

Media Credibility Index Zimbabwe

April – June 15th 2013

***“Every news organization has
only its credibility and
reputation to rely on”*** — Tony

Burman, ex-editor-in-chief of CBC News, *The Globe
and Mail*, October 2001



Defending free expression and your right to know

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The Media Credibility Index Zimbabwe is an exploratory study into the principles that govern journalistic practice to establish whether the mainstream media in Zimbabwe are, playing their central role in contributing to a just, functional free society.

The report is part of MMPZ's endeavors to promote and celebrate high standards of journalism in the country.

MMPZ's research team conducted the research. It comprised of media researchers Sibusisiwe Dube (who compiled the report), James Bvumira, Mabel Shoko and Prisel Samu (Print media monitors); Zenzele Dube, Elijah Daka, Pauline Ihani Phuthi Pretty Moyo and Stephen Manjoro (Electronic media monitors). Eric Matingo and Edson Madondo coordinated the report.

Chapter one

1. Introduction

MORE than ever before, the media today play a critical role in any society.

The media, from the shows we watch on TV, the music we listen to on the radio, our newspapers and magazines, and now the news services and social network pages of the Internet, serve as our main sources of information and communication. They keep societies connected to the world and to each other and informed about trends, events and opinions at every level. They are, in fact, the cohesive glue that reinforces our sense of identity; to our culture and the communities in which we live, and to the nations to which we belong.

A statement of Shared Purpose released by the Committee of Concerned Journalists (CCJ) following years of research into the ***“principles that underlie journalism”*** presents the function of the media as encompassing myriad roles in society. These include helping define community; creating common language and common knowledge; identifying a community’s goals, heroes and villains; pushing people beyond complacency; entertaining; serving as watchdog and offering a voice to the voiceless¹.

The world over, the media is considered as an industry, as a public service and as a political institution. And because they are the engineers of public opinion and forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy, it is imperative that a significant proportion of the public must trust them.

In this context, information in journalism is therefore considered as a social good and not a commodity. This means media organisations share the responsibility for the disseminated information, not only to their proprietors but also to the public at large, a situation which entails journalists to assume their social responsibility always in conformity with a personal ethical consciousness.

The Society of Journalists (SJ) – one of the leading voices in the US on the subject of Journalistic Standards and Ethics – notes the indispensability of professionalism and credibility in the way the media conducts its work:

“The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility.”²

¹ Principles of Journalism: Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ).

<http://www.journalism.org/resources/principles>

² Society of Professional Journalists: SPJ Code of Ethics.

<http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

1.1 What is media credibility?

MEDIA credibility is in fact trust and value given to a media product by its audience. If the audience have a high value of the media organization and trusts and respects the information provided, then that media organisation is said to have high credibility.

Thus, media vehicles having high levels of credibility enjoy good business status and social respect among the public. Otherwise, some bad names exist in the media only due to the low level of credibility. Modern media and their workers all take care of credibility efforts. They contribute to their company by enhancing credibility.³

How is media credibility achieved?

The Committee of Concerned Journalists (CCJ), a US non-profit consortium of journalists, publishers, media owners, academics and citizens, worried about the future of the journalism profession gives some helpful advice:

“...commitment to citizens first is the basis of a news organisation’s credibility, the implied covenant that tells the audience the coverage is not slanted for friends or advertisers. Commitment to citizens also means journalism should present a representative picture of all constituent groups in society. Ignoring certain citizens has the effect of disenfranchising them. The theory underlying the modern news industry has been the belief that credibility builds a broad and loyal audience, and that economic success follows in turn...”

1.2 Codes of journalism – their purpose

MEDIA credibility is a complex concept.

There are several journalistic principles that are the building blocks to the credibility of any media and underline journalistic practice. These principles of ethics and of good practice – known among journalists as professional “code of ethics” or “canons of journalism” – are designed to address the specific challenges faced by journalists in the course of their duties. These also provide journalists a framework for self-monitoring and self-correction.⁴

³ Blurt it.

<http://www.blurtit.com/q247830.html>

⁴ Journalism ethics and standards – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/journalistic-standards>

To ensure credibility in the dissemination of information media practitioners should therefore religiously adhere to these professional journalistic standards, which are centred on accuracy, fairness and balance.

1.3 Accuracy

JOURNALISM'S first obligation is to the truth. It should claim pre-eminence over all considerations. According to the CCJ, ***“journalist truth”*** is a process that begins with the professional discipline of verifying facts. This means journalists should take reasonable steps to ensure that they disseminate accurate information and depicts events fairly. Special care must be taken to check accuracy of stories that may cause harm to individuals or organisations.

Says the CCJ: ***“Even in a world of expanding voices, accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built – context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The truth, over time, emerges from this forum.”***

Adds the body: ***“Independence is an underlying requirement of journalism, a cornerstone of its reliability. Independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, is the principle journalists must keep in focus. While editorialists and commentators are not neutral, the source of their credibility is still their accuracy, intellectual fairness and ability to inform, not their devotion to a certain group or outcome...”***

Therefore, the most important task of the journalist is to serve the people's right to true and authentic information so that the public is provided with adequate material to facilitate the formation of an accurate and comprehensive picture of the world in which the origin, nature and essence of events, processes and state of affairs are understood as objectively as possible.⁵

1.4 Balance and Fairness

News reports should always be fair, full and balanced and must not suppress essential information pertaining to those events. The media should not distort information by exaggeration or omission, or give one side of the story and report the facts out of the context in which they occurred. This entails the news reports to have balance and context. Words, facts and quotes must not be deliberately downplayed or emphasized so as to distort a story. Prominence of the story should be related to its importance. The use of misleading headlines must be avoided.

In fact, according to the CCJ when the concept of objectivity originally evolved, it did not mean that journalists were free of bias: objectivity did not denote to the substance of the journalists themselves, but to a ***“consistent***

⁵ International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism/ethic net
<http://ethicnet.uta.fi/international/international-principles-of-professional-ethics-in-journalism>

method” of testing information, “a transparent approach to evidence, precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work”.

The seeking out of multiple sources, disclosing as much as possible about sources and asking various sides for comment so that balance and fairness in presenting facts is achieved embodies this approach. **“This discipline of verification is what separates journalism from other modes of communication, such as propaganda, fiction or entertainment,”** says the CCJ.

Crucial too is for journalists to promote access by the public to information and participation of the public in the media, including the right of correction or rectification, and the right of reply.

1.6 Justification

THE concept of media credibility provides a platform to explore the relevance and responsibility of the news media in Zimbabwe. This is especially so as public trust in the media is often undermined when these media deliver erroneous or distorted information.

Walter Lippmann, an American public intellectual, writer, reporter and political commentator (September 23, 1889 – December 14, 1974) may have been talking about the role of newspapers in particular, but it evidently sums up the importance of the role of the media in today's societies:

“For the newspaper is in all literalness the bible of democracy, the book out of which a people determines its conduct. It is the only serious book most people read. It is the only book they read every day. Now the power to determine each day what shall seem important and what shall be neglected is a power unlike any that has been exercised since the Pope lost hold on the secular mind.”⁶

This study therefore investigates the believability, reliability, ethical lapses, newsgathering techniques and news presentation of Zimbabwe's mainstream media, both print and electronic, in relation to each other. This was done in the context of assessing all the front-page news stories published in the newspapers and top stories aired both on TV and radio stations.

Placement of stories in the media is one crucial manner in which the media mediate the world to us. The media ‘tell’ their audiences what is significant and meaningful through their placement of stories, sorting them in order of their perceived importance. Within a newspaper's sections, for example, readers almost invariably read pages in order, from the front page to the back.

⁶ Roles of the media

<http://hums3001.unsw.wikispaces.net/Roles+of+the+Media>

The front-page stories of a newspaper and those billed as top stories in the broadcasting media are thus seen as the marketing points of these media. They are the sales points, which attract the potential reader to buy the paper and read further, and in the case of radio and TV, the allure for listeners and viewers to remain tuned to that particular radio or TV station.

1.7 Scope of the research

The Media Credibility Index (MCI) covers a three-month period from April 1st to June 15th 2013. The study involves monitoring and analyzing the content and credibility of the front page and top stories in 11 print and electronic mainstream media outlets. These media are listed in Fig 1.

Fig.1 List of Media examined

Media	Regularity	Status
ZTV (ZBC)	Everyday	Public media
Star FM	Everyday	Privately owned
Zi FM	Everyday	Privately owned
Studio 7	Everyday	Privately owned
SW Radio Africa	Everyday	Privately owned
<i>The Herald</i>	Everyday	Public media
<i>Newsday</i>	Everyday	Privately owned
<i>Daily News</i>	Everyday	Privately owned
<i>Zimbabwe Independent</i>	Weekly	Privately owned
<i>The Sunday Mail</i>	Weekly	Public media
<i>The standard</i>	Weekly	Privately owned

1.8 Methodology

The research used both the quantitative and qualitative methods in measuring the credibility of the issues covered in the respective media. The quantitative aspect involved measuring all quantifiable issues such as the number of stories and sources used in the media's coverage of the subject. The qualitative aspect was used to fine-tune the quantitative findings, including the how credible the media is when covering stories.

The qualitative aspects were informed by ethical journalistic principles and good practice of accuracy, balance and fairness as ascribed in earlier sections of this report. Anything that failed these standards was therefore deemed unprofessional. In this context, various indicators were used to

interrogate the credibility of the leading reports appearing in the country's mainstream media.

These mainly involved assessing completeness in news coverage; editorial intrusions; newsworthy events overwhelmed by trivia; representation of individual/party/corporate interests; lack of distinction between fact and opinion; manipulation of public/party opinion etc; obfuscation of facts with prejudice or supposition; and lack of discipline in verification.

From this process, reports were then classified as either fair or unfair; accurate/inaccurate; trustworthy/untrustworthy; balanced/unbalanced; biased/unbiased; reliable/unreliable; thorough/not thorough and; informative or not informative, benchmarks we used to categorise stories as credible or not.

Chapter Two

2. Summary of findings

The electronic media carried the most credible top news reports among the surveyed media in the period under review, achieving an overall credibility standing of 97 percent.

Zi FM, Studio 7 and *The Standard* carried the most trustworthy top news reports in the country among the surveyed media while *The Sunday Mail*, *The Herald* and ZTV contained the highest number of flawed top reports.

2.1 Overall media performance

FOR the purposes of relevance and easy reference, this research grouped the media outlets into three categories: electronic media, daily newspapers and weeklies. The classification was based on their genre and frequency.

The surveyed media collectively carried a total of 1 036 top stories in the three-month period under examination. Of these, 993 were credible while 43 were not.

The stories were on various topics such as politics and governance, social and business. Issues that hogged the limelight in the media were on the constitution making; electoral processes; increased political party activities, including the holding of primary elections, in preparation of this year's

harmonized elections; and the arrest of prominent Star FM Disc Jockey, Munya Mlimo, on kidnapping and murder charges.

The overall performance of each news organization is illustrated in Fig 2.

The Herald carried the highest number of unreliable front-page news stories (19) followed by ZTV, with 11. All of the top stories carried by Zi FM and *The Standard* in the three months period were dependable.

Collectively, the public (state-controlled) media contained the most undependable top news stories in the period.

Of the total 43 top news reports that lacked credibility carried in the 11 surveyed media in the three-month study, 34 (79%) of these appeared in the public media (ZTV, *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail*).

The remaining nine (30%) were spread across the monitored eight private media outlets.

The private media outlet with the most number of unreliable front-page reports in the period under review was *NewsDay* (two reports).

Fig 2. Overall assessment of each media outlet

Medium	Number of stories	Credible	Not credible
ZTV	132	121	11
Star FM	126	125	1
Studio 7	98	98	0
Zi FM	134	134	0
SW Radio Africa)	110	109	1
<i>The Herald</i>	185	166	19
<i>Newsday</i>	98	96	2
<i>Daily News</i>	82	81	1
<i>Zimbabwe Independent</i>	25	24	1
<i>The Standard</i>	23	23	0
<i>The Sunday Mail</i>	23	19	4
Total	1 036	996	40

2.2 Media performance by category

THE 11 surveyed media outlets were organized into three groups: electronic media (TV and radio stations), daily newspapers and weekly newspapers.

The electronic media category comprises one TV and four radio stations. Of these, only ZTV is public owned.

In the dailies category, three newspapers were surveyed: one public and two private owned. Similarly, three weekly newspapers were monitored. They comprised two private and one public owned.

2.2.1 Electronic media

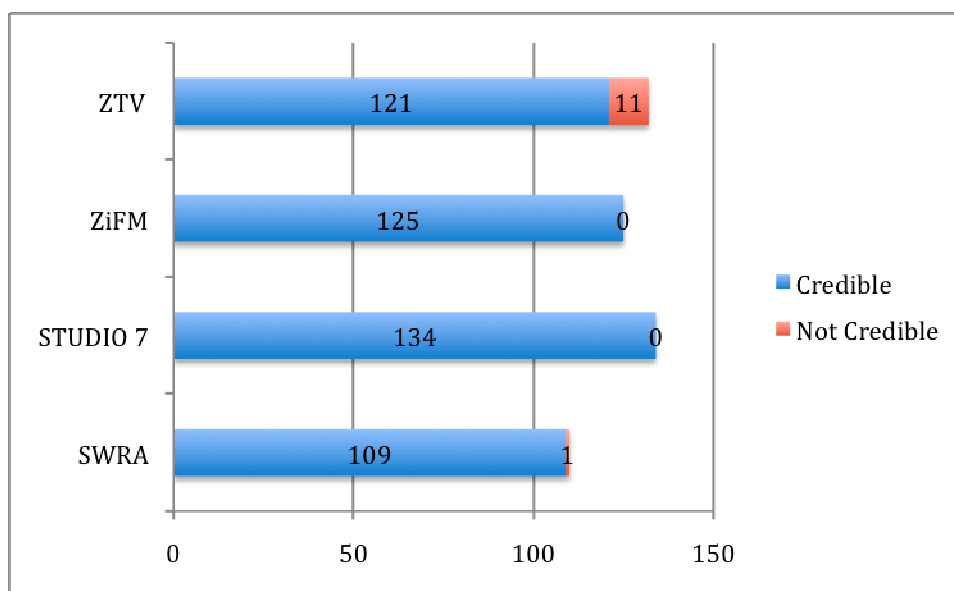
COLLECTIVELY, the electronic media proved the best sources of information when it comes to reporting plausibly on top national developments.

In the period under review, they carried a total of 600 top stories 587 (99%) of which were credible. The remaining 15 reports (two percent) were not.

The best performer in this category was Zi FM, which had a 100 percent credibility record.

The least dependable source of information among the electronic media outlets was the sole national TV station, ZTV. The station contributed nine (60%) of the 15 top reports that did not comply with professional journalist standards in the period under study.

Fig 3: Electronic media credibility ratings



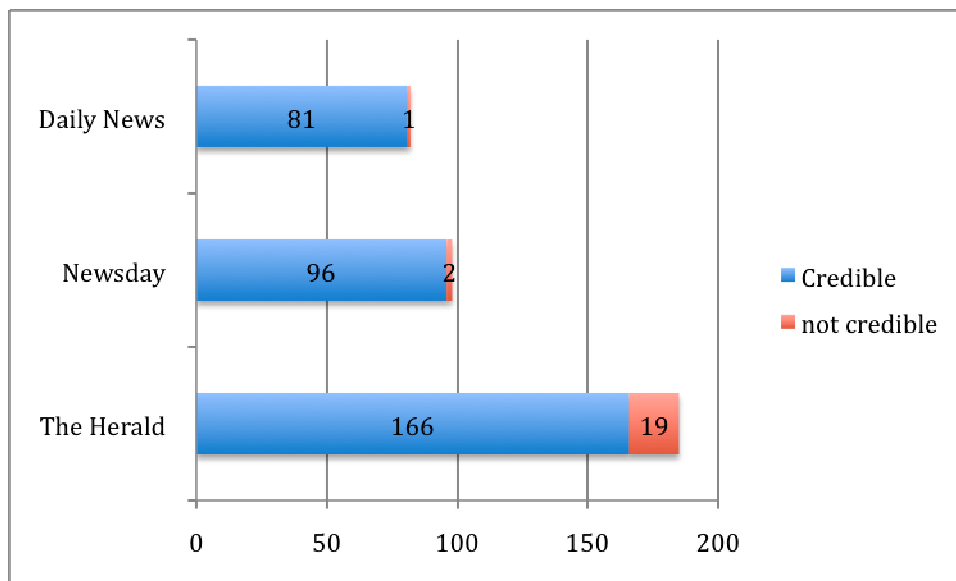
2.2.2 Dailies

DAILY newspapers achieved an aggregate credibility standing of 94 percent, the lowest among the three media categories.

However individually, the *Daily News*, with a credibility score of 99 percent and *Newsday* (98%) proved credible sources of information among this group, showing that they were capable of presenting national issues in a professional manner. See Fig 4.

Only *The Herald* regularly displayed gross professional incompetence in its coverage of top events. It ran 19 untrustworthy front-page stories in the three-month period, which translates to 86 percent of the 22 leading stories that fell short of professional journalistic standards the three dailies carried in the period under review.

Fig 4: Dailies' credibility ratings



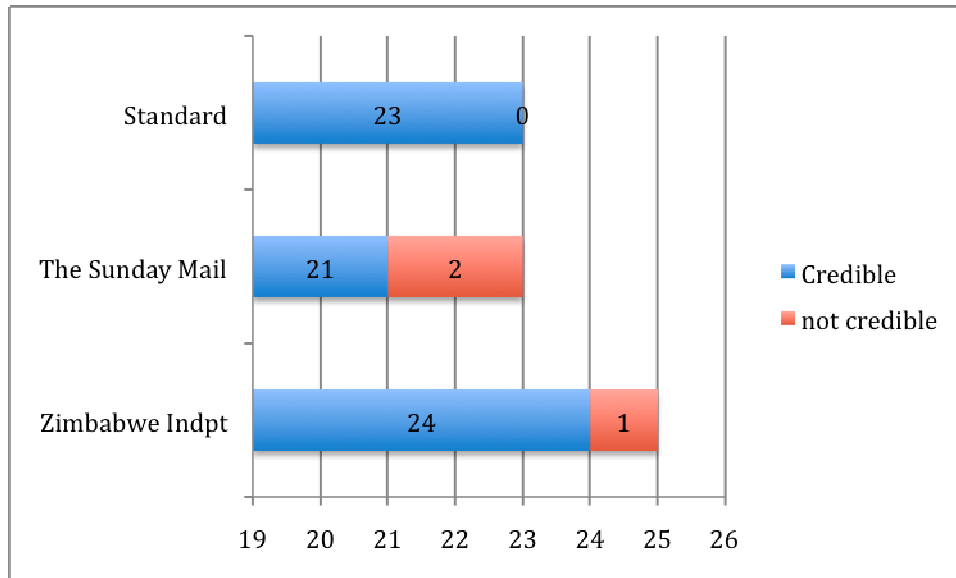
2.2.3. The weeklies

WEEKLY papers got an aggregate credibility standing of 96 percent, the second best score among the three media categories.

All the 23 reports that *The Standard* carried in the period under review complied with professional journalistic practice.

Four (80%) of the five unreliable top news reports recorded in this media category appeared in *Sunday Mail*. The remaining one (20%) was published in the *Zimbabwe Independent*. This is shown in Fig 5.

Fig 5: The weeklies media credibility ratings



2.3 Sourcing patterns

IN the three-month survey, the media carried 1 036 top-stories, 522 of which used multiple sources. The other 467 were based on single sources and the other 121 on unnamed sources.

Fig 6 shows the sourcing patterns of each media.

Only Studio 7's top stories were exclusively based on named sources.

The Herald had the highest number of top stories with unnamed sources [25], followed by the privately owned radio station Zi FM [23] and the weekly, *Zimbabwe Independent* [22].

Star FM recorded the highest number of leading stories that relied on single sources of information (98), while *The Herald* had the highest number of multi-sourced reports [110].

Fig 6: The Media's sourcing patterns

Medium	Stories with unnamed sources	Single sourced stories	Stories with two or more sources	Stories with editorial intrusions
ZTV	3	84	47	0
Star FM	1	98	14	0
Studio 7	0	37	56	0
Zi FM	23	72	80	0

SW Radio Africa	12	33	67	1
<i>The Herald</i>	25	68	110	9
<i>Newsday</i>	8	20	49	0
<i>Daily News</i>	12	25	51	1
<i>Zimbabwe Independent</i>	22	4	17	0
<i>The Sunday Mail</i>	6	4	13	3
<i>The Standard</i>	9	22	18	0
Total	121	467	522	14

2.4: Common Weakness in the media's top stories

THE most common contributor to the weaknesses was bias, but this was not always the out-in-front-bias. This prejudice was also imbued in text and the way the media reports were fashioned. Symptoms of the bias included use of editorial intrusions, faceless sources, sensational and misleading headlines, failure to balance and corroborate facts, and the excessive use of single sources, among others, to perpetuate preconceived notions mainly in stories on national political discourse.

Professor and former journalist Andrew Cline observes that the Press is often thought of as a “unified voice with a distinct bias,” usually either politically right or left leaning, depending on the critic. In order to avoid political bias (or any sort of bias, for that matter), journalists invoke the ethics of objectivity and fairness. Objectivity, in turn, is sought through attempting to be fair to those concerned with the news, and through a “professional process of information gathering that seeks fairness, completeness, and accuracy.”⁸

2.4.1 Single-sourced reports

WHERE the story ‘comes from’ and the sources quoted in news reports shape the story and the nature of the message conveyed. Bias by source control is a major issue in political reporting and was prevalent in several of the media surveyed in the period under review.

Except for stories on official positions, events, policy-making and

⁷ Andrew R. Cline, “Media/Political Bias,” *Rhetorica, A Rhetoric Primer*.
<http://rhetorica.net/bias.htm>

representation, a story should generally have two or more sources to ensure balance and authenticity. Therefore, to ensure balance, fairness and accuracy reporters should abide by the “*two reliable source rule*”.

In the three months under review, the media carried 467 single-sourced reports. Because of their event and statement based approach, the electronic media, particularly Star FM (98) and ZTV (84) had the highest number of stories.

In the print media, *The Herald* carried the most single-sourced top stories due to its preoccupation with officialdom. Most of the single-sourced top reports carried in these media stemmed from pronouncements of the actual policymakers or official representatives involved in the action or negotiation with first hand knowledge.

Examples are: *Labour lawyers say the recent increase of the minimum wages of farm workers from \$59-\$65 is insignificant* (Star FM 9/4/13); *Service chiefs speak on PM Tsvangirai* (*The Herald*, 1/5/13); *ZANU PF supports positions on UNDP funding for elections*. (ZTV, 17/4/13, 8pm).

However, there were also some cases in which the use of single sources – especially in controversial or where there are competing interests – appeared to perpetuate bias and promote certain interests over others.

These include stories such as: *MDC stalls second reading of constitutional bill* – source Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa – ZANU PF (ZTV, 7/5, 8pm), *MDC plot against judiciary exposed* (*The Herald* 13/4) and *Teachers & children attacked by violent youths at Gweru school* (SW Radio Africa, 28/5).

2.4.2 Use of faceless sources

A named source is always preferable to an unnamed source.

Anonymous sources are the weakest sources in any report; they compromise the credibility of the story. An anonymous source is less reliable for the reader.

However, there are instances when journalists need to protect their sources, especially when they are writing on very sensitive issues such as exposing high profile figures. Otherwise, problems such as corruption, crime and abuse of office, among other vices, might go undetected and unchallenged, to the ultimate detriment of society as a whole⁸.

Therefore it is imperative that journalists should only allow sources to remain anonymous in certain critical situations: Accusations and low profile stories should almost never have anonymous sources attached to them so as to curb the tendency by some journalists and media outlets to smuggle their own opinions into the news pages under the guise of anonymous sources.

The *Zimbabwe Independent* was the greatest user of unnamed sources (22) in its front pages, perhaps due to the papers investigative approach and

⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protection-of-sources>

strength in covering sensitive issues.

However, there were other stories that abused this principle.

Examples of such stories include MDC-T shields bigwigs in primaries; Western duplicity exposed; Skeletons tumbles off poll list and Discord intensifies ahead of MDC-T primaries (The Herald 13, 16, & 21/5);

2.4.3 ZTV and Star FM: Event followers

SOME of the surveyed media continued to be engrossed in officialdom and events. This tendency was prominent in the public funded ZTV and the commercial radio station *Star FM*.

For example, of the 28 monitored top reports that Star FM carried in June alone, 20 were event-based while ZTV aired 14 event-based reports out of the 26 leading stories it carried during the same period.

Although occurrences featuring well-known individuals or institutions are newsworthy – the way these media were mired in these official beats – to the detriment of other pertinent issues, almost amounted to professional dereliction of duty.

And while the effect of such preoccupation with officialdom did not directly affect the credibility of their reports on the matter, collectively these reports had the sum effect of undermining their reputation among the public.

ZTV's obsession with the activities of only one arm of the inclusive government especially, also leaves them bare to accusations of being partisan and biased towards only certain sections of society in violation of the broadcaster's public mandate.

In fact, most of the top stories aired on ZTV in the three-month study showed strong leanings towards ZANU PF activities and President Mugabe, almost to the exclusion of other political interests in the country.

For example, the ZTV bulletin (1/6, 8pm) led with a ZANU PF event where the party national chairman Simon Khaya Moyo was calling for unity within the party.

The station (3/5, 8pm) also led with a report giving an update on ZANU PF activities such as the beginning of the 266th Ordinary session of the party's politburo in Harare.

Others included:

- ZANU PF Harare province begins mobilizing supporters (1/5, 8pm);
- 92nd ZANU PF Central committee held in Harare (4/5, 8pm);
- ZANU PF urges members of Johanne Masowe Chishanu to register to vote (4/5);
- ZANU PF finalises election rules and regulations document (4/5, 8pm);
- Mpofu rallies ZANU PF to victory in Matabeleland regions (6/5, 8pm);

- ZANU PF youth chairman calls on Bulawayo to register as voters (6/5);
- President back home (7/6, 8pm)
- President Mugabe hails missionaries in education provision (14/6,8pm)

2.4.4 Editorial Intrusions

NEWS media often use labels and titles to describe people, places and events. The nature of these labels and titles set the tone of the story and can influence how readers view the news story and the individuals or organizations that are the focus of the news item.

A journalist's decision to use labels such as "terrorist", "insurgent" or "freedom fighter" often reflect a deliberate choice and provides an indication of how the journalist attempts to frame the story.⁹

For example, in a front-page report *Tsvangirai tightens pressure*, *Newsday* (10/6) uses the verb "**sneaked**", insinuating that the PM had apparently used unconventional means to travel to South Africa. However, nowhere in the report is there an indication of this, apart from South African President Jacob Zuma's advisor, Lindiwe Zulu, confirming that Tsvangirai was in the country.

The Herald and *The Sunday Mail* festered with such cases, where labels such as "**revolutionary party**", and "**Western-backed party**" were often used to describe the competing political interests in the country.

For example, In *Skeletons tumble off poll list*, *The Herald* (16/5) pollutes its report on the MDC-T primary elections by opining: "**No one dared stand for MDC-T in Mwenezi held by Cde Kudakwashe Bhasikiti and Chiredzi North whereas in Chiredzi South, all three aspirants failed to meet the criteria, a development that may point to possible mediocrity.**"

In another, alleging **infighting** and **racism** in Bulawayo's MDC-T structures, the paper (1/6) editorializes: "**Ironically, MDC-T is bent on protecting white property rights and the party is unapologetic about being an appendage of Western countries, which launched and funded it from inception.**"

These editorial intrusions were mainly used to divert attention from the facts of the story and manipulate public opinion on the issues. The problem was mostly detected in stories on politics and governance issues.

2.4.5 Sensational Headlines / Misleading headlines

IT is widely recognized that many readers 'scan' newspapers rather than read all of a news story. Often just the headline is read and perhaps an initial paragraph or two.

In newspaper reports paragraphs frequently are just one or two sentences in length. Readers who adopt this strategy rely on limited and often sensationalized information.¹⁰

Some of the headlines used by the media in their top stories in the period under review appeared to reduce fidelity to the truth and contributed to a lack of needed context for public understanding of issues being reported on.

An example is *The Herald* (13/5)'s *Three CIA agents for MDC-T indaba*, a conspiracy theory report that could not sustain its headline's allegations.

Another, *Makandiwa wants daily news closed* (the *Daily News* 12/4) did not provide evidence to show that United Fellowship International "Prophet" Emmanuel Makandiwa had categorically asked the country's media regulation body, the Zimbabwe Media Commission, to "**close**" the paper.

2.4.5 Failure to balance and Corroborate facts

ONE of the most important tasks of journalists is to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty, elements that were missing in some of the top stories carried in the media in this period.

This obliges journalists to seek and include comment from the affected individuals or institutions in the same story, or as quickly as practicable. Fairness shall also include reporting facts in their proper context.

Where the affected party declines to comment or where the media house genuinely tries but fails to extract a comment, such position should be explained in the story published or broadcast.

Some reports failed to live up to these expectations. This was reflected in stories such as: *NGO voter scam exposed*; *Tsvangirai's SA mission*; *MDC-T launches litigation crusade*; and *MDC-T plot unmasked* (*The Herald* 8, 11, 12, 13); and *The Sunday Mail's Hang in there, the President is busy*.

Chapter Three

Conclusion

THE 11 surveyed media carried a total of 1 036 top stories in the three month period, 989 reports of which were credible and the rest (47) were not.

Collectively, the five electronic media proved the best providers of credible information on topical national developments, followed by weekly newspapers.

Individually, Zi FM, Studio 7 and *The Standard* were the top performers, with all the top stories they carried in the three-month period informative.

The *Daily News*, with a credibility standing of 99 percent and *NewsDay* (98%) proved the better sources of information in the dailies category during the same period than *The Herald* (90%).

The *Sunday Mail* had the lowest credibility rating (83) among all the surveyed media, followed by *The Herald* (90%) and ZTV (92%).

Combined, the public (state-controlled) had an overall credibility rating of 88 percent, 11 percent lower than the aggregate 99 percent achieved by the private media.

The common weaknesses in the monitored stories mostly arose from bias stemming from, misrepresentations, distortions, inaccuracies, lack of balance and fairness; and downright manipulation of facts to further particular interests.

The public media were the most frequent offenders.

Ends

