



National University of Science and Technology

Think in Other Terms



Thesis Title:

A comparative analysis of the role played by print media during Zimbabwe's economic crisis of 2008. A case of *The Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Sunday Mail*

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Year: 2012-2014

This report was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of The Masters of Science (Honours) Degree in Journalism and Media Studies.

ABSTRACT

This study is on the roles and politics of media operating in economic crisis situations. In unpacking the roles and politics of media in economic crisis environments, the study utilised two cases of polarised print media titles, namely *The Sunday Mail* and *The Zimbabwe Independent*. Previous scholarly research has provided a generic appreciation of media roles, within these reviews, the prominent and recent typology classifies media as collaborative, monitorial, radical and facilitative. These four categories of media roles form the basis of analysing the roles played by *The Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Sunday Mail*. Beyond the four typologies mentioned above, the study also looked at how effective the two publications played the agenda setting function on economic issues and went further to relate the facilitative role to the public sphere concept in analysing the implications of the media roles.

In interrogating the roles assumed by *The Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Sunday Mail* during the 2008 economic crisis a mixed research approach was employed. That is, the study employed the quantitative aspects of content analysis and the qualitative aspects of critical discourse analysis and structured interviews of the editor and news editor of the two newspaper titles under study.

The findings suggest that in economic crisis situations, media are bound to adopt two main extreme roles: the radical (*The Zimbabwe Independent*) and collaborative roles (*The Sunday Mail*). Elements of the monitorial role are discernible in both publications, but the monitoring is done to fulfil certain ideological positions hence this role is seriously compromised in economic crisis situations. The facilitative role is to a large extent relegated as it proves impracticable in a polarised and desperate environment. Evident is that the roles media play in crisis situations are not totally divorced from their roles in normal environments, the difference lie in that in times of crisis media assume extreme political positions yet in normal environments the tone would attempt to refrain from extreme radicalism and even disguise collaboration. The study concluded that economic crisis situations ignite media ideological extremism and such a stance compromises media objectivity on coverage of matters.