgeoisie public sphere as "the sphere of private people come together as a public" and articulating the needs of society. In the case of *The Herald*, thus participants were allowed into its public sphere to discuss national issues as defined by the newspaper the same way those allowed to participate in European history did so provided they were property holders on the continent. Habermas' (1989) further study of the Public Sphere confirms the manipulation of the public on *The Herald's* public sphere platforms through commercialization as the newspaper was observed to be suggesting to the public what news is on the basis of what sales.

In the same vein as explained by the Public Sphere theory, *The Herald's* initial opening up of the comments platforms at least before moderation would explain the recognition of the rights of the citizens in communities, interest groups and subcultures to media access and participation for the promotion of democracy (McQuail, 1994:132 in Atton, 2002). The research findings observed that although *The Herald* constricted its platforms, the shut-out was not absolute as some voices still found their ways to neutralize the all positive comments singing praise to the status quo.

The Herald's adoption though of digital strategies was not without challenges. Digital media also qualify as alternative media as they wield the participatory element that allows reader agency and participation thereby being agents of radical content. This therefore implies *The Herald* had to compromise to an extent, but where it could not in order to guard against its editorial charter of saving the interests of the government of the day, the research findings show that the title lost debate to those alternative digital platforms that pirated or plagiarized its content. These alternative platforms took both debates and audiences away from *The Herald* resulting in possible revenue loss as well.

Thus *The Herald* would be better saved by coming up with policies that recognize the challenges posed by digital alternative media in terms of war for content especially where the government controlled title looks lost on policy as it loses content it has expensively invested in.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 presented the findings emanating from the autoethnography, interviews and digital archival methods of data gathering used to get data during the research. Data was obtained from senior members of management of *The Herald* editorial, members of the Digital department and concerns of members of the audience were observed through their comments as posted on The Herald website on certain stories, or as obtaining from those that were deleted, which the researcher was privileged to access as one of the administrator of the Disqus comments moderation platform. Challenges faced by *The Herald* in the implementation of its digital strategies which are under study in this research were also highlighted.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 sums up the findings of this study, whose topic centered on the exploration of the digital strategies adopted by *The Herald* in an attempt to tame the digital Leviathan, a wave of dissenting voices riding on various kinds of digital media. The Chapter also draws up conclusions and recommendations basing on the findings and relating these to the objectives and research questions as posed in Chapter 1. The recommendations are to Zimpapers with particular attention to *The Herald* editorial and the Zimpapers Digital Department basing on the findings of this study and the ensuing discussions in Chapter 5. Recommendations are also to fellow researchers on areas of further discussion as observed in this study.

6.2 Evaluations and Conclusions

The study sought to explore the digital strategies adopted by *The Herald* newspaper in the face of competition posed by dissenting voices which rode on the digital wave taking the media terrain by storm like a Leviathan. The study explored these strategies from three thematic perspectives which included the hegemonic role of *The Herald* as a government propaganda tool, the emancipatory promise of the digital media and reader participation and the generation of user-generated content (UGC). Qualitative data gathering methods were employed in order to obtain data based on the research objectives and questions as outlined in Chapter 1.

6.2.1 The hegemonic role of *The Herald*-tables turning

The study sought to explore the extent to which *The Herald* had appropriated various digital media technologies available to counter dissenting voices and be able to support the government of the day in line with its editorial charter. *The Herald* like most of the newspapers in Zimbabwe went online just after the turn of the millennium (Chari, 2011:370), but also went on to employ other digital ICTs like the mobile phone, and social media all in order to counter competition which challenged the status quo in the country. Some of the alternative digital channels based in the diaspora, run by exiled Zimbabwean journalists (McGregor and Primorac, 2014) challenged the hegemonic dominance of *The Herald*.

From the autoethnographic observation conducted during this study, it can be argued that since hegemony is won and re-won (Storey, 2009), *The Herald* is losing the hegemonic battle based on

its own content to some foreign-based websites, some of which can qualify to be pirate platforms as those behind them choose to remain anonymous. *The Herald* is losing content to these sites, which is used to create UGC on the pirate sites without credit to the state controlled newspaper. The UGC created is mostly used against government whilst at the same time these pirate sites generate own denigrating content against government.

6.2.2 Participatory journalism and the threat of de-professionalization of news production

The autoethnographic observations carried out in this study showed that participation by citizens in the news production processes had gone viral especially through social media such as Facebook, Twitter and mostly WhatsApp as individuals could create own content either from original professional content produced by mainstream media or creating their own copy from scratch on these platforms and personal blogs.

Audiences could also manipulate content produced by mainstream media and use it as a foundation for the re-creation of their own content which they would use to speak truth back to power. However as observed in this research, the mainstream newsroom of *The Herald* managed to protect journalistic professional values by going for "Day 2 Journalism" which implied taking general content further by conducting analyses, something which its competitors on the digital arena was not found matching. It therefore can be argued that the notion of digital media being a threat to professional journalism remains a myth for now especially after the appropriation of digital strategies by mainstream media to take the alternative media channels head-on.

6.2.3 Emancipatory promise of UGC

The fact that mainstream media could use UGC to do indepth stories can be argued to imply a certain degree of emancipation on the part of the audience in line with Hall's theory of reception (Bill and Fenner, 2010) which argues that people are not passive recipients of information. The digital archival research employed in this study brought out issues of memes of mainstream content on President Mugabe, proof that indeed audiences in their multitudes with varying talents could caricature and mock the powerful elite as a way of venting off emotions. However whether venting off emotions without necessarily shacking the status quo can be concluded as emancipatory is arguable. It could be concluded indeed, however that through UGC, audiences of *The Herald* and any other similar mainstream media elsewhere can cry out loud, complain

louder, swear and rant, but the elite will be out to renew their hegemonic tendencies by softening their stance and give a little room to the participants to shout and feel recognized. However, UGC on social media in view of the Arab Spring remains a threat that would most likely push the status quo to activate repressive state apparatuses in the event of threatening resistance to hegemony.

6.3 Recommendations to *The Herald*

The Herald should employ strategies that safe-guard their content online and use the subsequent UGC to its advantage in terms of revenue generation as a result of high traffic to its site. Even though debates are raging on whether mainstream can successfully charge for content online (Tofel, 2012), *The Herald* can still innovate and enjoy their own sweat.

6.3.1 Digital apps

The Herald can move in to develop digital apps downloadable on smartphones and tablets. These should run on any operating system. *The Herald*, instead of uploading all content including features and exclusive stories on its website, can load up the juiciest on these apps and sell on internet. *The Herald* can then charge for access to this app for a certain period of time. The assumption is no subscriber would wish to re-distribute for free what they would have paid for. *The Herald* website would then work like a teaser platform redirecting people for more details to these apps for the internet savvy and to the print newspaper for the print savvy.

6.3.2 Liberalization of the comments platforms

Although *The Herald* has employed high end strategies developed by Disqus in order to moderate comments and UGC, debates stimulated by their own content are raging elsewhere. *The Herald* can liberate the comments platform so that they rather retain their audiences, whether they are for their content or they are there to speak truth back to power. *The Herald* could then use the ideology in the UGC to up their game in terms of critical content that can be developed through the engagement of experts on various issues from politics to social.

6.3.3 Engagement of private bloggers

The Herald can still harness the emotional critics in the opposite of Nathaniel Manheru to strike a balance on their digital platforms and be able to retain even those audiences with whom the newspaper does not agree ideologically. For example a blog run by any prominent opposition

figure on *The Herald* would not translate to the newspaper changing its editorial policy, but debate would most likely escalate.

6.3.4 Refinement of Mobile News to suite audience needs

Meanwhile the mobile news of *The Herald* is more unidirectional than interactive. The service assumes that every one is interested in receiving content on their mobile phones want to receive the entire content of *The Herald* print paper, though paraphrased. Instead, *The Herald* should make use of shortcodes and research on the kind of content readers would prefer, then package and charge that on request.

6.3.5 Dealing with the mobile telecoms political economy

The issue of political economy in the telecoms industry was up to the period of this study threatening to push *The Herald* out of the mobile news business. It is important for Zimpapers as a group to start considering diversifying into internet service provision as well as become a player in the telecommunications industry, whether wholesomely or by becoming a shareholder in an existing mobile telecommunications companies. This would help Zimpapers strengthen its negotiation power when it comes to mobile phone based services as the publishing company would have a voice if it is represented on the board of the telecommunications partner.

6.4 Recommendations to the Digital Department

The Zimpapers Digital Department is a new phenomenon that has to be explained to all in the Zimpapers group. From the way *The Herald* editors are holding on to content resulting in content tussles, it shows that the department is either treated with suspicion or people have not simply been educated on the objectives of the department.

6.4.1Reorientation for all

 From the findings of this research, it still appears the Zimpapers Digital Department is like a lost chicken in a vast farm. For a department that has brought *The Herald* logo onto the global map through internet, it is important for Zimpapers to re-orientate all in the company so that the Digital Department does not appear like an alien or a threat to mainstream journalism. When journalists are re-oriented, they would be most likely keen to participate and that would put to an end the content tussles ensuing at *The Herald* between the main print newsroom and the Digital department.

6.4.2 Equipment for all

The issue of equipment came out strong in the study and as such *The Herald* should demystify digital equipment like tablets, laptops and smart phones by procuring en-masse the same way they spent on notebooks and pens in the pre-digital era. Better equipped journalists are likely to co-operate as the gadgets in question become common to everyone.

6.5. Recommendations for further research

This study obtained the notion of Day 2 Journalism as a strategy of striking a balance between mainstream print media and digital media. However the notion of Day 2 Journalism was not broadly attended to in this study, and neither was it commonly encountered in the literature review. Future research would better explore Day 2 Journalism and the extent to which it can quash the fear that digital media is out to replace print media.

In the face of political economic issues between *The Herald* and the mobile telecommunications service providers, further research can also look at the feasibility of mobile news services in Zimbabwe in view of the existing power dynamics. If media companies require publishing licenses to go into the news business, can mobile telecommunications go in free on the basis that they are publishing on mobile and probably buying copy from content factories? Further research would most likely address these issues.

6.6 Conclusion

The Herald editorial and the Zimpapers Digital department are important units in the Zimpapers group as obtained by this study, and as such it would be noble for the group to take cognizant of this realization and be able to make the right decisions in order to tame the Leviathan called digital media.

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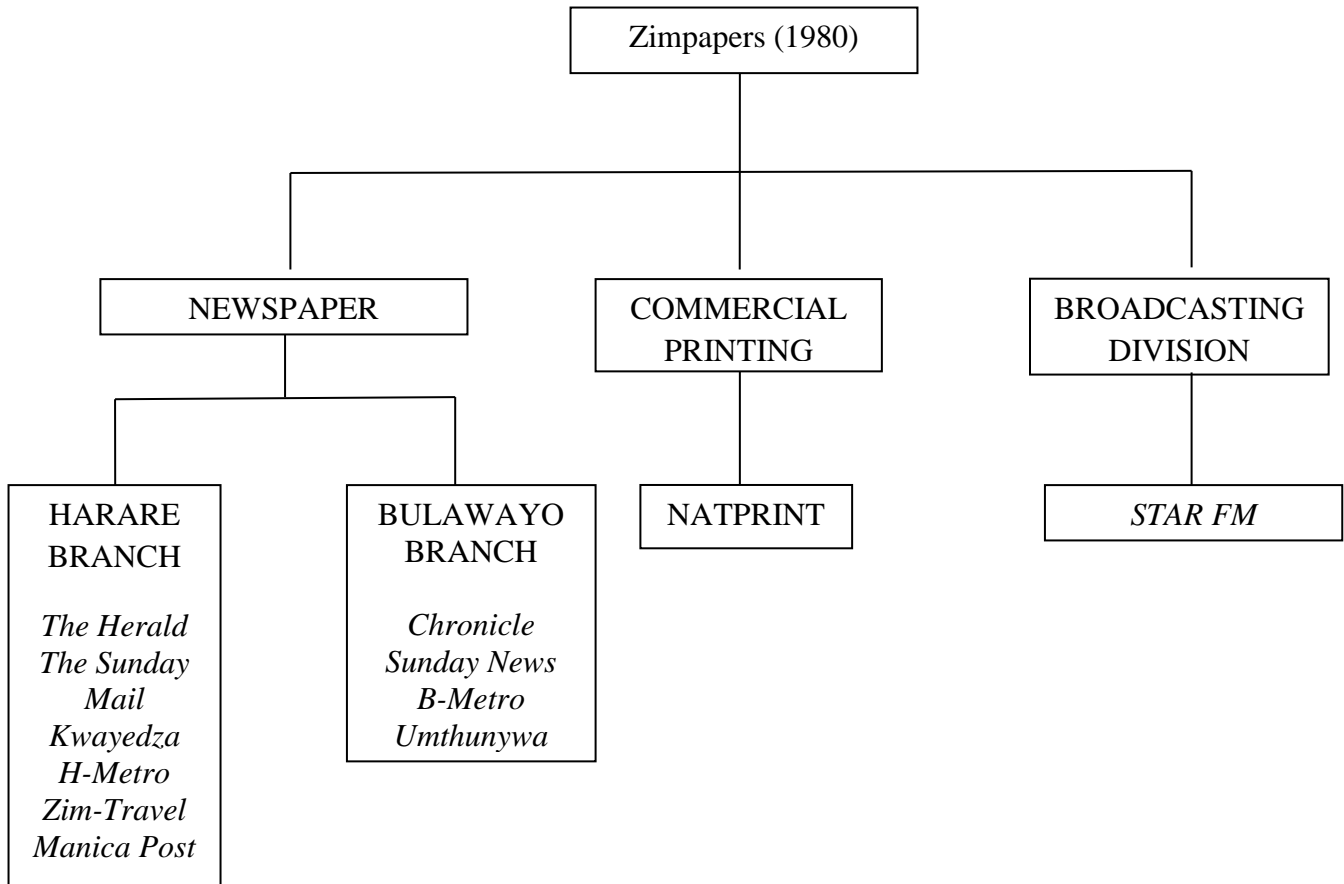
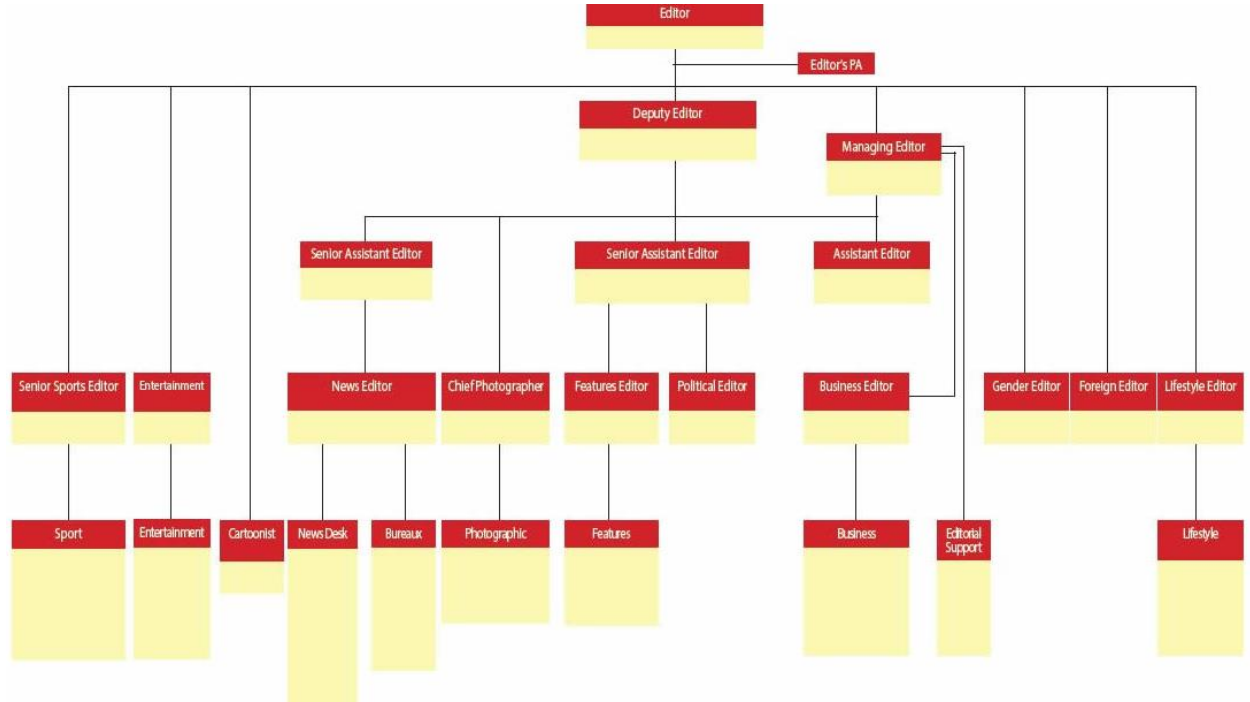APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1. Zimpapers Shareholding Structure
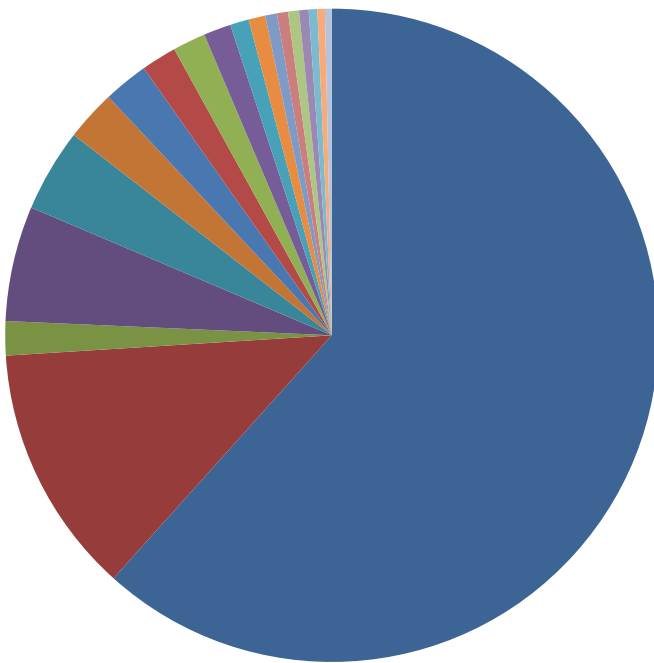
- ■ ZMMT = 51.09
- ■ Old Mutual Life Assurance = 10.24
- ■ Hamilton & Hamilton Trustees = 1.4
- ■ Hot Air = 4.72
- ■ Zimpapers Employee Share Trust = 3.41
- ■ Willoughbys = 2.08
- ■ Messina = 1.84
- ■ NSSA = NSSA
- ■ Bexley Trust = 1.35
- ■ Zimpapers Managers' Share Trust = 1.12
- ■ Hamilton And Hamilton Trust = 0.77
- ■ Stanbic Nominees = 0.69
- ■ Hamilton Insurance = 0.48
- ■ Hot Air Inv Ltd = 0.45
- ■ Kamba Thmpson Togarepi = 0.45
- ■ Datvest = 0.39
- ■ Wabatagore Biriam = 0.35
- ■ Workers Compesnation Insurance Fund = 0.31
- ■ Hooper Adrian Charles Norgate = 0.28
- ■

APPENDIX 2: Zimpapers (1980) Group Operations Structure

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                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │   Zimpapers (1980)  │
                          └─────────────────────┘
                                     │
        ┌────────────────────────────┼────────────────────────────┐
┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
│    NEWSPAPER    │        │   COMMERCIAL    │        │    BROADCASTING     │
│                 │        │    PRINTING     │        │      DIVISION       │
└─────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘
        │                           │                           │
   ┌────┴─────┐              ┌───────────┐              ┌───────────┐
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐    │ NATPRINT  │              │  STAR FM  │
│ HARARE   │ │ BULAWAYO │    └───────────┘              └───────────┘
│ BRANCH   │ │ BRANCH   │
│          │ │          │
│The Herald│ │ Chronicle│
│The Sunday│ │Sunday News│
│  Mail    │ │ B-Metro  │
│ Kwayedza │ │Umthunywa │
│ H-Metro  │ └──────────┘
│ Zim-Travel│
│Manica Post│
└──────────┘
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APPENDIX 3: The Herald Editorial structure

APPENDIX 4. Zimpapers Digital Structure

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│  GROUP EDITOR IN CHIEF   │
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   DIGITAL EDITOR-        │
│   VACANT                 │
└─────────────────────────┘          ┌──────────────────────┐
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                                      │  EDITOR (VACANT)     │
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                                                 │
                                                 ▼
                                      ┌──────────────────────┐
                                      │   OFFICE ODERLY      │
                                      └──────────────────────┘
```

| SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR (DELTA NDOU) | ONLINE/MOBILE NEWS EDITOR (H.CHIKWANHA | ONLINE EDITOR (BYO) (S.CHIWANGA) | BH24 EDITOR (VACANT) | SPORTSZONE (VACANT) | PRODUCTION EDITOR (VACANT) |

| SOCIAL MEDIA WRITER | NEWS EDITOR – ONLINE (COSTA MANO) | SNR REPORTER (R. ZINYUKE) | SNR REPOTER T.MUSARURWA | SPORTS REPORTERS (ALL NEWSROOM DESKS) |

ONLINE SUBS X 2

WEB DEVELOPERS

(SERVICE

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UNCATEGORISED

President in carpet mishap

05 FEB, 2015 - 03:02 | 102 COMMENTS | 2 IMAGES

President in carpet mishap

President Mugabe yesterday tripped over a poorly laid-out carpet at Harare International Airport

Editor

PRESIDENT MUGABE yesterday tripped over a poorly laid-out carpet at Harare International Airport, but remarkably managed to break the fall before walking to his car, evidently unscathed.

The African Union chairman had just addressed thousands of jubilant party supporters who gathered to welcome him and celebrate his election as AU chairman.

Speaking off the cuff for slightly over 43 minutes following a four-hour flight from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he spent a busy week chairing AU plenary meetings in addition to meeting African leaders, President Mugabe turned to leave the podium and was walking down a flight of steps when he tripped over.

Remarkably, the President broke the fall and landed on his knees.

Aides helped him to his feet and he walked to his car.

Last night, the incident was attracting excited headlines around the world, with many linking it to his age and alleged poor health.

Ironically just seconds earlier, the President had admonished the media for making issues out of non-issues.

"Do not be writers who always criticise. When they (journalists) fail to get something to write they look for non-existing issues. We do not want that. We want the truth, teaching our people the truth.

''I appeal to you journalists to be people with knowledge of policies happening in various countries. Reporting on the progress that we achieve and this must constitute new steps for us to make further progress until we achieve our objectives. That is what we want," President Mugabe said before winding off his address.

Information, Media and Broadcasting Services Minister Prof Jonathan Moyo who witnessed the incident first hand said the real news lay in the misrepresentation of the incident by malcontents in the media.

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Information, Media and Broadcasting Services Minister Prof Jonathan Moyo who witnessed the incident first hand said the real news lay in the misrepresentation of the incident by malcontents in the media.

"The misrepresentations and morbid celebrations of the incident by malcontents is the real news here and not the alleged fall as there was none.
''What happened is that the President tripped over a hump on the carpet on one of the steps of the dais as he was stepping down from the platform but he remarkably managed to break the fall on his own. I repeat that the President managed to break the fall.

''Nobody has shown any evidence of the President having fallen down because that did not happen. The hump on which the President tripped was formed by two pieces of the carpet which apparently had not been laid out properly where they joined. And to be honest with you, even Jesus, let alone you, would have also tripped in that kind of situation. In the circumstances, there's really nothing to write home about the nonsensical celebrations by malcontents who are imagining a fall that never was since it was actually broken by the President himself," he said.

This is not the first time a poorly laid out carpet has caused a head of state and/or government to stumble.

Former Australia prime minister Julia Gillard fell face first near the Ghandi Memorial during an official visit to India in October 2012.
Former United States President George Bush, missed a step while watching the Athens Olympics in 2008, and required the help of aides to stop him from an ignominious fall.

Five years earlier, In 2003, Bush was left bruised after falling head-first from a Segway – a stand-on scooter designed to make motorised travel user-friendly.

Queen Sofia of Spain, stumbled at the White House, with President Bill Clinton coming to the rescue, as she ascended steps during visit to Washington in 2000.

In 1975, US president Gerald Ford tumbled down the Air Force One stairs while visiting Austria.

These are just a few examples of high-profile incidents where leaders fell down with the stories hardly speculating about the health or ages of the people concerned.

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tiriparwendo2 · 4 years ago
We all fall, just that its not captured on camera and we are nobodies
37 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

> **rukudzo** → tiriparwendo2 · 4 years ago
> I actually fell this morning going for lunch. Nice pair of shoes but the sole let me down. Its not restricted to age. Its a pitty vana ve mazuva ano tarasa tsika. How can you go to town writing about that?
> 5 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
>
> > **Dube** → rukudzo · 4 years ago
> > This morning going for LUNCH ???? How?
> > 57 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> >
> > > **SaMunawa** → Dube · 4 years ago
> > > hahahaha,this morning going for lunch.? hatisi ma grade
> > >
> > > 1 bambo
> > > 17 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> > >
> > > **jojo** → Dube · 4 years ago
> > > Ndo vari kuuraya nyika ava.supposed to be working and not "going for lunch this morning"
> > > 11 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> > >
> > > **Red Carpet** → Dube · 4 years ago
> > > Indeed. Bizarre timing for lunch. And NO, we don't all fall walking over a neatly laid carpet without obstacles in broad daylight.
> > > 9 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> > >
> > > **rukudzo** → Dube · 4 years ago
> > > You got what I said. Its actually true but it also shows you have an eye for detail
> > > 1 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> > >
> > > **hubvu tsubvu** → rukudzo · 4 years ago
> > > You can go for lunch anytime depending on what time you started work.Those who work night shift can go for lunch at midnight.
> > > 1 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> > >
> > > **Pasi nemhanduuuuuu!!** → hubvu tsubvu · 4 years ago
> > > No it will be a break zvauriwe unototi brake lol
> > > 4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> > >
> > > **gerro** → Dube · 4 years ago
> > > Very petty
> > > ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> >
> > **justsaying** → rukudzo · 4 years ago
> > this morning going for lunch?
> > ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> >
> > **Valembe** → rukudzo · 4 years ago
> > Lunch rudzii yaunoenda makuseni akadaro?
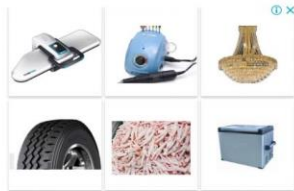> > 4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›
> >
> > **kutototo** → rukudzo · 4 years ago
> > You fell because you were going for Lunch in the morning before 8 am according to the time your post was added, next time know the actual time you go for lunch
> > 5 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

mambo · 4 years ago
Old people fall, mhani. Though young people fall but higher rates in older people with or without a carpet. What can't be proved is whether a younger person would have fallen. Not sre why herald posted this article.
46 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

> **Mambo** → mambo · 4 years ago
> Iwe so-called small mambo the Herald can write whatever it thinks is newsworthy. Nyatsotaura nyaya yako. The business of publishing newspapers is open to everyone, so I suggest you have your own publication where you chose what to and not to write. Better still you chose not to read it if you think it's not newsworthy. I don't like these kinds of people who read through the whole story and then go on to comment that the story is not newsworthy!
>
> In any case, this story was published by numerous newspapers, blogs, TV and radio stations throughout the world well before the Herald did. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if it was the news story of the day. It even bit the story of the plane accident in Taiwan that killed over 31 people to the front pages. Isn't that remarkable! So why not the Herald.
>
> I'm actually glad that the Herald published this story because, like the Chihuri incident, this pours water over the story. If they hadn't published it, the speculation machine would still be in overdrive. And you would say the Herald has been told not write the story. Last night ZBC delayed the news at 8 zvikanji they are busy removing the pictures on the fall of the President. Iya
>
> 5 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

110

4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

pupurai → mambo · 4 years ago
Its good they posted it otherwise somebody would have made a meal out of it and we all would have believed
4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Hombarume → pupurai · 4 years ago
Ayehwa. kune mamwe aripo. Iyi ine dignity. Pane in mdara vachi kambaira. But munhu akaisa carpet ari pama one, pamwe ndewe Gamatox Crew.
1 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Kusvikazvanaka → mambo · 4 years ago
Not news worthy...
3 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

L. Makombe → mambo · 4 years ago
Shame on you Mambo, you should learn to respect your elders. You may fall and never rise again. If the President stumbled is that falling, I do not know where Zimbabweans are getting these silly interpretation of events. Shame on you all who wish others evil. You are agents of the devil. My prayer is that may the Lord give the President good health, wisdom and knowledge to lead us. Why, because a healthy, wise and knowledgeable President will lead us well.
4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

h.mbudzi → L. Makombe · 4 years ago
Please don't col others agents of the devil just because they dont share same political views with you Makumbe.Your response shows that you are those pple who resort to physical violence in order to force your political views into others,it doesn't work baba.
4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Ultron → mambo · 4 years ago
Well spoken. Though I am kinda glad this article was posted actually. It helped neutralise, at least for me, all the alarmist and crazy talk going around in the other media, especially messages forwarded on Whatsapp.

KKK, looking at the photo leading this article: dude's still got amazing agility.
2 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Cde GABA RINOCHEKA, PhD (UZ) · 4 years ago
We have all fallen. A fall that's broken is better than ma fall ema pastor!
2 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Cde Mzvinavhu(Prof) · 4 years ago
The negative insinuations from the neo-colonial press are obvious because they have short memories and had forgotten that other leaders in world had experienced such mishaps. While the Herald has given few examples of worldwide similar mishaps, those by non public figures remain unreported . I personally has suffered such a minor accident and went unreported . Long live our dear leader ! We are proud and thank God for his precious life which continues to benefit Zimbabwe and Africa , especially in educating those hell bent on exploiting black people in the world. Tongai tongai Gushungo!
4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

patrier2 → Cde Mzvinavhu(Prof) · 4 years ago
Most of you guys are wearing sunglasses, I think he should get a walking stick,we are all human and there is a limit to our bodily strength. Congrats my President you made us proud at the AU.
∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Mdhara · 4 years ago
There is nothing embarrassing in falling, sometimes the truth is a better lie than the half truth Herald
5 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Taki · 4 years ago
lol

Gibson F Marwa Does this incident needs a Ministerial explanation? Let's us enjoy the new dance in the beloved country! Eeka. Ita seunononga!!
Like · Reply · 👍 5 · 1 hr · Edited

16 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

KING · 4 years ago
Even Jesus??? Jonathan do not say such things
1 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Chil-Ichochol? → KING · 4 years ago
And what do you refer to as "King" here? Kunyepera kunamata when you comment is just full of hate!
∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

moses matanga → KING · 4 years ago
To anyone who is happy about what happened to the President, you must know that you are evil minded .
1 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Mukwambo → moses matanga · 4 years ago
Well said Moes.Its only the devil that puts a smile on when a mishap befalls one of yours.
1 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Chalye · 4 years ago
He is still our President, let's respect him please.
3 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Jayden Bango → Chalye · 4 years ago
we respect him very much....but the fact remains....he fell. cant hide that can you. whats wrong in discussing this
1 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

kutototo · 4 years ago
The real story is on why people would celebrate the fall of someone (a president for that matter) not on why he fell, how he fell, how he managed to get up and who else fell. Investigate why people celebrated, with God on our side we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.
14 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Doc · 4 years ago
If the incident is not newsworth why make the reaction to it newsworthy? And to contradict itself, the herald goes on to cite a number of reports on "Presidential Falls". In short, a falling president makes news. As to the cause people always speculate. Whether it is tripping or falling is a matter of semantics. In Shona tinongoti President vakawa or more specifically, President vakawira pacarpet.
17 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

DangerWomanXX → Doc · 4 years ago
This is by far the best contribution. Rational, factual and true. No spin, no amanga.
∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

shamiso karimadora · 4 years ago
I fell yesterday ndanzwa kadzungu zvangu. I am only 40. Its human nature to stumble and fall sometimes. Its big news in the opposition press as usual as if it is the first such incident to happen to a Head of State. For Mugabe the famous fall has come at a ripe age of 91. what a remarkable achievement
4 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

ndini uya uya · 4 years ago
Herald mashaya, i news here idzodzo. you are equally to blame.
2 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

Long Live President Mugabe · 4 years ago
Our beloved President is strong and fit guys,at his age hapana akasimba like him,you thinks like him,who articulates issues likes him,who remembers events like him.Those who are trying to make news pasina news are far far below Our Beloved President.Even if we take them for medical examination naPresident,His Excellence will come out 100% than those who are making news out of nothing.Vakangani vanoda mustreet or muroad ,but it's not recorded,just because ndiPresident ,some of journalists in the private media needs to go be taken back to school guys.The President is a strong man Physically , mentally & politically.Long live President Mugabe.
3 ∧ | ∨ · Reply · Share ›

APPENDIX 8

Mimed images of President Mugabe that did rounds on social media.

via @iapperture

(via @fourfoxache)

(via @fourfoxache)

(via @fourfoxache)

(via @kidd_kong78)

(via @thepunningman)

115

@GLOSSYMANATEE

via @GlossyManatee