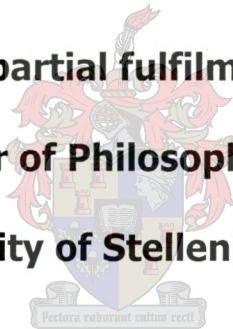


**A comparative study of the factors affecting the  
growth/development of the rural community newspaper the  
*Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror*, Northern Province**

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**Assignment presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Journalism) at the  
University of Stellenbosch**



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"Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

## **ABSTRACT**

The print media, especially newspapers, play an important role in providing information in any society. In the rural communities of South Africa, information available to the people is scanty. Growth of a newspaper is necessary if a newspaper is to fulfil its duties. The *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror* are two of the few local newspapers that circulate in the Far North Region of the Northern Province.

The *Zoutpansberger*, which started in 1985, has experienced negative growth in the various departments of the newspaper, while the *Mirror*, which started in September 1990, has experienced slow growth. Several factors have been responsible for this. Therefore, there was a need to examine and compare the factors that have affected the growth/development of the newspapers over ten years.

The aims and objectives of the study are to examine and compare the factors that affect the growth and development of the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror*, give suggestions to facilitate future growth and the best ways of utilising the available resources. A literature survey was carried out to get the perspectives of other researchers.

Data was collected after conducting personal interviews, using the interview schedule. It was analysed and interpreted with the use of graphs and charts. The findings reveal that economic, social, cultural and geographical factors affect the growth of the newspaper. A few recommendations have been given to highlight ways in which the paper can make full use of the available resources.

## OPSOMMING

Die drukmedia, in die besonder koerante, speel 'n belangrike rol in die oordrag van inligting in enige samelewing. In die plattelandse gemeenskappe van Suid-Afrika is die beskikbare inligting kargig. Vir 'n koerant om sy pligte na te kom, is dit nodig dat die koerant groei. Die *Zoutpansberger* en *Mirror* is twee van die plaaslike koerante in die Verre Noorde-streek van die Noordelike Provinsie.

Die *Zoutpansberger*, gestig in 1985, het negatiewe groei in verskeie afdelings ondervind, terwyl die *Mirror*, gestig in September 1990, stadige groei ondervind het. Verskeie faktore is hiervoor verantwoordelik. Daar was daarom 'n behoefte om die faktore te ondersoek wat die groei van die koerante oor 'n tydperk van tien jaar beïnvloed het.

Die doel van die studie is om die faktore wat die groei en ontwikkeling van die *Zoutpansberger* en die *Mirror* geraak het, te ondersoek en te vergelyk en om voorstelle te gee wat toekomstige groei en optimale benutting van beskikbare bronne kan bewerkstellig. 'n Literatuurstudie is gedoen om die perspektiewe van ander navorsers te betrek.

Data is ingesamel nadat persoonlike onderhoude gedoen is met behulp van die onderhoudskedule. Dit is geanaliseer en geïnterpreteer met behulp van grafika en kaarte. Die bevindinge bring aan die lig dat ekonomiese, maatskaplike, kulturele en geografiese faktore die groei van die koerant beïnvloed. Enkele voorstelle is gemaak om moontlike maniere te belig waarop die koerant die beskikbare bronne ten volle kan benut.



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DEDICATED TO MY HUSBAND WILLIAM FOR YOUR IMMENSE SUPPORT AND MY TWO SONS  
MWESIGWA AND MUBEEZI: CONSTANT REMINDERS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND EVER-  
PRESENT HELP.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a crucial role in the advancement of any society.

Communication technology in most parts of the world has contributed to what has come to be known as the global village. Whatever happens in one part of the world is instantly relayed to another and it affects the other, hence making all areas a part of the whole world - the global village.

Newspapers, together with other media, have exerted a great influence on the world's developments because they link the different societies. With the advent of the electronic newspaper in the 1990s, information became more accessible and information exchange between different countries became easier. Oosthuizen (1997:22) says the primary function of newspapers is the supply of information. A newspaper keeps its readers informed about what is happening around them so that they can form a better understanding of the world that they live in.

Furthermore, newspapers help different societies to define their role within the global village. They serve as a window through which the rest of the world can view a society as well as a mirror through which a society can examine itself. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the functions that a newspaper is meant to fulfil. In



addition to serving as conduits of information, newspapers also serve to educate the different sectors of society. According to Merrill et al (1994: 62) education is an inevitable result of other functions because individuals assimilate information and learn from it adding to their knowledge, their values and their total experience. It is an important role because newspapers wield a lot of influence over what happens in a society in particular and the world as a whole.

It is because of this importance that it is necessary to study how newspapers fare in their operations, especially the obstacles they face, in order to formulate suggestions for maximum efficiency.

In South Africa, different categories of newspapers serve different sections of the society. National, daily and weekly papers, as well as provincial and regional newspapers serve their various communities. Local and community newspapers serve urban, peri-urban and rural communities.

Newspapers strive to operate efficiently, but most of them face some difficulties which have to be solved if newspapers are to flourish. Community newspapers, especially those in the remote rural areas of the country, are not immune to such difficulties. It was necessary to investigate the factors that are affecting the

growth/development of rural community newspapers, factors that limit them from growing into bigger and more effective entities within their environment.

This study will focus on the operations of rural community newspapers, specifically the *Zoutpansberger* (see Appendix C) and *Mirror* (see Appendix D) operating in the Far North region of the Northern Province. Both newspapers target the local people and have a circulation of 11 000 and 9 000 copies a month respectively.

In conducting the study, the following were undertaken:

The research instrument used during the study was field study using the interview schedule/guide. The method used for data collection during the course of the research was mainly personal interviewing of the respondents, but some statistics were also obtained by telephone from professional media bodies to explain the quantitative aspects of the research.

Data processing and analysis followed the data collection process. Processing of the data involved editing, while analysis relied heavily on interpretation of responses and comparison with data available with media bodies. A sample of six respondents was used during the study. The six respondents' interviews constitute the entire group of people who have worked with the newspapers since they started and are still



working with the papers. This chapter shall give a background to the research subject and outline the research subject under study. It shall state the aims and objectives of the study as well as the hypotheses that guided the research and the significance of the study. In addition, limitations to the study will be briefly examined as well as definitions of some of the concepts that are crucial to the study.

### **1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH SUBJECT**

Newspapers are the "watchdogs" of society. As Altschull (1991:271) says, not only is the newspaper meant to educate and entertain society, it has a duty to act as the eyes and ears of society. Journalists have been pushed to the forefront to ensure that the newspaper fulfils its duty by purging society of wrongdoers. Journalists have had to spearhead the dissemination of information to the public, distinguishing between fact and opinion. However, they are facing an increasing challenge to build newspapers into forums of exchange and criticism as well as media that represent the various groups of society, without being seen to favour one group over the other. In addition to that, presenting and clarifying the goals and values of society without showing any bias (Day 1991:278). It is important to stress that in many situations, the reality has greatly differed from the ideal. While journalists strive to fulfil their duties, political, economic and social pressures, among others, have greatly hampered them. Such pressures have affected the growth of the newspapers and

limited their effective operation. In some cases newspapers have not been able to fulfil even their most basic function - that of information.

Indeed many newspapers have to battle for survival in a market that has stiff competition amongst the different papers. They also experience decreasing sources of income and high costs of production that are detrimental to survival. The objective of any newspaper is profit, otherwise the newspaper will not be able to carry out all the other functions. With little or no profit, any newspaper will struggle to exist and its ability to operate efficiently is limited. Day (1991:181) is in agreement with the profit motive of newspapers when he says that the fundamental objective of any newspaper, magazine, broadcast station, and movie studio or cable system is profit. Without it, the life span of any media institution will be a short one. Shoemaker & Reese (1996:173) also state that the primary goal sought by most media organisations is economic profit. Whereas the struggle for survival and existence for newspapers is worldwide, many newspapers have overcome the problem by operating newspaper organisations as businesses. Nevertheless, the challenge for newspapers is to balance the "profit motive" with the duties that society expects of it. As Day (1991:179) notes, the issue in any given situation is how to balance economic pressures against individual or institutional duties to society. In South Africa, newspapers face the same economic, social and political pressures as other



newspapers elsewhere in the world.

Rural community newspapers in South Africa may be shielded from some of the factors faced by national newspapers such as stiff competition in an ever-growing market. They however, have their own share of challenges. Such common challenges include diminishing sources of already scarce income and high production costs. Nonetheless, many of the rural community newspapers battle to exist due to geographical, economic, social and cultural factors, most of which factors are exclusive to the rural setting in which these newspapers operate.

If rural community newspapers are to remain in existence, they are faced with a glaring challenge to find means of fully utilising the available resources so that they do not barely survive, but realise profits as well. Realistically, a newspaper cannot be able to perform its functions efficiently if it is on the brink of collapse. This does not mean that newspapers should compromise their integrity and fully concentrate on economic gains. However, as Day (1991:181) correctly points out, an unprofitable operation is unlikely to attract the capital needed for investment into the newspaper and ultimately its growth. Profit also allows an organisation to invest in the talent and hardware necessary for the production of a quality product. According to Shoemaker & Reese (1996:145), while the primary goal of the newspaper is

economic, to make profit, other in-built goals exist. These are to produce a quality product, serve the public and achieve professional recognition, for the newspaper personnel and the paper itself.

Community newspapers are not immune to the needs of newspapers in general.

In fact, for community newspapers operating in remote rural areas of South Africa, the need to attract investment capital is even greater. This is because the revenue needed to sustain the newspaper by covering costs of production, yet realising profit, is limited. In most of the rural areas, the population faces great economic limitations. Hence, circulation and advertising hardly sustain a paper.

It is true that all newspapers do not expand overnight into the big conglomerates that the powerful newspaper organisations become. As Shoemaker & Reese (1996:144) state, it takes years for them to develop into the big profit making organisations that powerful newspapers are. Nevertheless, in most cases, the growth is consistent as the managers constantly look for new ways to increase their income.

However, most of the rural community newspapers operate with the bare minimum in terms of personnel and resources. Because of this, it is difficult for them to grow into profit making organisations as shown by the case of the *Zoutpansberger* and



*Mirror*. Therefore, it is of importance to identify factors that are affecting the growth and/or development of typical rural community newspapers.

## **1.2. RESEARCH STATEMENT**

Newspapers play an important role in providing information in any society. However, in rural communities, the information available to the people remains scanty because of few or the lack of newspapers. Most importantly, the few newspapers serving the rural communities are struggling to survive.

Electronic media, especially radio, have largely filled the information gap in rural communities. Radio in particular has been successful mainly because it communicates to people mostly in their first languages. It is also more affordable to most of the rural population, unlike other media like television.

Nevertheless, community newspapers have done their part in informing the rural communities. According to Print Media South Africa, the Community Press Association (1999) had 140 newspapers registered with the association. Some of these papers operate in the remote rural areas, while others serve communities in urban and peri-urban areas. The *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror* are some of the remote rural community newspapers that are endeavouring to serve the rural areas.

However, both the newspapers, which started in 1985 and 1990 respectively, have experienced little or negative growth in terms of management/staffing, circulation and production, among other areas. The current owner of the papers, Anton van Zyl, took over ownership from Johan du Plessis in December 2000, when both of the papers were facing closure and were operating at a loss.

The research need is underlined by the fact that the papers experienced such a big decline over three years from 1997 to 2000, that the former owner could not sustain them. It was not until Van Zyl took over in December 2000 and acquired a bank loan to inject capital into them, that operations resumed normally. Both of the papers have experienced a very slow growth given that after over ten years since they started, they are still struggling to exist. Although there was some growth in some areas, it has been minimal.

Furthermore, they have experienced a decline in circulation during the past three years. The *Mirror* began with a minimal circulation of 2 000 copies per month, about 500 copies being produced weekly, which grew to 9 000 by 1997 and oscillated between 9 000 and less copies after 1998. On the other hand, circulation growth for the *Zoutpansberger* has been slow but constant. It started with 4 000 copies per month, about 1 000 copies weekly, which grew to 12 000 copies up to 1997, then



declined to 11 000 copies after 1998.

The advertising sectors of the newspapers have experienced some growth over the past ten years. While this is not unusual for a community newspaper, Diedericks & De Beer (1998:98) say that community newspapers derive their revenue from advertising. Even then, advertising income is still inadequate for both of the papers. Thus, there is the need to widen the sources of income for the newspaper. Although Clear & Weideman (1997:64) state that the cost of producing a community newspaper is almost covered by advertising aimed at the local market, the advertisements available are not enough. Most of the stores that serve the community are national clothing, furniture and shoe stores. Their advertisements can only be negotiated for and acquired on a national basis. The competition is stiff at that level. Most of the national stores place their advertisements in national dailies and weeklies.

Other departments like the production and distribution department remain non-existent for the newspapers. They rely on outside organisations to produce and distribute the newspapers. Many small newspapers in the country do not own these departments leading to production and distribution costs being hiked by their absence. Some of the national dailies and weeklies in major cities like Pretoria and Johannesburg have solved the problem by contracting independent printing

companies and independent distributing companies.

The costs of printing are high because the volume of work is not big. Since December 2000, *Mirror* is printed in Pietersburg, about 270 km away from Thohoyandou. Before that, the newspaper was printed in Louis Trichardt, 90 km away. While the distance became greater, the printing costs have been reduced from R17 000 to R7 000 per issue because the previous printing house had old-fashioned machinery that was slow and wasteful. The *Zoutpansberger* is produced and printed in Louis Trichardt. Costs are lower because a smaller number of copies is printed since the *Mirror* is no longer being printed by the same company.

Lack of a distributing department within the newspapers makes distribution complicated given the infrastructure of the target areas, many of which are remote and do not have good roads. It becomes hard to monitor priority areas and whether the newspapers are reaching the target market with independent distributors, who in the case of the *Mirror* are not professional distributors who keep record of areas of distribution. According to Van Zyl, there are no records of where and how the newspapers were distributed before he took over.

The research intends to establish the factors that affect the growth of rural community newspapers, as well as establish guidelines to help them grow inspite of the inhibiting factors.



### **1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study was undertaken to achieve the following: -

- To identify the factors that are affecting the growth/development of the rural community newspapers, the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror*.
- To compare how such factors affect each of the newspapers.
- To establish guidelines which will ensure efficient and effective community newspapers.

### **1.4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following guiding hypotheses were formulated;

- Rural community newspapers struggle for survival and existence.
- Some rural community newspapers have survived closure, but experience a slow growth process, limiting their efficiency in society.
- Geographical, social, economic and political factors have all combined to hinder the growth/development of rural community newspapers.

### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

All communities need access to local and global information that concerns them. This can best be achieved if there is a flow of communication all over the world.



Newspapers perform many functions that are vital to society. Among other things, newspapers contribute to the development of the communities they serve by highlighting the needs and shortcomings of individual communities to relevant bodies like government, non-governmental organisations and the business community.

In the rural areas where illiteracy is abundant with few means of people attaining education, newspapers combine with other media to educate communities, thereby contributing to literacy.

In order to perform its duties efficiently, a newspaper needs to have basic facilities. It is possible for newspapers to grow into profitable businesses and serve their communities more efficiently. In this aspect, rural newspapers have been largely incapacitated because of economic, social and geographical factors among others.

This study will underscore factors limiting rural community newspapers in conducting their duties. Findings of this study will have practical importance to individuals and companies that want to start and operate newspapers in the rural communities. It may also benefit non-governmental organisations and media bodies in South Africa like Print Media South Africa, which have development projects aimed at facilitating the growth of emerging print media, especially in historically disadvantaged communities. In South Africa, the community newspaper is a growing market as

organisations turn to new areas that were originally untapped within the industry. Diedericks & De Beer (1998:98) state that community newspapers are becoming more important in the South African market.

The findings will also be of use to organisations desiring to use community newspapers as vehicles to educate and inform people in rural areas where means of education are limited. The researcher hopes that the study will encourage more research since little information is available on rural community newspapers in South Africa.

#### **1.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research was carried out in the Far North or Soutpansberg Region of the Northern Province. Rural community newspapers were chosen because there is little information available on in-depth operations of rural community newspapers in terms of ownership, structure, and expansion. Literature on the operations of community newspapers was scanty, yet necessary in the review of the subject.

#### **1.7. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

The definitions of several terms, which are used throughout this study, are as follows:



### **1.7.1. Growth/Development**

The terms growth and development are interrelated. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, growth refers to the process of growing or developing. It is also referred to as a degree of increase in size, weight or power. On the other hand, Burkey (1993:33) says there can be no fixed and final definition of development, merely suggestions of what development should imply in particular contexts. Development, he adds, necessarily involves structural transformation. Gregory & Griffin (1995:475) refer to organisational development as the process of planned change and improvement of the organisation.

In this study, growth and development are used interchangeably to refer to positive transformation and improvement in the various departments of the newspaper and areas within those departments.

### **1.7.2. Community Newspaper**

Diedericks & De Beer (1998:97) define community newspapers as weekly tabloids serving particular towns, districts or suburbs covering local affairs and carrying local advertising. According to Clear & Weideman (1997:64), community newspapers serve the communities and available editorial space focuses on local interest stories. They focus on human-interest stories with few hard news.



In this study, community newspapers will refer to those community newspapers operating in the remote rural communities of South Africa. Whereas some of the community newspapers in South Africa serve towns, districts or suburbs, this study focused on those papers operating in the remote rural areas of the country. Hence specific use of the term "rural" community newspapers, to emphasise the rural environment in which the newspaper operates.

### **1.8. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The research subject and its background were described and the purpose of the study and significance of the study underlined. The main concepts of the study were discussed as well as the limitations to the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

To obtain a fuller understanding of newspaper organisations as they exist today in South Africa, it is important to reflect on the past. This will clarify how newspapers started, as well as their growth and expansion to the powerful newspaper industry as it is today.

There is little written about rural community newspapers in South Africa. A number of researchers worldwide and in South Africa however, have conducted in-depth research on newspapers. A review of this literature enabled the researcher to get a wider perspective on how newspapers operate through the concerted effort of the different sections/departments within the newspaper organisations, which make it possible to maintain and sustain their operations.

This chapter will focus briefly on findings by other researchers on the growth/development of newspapers in general and rural community newspapers in South Africa in particular.

## **2.2. HISTORY OF NEWSPAPERS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1800, according to May (1967:108), the first newspaper in South Africa, the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigter* was published. The next newspaper to be published appeared on the streets in 1823, due to policies of the then governor that allowed only government to print newspapers.

The South African press has since grown to include newspapers in a variety of languages, but mostly in Afrikaans and English. As Diedericks & De Beer (1998:92) state, the press in South Africa were influenced by apartheid, which established different categories. The political climate within the country was good breeding ground for a variety of newspapers. Some were used for propaganda; others for criticism of the then government and yet another group of newspapers were used for rallying up people for struggle against the government. Newspapers, say Diedericks & De Beer (1998:92), became categorised as liberal, pro-segregation, conservative, social democrat, alternative, neo-fascist and communist, among other categories.

While the political climate in the country ensured the growth of newspapers in South Africa, chain ownership also developed the industry. Media groups like Nasionale Pers Beperk, now called Naspers; mostly printing Afrikaans language newspapers,



and Times Media Limited, Independent Newspapers, Caxton Printing and Publishing Company, mainly printing English and bilingual papers were started. Competition became intense, leading to fast growth within the industry. According to Hachten (1971:24), the largest and most modern newspapers in the whole of Africa are published in South Africa, a trend that was established before the 1970s.

Corporate ownership which contributed greatly to the growth of the newspaper industry, emerged in response to the challenges of the ever-increasing production costs, and growing competition from other media like magazines and television in particular (Diedericks & De Beer 1998:92). Newspapers had to find means of surviving in a highly competitive media market and yet realise their goal of profit making at the same time.

Even then, the newspaper industry grew so big that the owners had to widen their sources of income to maintain their papers and withstand the competition. This led to the growth of other groups of newspapers in the country apart from daily, weekly, national and provincial newspapers. Specialist publications, religious, professional, community and local newspapers evolved over time. It is important to note that whereas community newspapers were partly a means of widening the income base of big media organisations, they were an answer to providing much needed

information to communities in which they sprung up. As such, there was no specific period in which community newspapers were all started. Some of the earliest community newspapers were started in the 1800s out of the need to serve communities, but the growth of the community newspapers accelerated after 1976 with the introduction of television broadcasting (Diedericks & De Beer 1998:98).

In addition to that, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, according to Diedericks & De Beer (1998:90), there was hardly a town of any size without its own newspaper, the proprietor and editor often being one. As a result, a strong provincial and very independent press developed. The boom in growth of provincial papers resulted from the introduction of printing presses in 1820 by British settlers who settled in the Eastern Cape.

### **2.3. GROWTH OF COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

With the advent of television in 1976, changing consumer patterns and the drop in the economy, major advertisers switched to television advertising and major newspapers had to compensate for the decrease in income with more local advertising (Diedericks & De Beer 1998:98). This led to the establishment of the community newspapers to cater for the local audience. With the corporate environment in the newspaper industry, in which there was a lot of competition



among the big newspaper companies, existence and survival became a battle. Newspapers could no longer solely survive on circulation income. Whetmore (1982:92) confirms this when he says, at one time newspapers used to survive without advertisements and were able to make enough money from subscriptions and sales, but today production costs make it impossible.

At the same time, there were new audiences that were as yet untapped. The local audiences, away from the urban areas, provided an alternative but lucrative advertising market to the newspaper organisations. Local newspapers were launched to supply communities with information and create an advertising medium. Thus in a competitive market, a new group of newspapers developed to play a unique role in serving society. According to Diedericks & De Beer (1998:98), people need to know what is going on in their community and its vicinity, which guarantees a niche for these papers.

While community newspapers cater for the information interests of the community, they above all provide the much-needed advertising income from local and national advertisements, to the owners. Growth of the community newspapers cannot be divorced from advertising income for newspaper owners, mainly generated from advertisements by local merchants in the communities. At the same time, local



merchants get an avenue of advertising their goods to a local market. Rucher and Williams (1975:188) state that local merchants, manufacturers and distributors depend upon the home newspaper for an economical and effective means of reaching the public they serve.

In fact, according to Diedericks & De Beer (1998:98), figures of the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) in early 1997 pointed to an impressive growth in circulation of the community newspapers. One of the big owners of local media, Caxton, showed growth four times that of daily newspapers. ABC figures show that circulation of community newspapers grew from 252,591 in January - June 1999, to 267,993 during the period of January to June 2000 (ABC six monthly figures: 2000).

#### **2.4. RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS**

There are distinct divisions amongst the community newspapers. Some of them serve urban and peri-urban areas while others serve rural communities. Some are weekly, monthly or fortnightly newspapers. However, the difference does not only lie in the location of the community newspapers, although location is significant in that the challenges of a rural community newspaper far outweigh those of an urban one. The rural environment within which the newspaper operates plays a big role in defining how the newspaper operates, the audience it serves and the facilities

available to the newspaper operators in the rural setting, among other factors.

Various factors - mainly social, cultural, geographical, economic and political, influence the development of rural community newspapers. Even then, these factors do not affect rural community newspapers in the same way. This is illustrated by the results of the comparison between the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror* given that the profile of the readership and the historical background of the readership of the two newspapers is very different. Still, the factors that influence the development of both papers are the similar.

#### **2.4.1. Economic Factors facing Rural Community Newspapers**

The economic factor is the biggest influence on rural community newspapers. People in rural areas do not have enough money to buy newspapers, even at low prices. Both the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror* are sold at a very low price of R1,80 once a week. Available statistics from the ABC South Africa (2000) reveal that most community newspapers have a cover price of between 40c to R2.50. Most of them are weekly, with one fortnightly and one monthly.

Although the papers have such low cover prices compared to contemporary national weekly newspapers like *Mail & Guardian* and *Sunday Times* which sell at R6,50 and



R5,60 respectively, the latter boast some of the largest circulations in the country according to ABC figures, yet few people can manage to buy the two rural newspapers.

Most of the people in the rural areas cannot afford to buy newspapers as they have more pressing needs. Hachten (1971:9) emphasises the problem when he says, "Such poverty means that a man if he can read, must go without a meal to buy a newspaper." The cost is unaffordable for most of the people in the rural areas, according to Oosthuizen (1997:17).

Most of the people in the area in which the papers circulate, derive the little income they have from subsistence agriculture. The study area is not endowed with minerals and is not industrialised. A few people are employed by government to provide social services and management of local councils. The poor economic situation means that there is lack of capital to support the newspapers. Due to the rural nature of the area, advertisements are scarce, further limiting the already little available income.

As a result, the cover price is so low that it cannot meet the high costs of production. At the same time, it limits the chances of realising profit for the owners, thus limiting the growth of the newspaper.



The poor economic situation also means there is little capital to invest in the newspapers. According to Oosthuizen (1997:98) strained economic conditions lead to low investments in press enterprises. Advertisements by local people are few. As Oosthuizen (1997:17) states, newspapers are among other things dependent on advertisements for survival.

#### **2.4.2. Geographical Implications**

The geographical location of rural community newspapers renders them vulnerable to problems of distribution. In many rural areas, the infrastructure is not well developed. Most of the roads are gravel and are impassable whenever it rains and thereafter. Hachten (1971:7) confirms there is lack of adequate transport and communications in rural areas leading to difficulties of newspaper distribution.

This means that readers who would have had access to the newspaper are unable to do so because of poor distribution. As a result of this, some of the vendors who take the papers to remote areas hike the cover prices, making the paper even harder for the readers to purchase.

In turn, the circulation of the paper is reduced and the additional income that would

be derived from bigger circulation is minimised, limiting the chances of making the much-needed profit necessary to help the newspaper to grow.

### **2.4.3. Social and Cultural Factors**

#### **2.4.3.1. Literacy**

Literacy is so intertwined with newspapers and other print media that the one cannot exist without the other. Literacy is therefore both an agent and an index of mass media development. Many people in rural areas are illiterate. Oosthuizen (1997:16) stresses the problem when he says in South Africa approximately 50% of the population is illiterate. This is especially so in rural areas.

Hachten (1971:7) states that to produce, and to an extent to consume, the print media requires literacy. Yet, most of the people in the rural areas are not educated, therefore even if the newspaper were accessible to them, it could not be read because it is printed in English, a language which they cannot read or write. In effect, the high levels of illiteracy coupled with poverty greatly restrict the potential readership of rural community newspapers.

#### **2.4.3.2. Language**

Most of the people in the rural communities of South Africa speak their vernacular



languages. A newspaper in English is "unpalatable" to them. As a result, the paper's readership is limited to people who are educated, who can afford to buy the paper and who understand the English language. Hachten (1971:7) notes in the end the educated communicate among themselves and receive the bulk of mass media content in the language of the colonisers.

#### **2.4.4. Lack of skills**

In relation to the low literacy levels and economic hardships, there is a lack of skills to produce newspapers. Oosthuizen (1997:98) notes that strained economic conditions lead to inadequate training facilities for journalists. Most of the journalists are not trained, yet the challenge is even greater if they are to be productive in a rural setting. As May (1967:19) says, in a small newspaper the journalist must always be ready to write about anything, from a court case to a church bazaar, from sports to murder. He must be able and willing to tackle anything that might be in the interest of his paper.

While this is desirable, in many rural areas it is not possible, as most of the people available for work are not trained. Those who are trained move to urban areas to further their careers and to get more exposure in the field. Nevertheless, the need for skilled personnel remains just as high in the country. Nel (1998:22) says the need



for journalism training in South Africa has never been greater, be it for entry into mainstream, local or community media. The lack of untrained personnel limits the productivity of the rural community newspapers and their efficiency.

#### **2.4.5. Political influence**

The politics of the country has had a huge influence on the development of the newspapers. As Oosthuizen (1997:20) says, before 1994 there were laws in existence that limited the operations of the newspapers in South Africa. The *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror* were not immune to these laws of the country. As a result, the way they operated was restricted which slowed down the growth of the papers. There was a right wing newspaper, *Berg*, operating in Louis Trichardt in the early 1990s, so the *Zoutpansberger* had to concentrate on being apolitical in order to survive. The former Venda State did not permit any non-government paper to cover political news until 1990, when *Mirror* was started to cover other local news outside of politics, according to the owner. Most of the people read the Venda government papers that were freely available.

#### **2.5. SUMMARY**

This chapter attempted to highlight issues of relevance to this study from the point of view of different scholars and researchers.

The literature review revealed that:

- Rural community newspapers operate under many hardships.
- Economic, social, cultural, political, illiteracy and geographical challenges among others endanger their existence and survival.
- Community newspapers in South Africa have existed over a long time, but inadequate in-depth research has been done on them.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Chapter Three of this research will give a background of the study areas and will further outline the methods as well as the procedures that the researcher used to collect the data for the study.

### **3.1. GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREAS**

In order to understand the factors that affect the growth and development of the community newspapers, it is necessary to examine the areas in which the newspapers circulate: the related historical, geographical and socio-economic factors pertaining to those areas.

Both of the study areas are situated in the Northern Province. The province is divided into four regions. Bushveld in the west, Capricorn in the South, Valley of Olifants in the east and Soutpansberg in the north of the province. The areas under study both lie in the Soutpansberg region (see map, Appendix B; Map Studio: 1994/1995).



### **3.1.1 Geographical Background**

#### **3.1.1.1. Thohoyandou Study Area**

Thohoyandou town, where the *Mirror* is based, is situated 160 km from Pietersburg, the main city of the Northern Province. The town is located approximately 60 km east of Louis Trichardt - halfway between Louis Trichardt and the Punda Maria gate of the Kruger National Park.

The study area covers an area of approximately 938 sq.km and approximately 90 individual settlements are found in the area. It lies in a valley between hills covered in lush natural vegetation. Thohoyandou means "*head of the elephant*" and was named after the greatest king of the Venda People.

#### **3.1.1.2. Louis Trichardt Study Area**

Louis Trichardt town, where the *Zoutpansberger* is based, is situated in the far north of the Northern Province. The town nestles in the southern foothills of the Soutpansberg mountain range. Louis Trichardt lies 100 km north of Pietersburg and 100 km south of the Beit Bridge border post, which is the entry to Zimbabwe. The N1 road passes through Louis Trichardt and it forms part of the Maputo Sub-Corridor.

### **3.1.2. Historical Background**

#### **3.1.2.1. Historical Background of the Thohoyandou Local Government Area**

Two Vha-Venda chiefs, Tshivase and Mphaphuli, settled in the area which is currently known as Thohoyandou, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The concentration of people and activities that developed here became known as Sibasa, which is actually a misnomer for Tshivase. With the independence of Venda in 1979, it was decided to name the capital Thohoyandou, after the leader who originally brought the Venda people to the area. The name is particularly fitting as the meaning of the word is "head of the elephant," and the elephant represents the national symbol of the Venda nation (Thohoyandou TLC Report: 1997).

After the "independence" of Venda as a state from the former apartheid government in 1979, marked growth took place mainly because of the establishment of a developed civil service and the declaration of Thohoyandou as an Industrial Development Point (IDP) in 1982, which led to relatively extensive industrial development. After the 1994 elections, Venda again became part of the Republic of South Africa. In order to facilitate effective governance at local level, so-called Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) were proclaimed. The Greater Thohoyandou TLC was proclaimed in the Government Gazette during May 1995.



### **3.1.2.2. Historical Background of Louis Trichardt**

The town is named after Voortrekker leader Louis Trichardt whose trek party camped in the Soutpansberg region after 1836, and provided the first steps towards European settlement in the far north, according to Louis Trichardt Town Council.

After a long trip of 12 months to Delagoa Bay, present day Maputo, Trichardt and his wife died of malaria and a memorial was erected where the present day town stands. The memorial however became neglected as the region was taken over by black tribes in the area who were trading in ivory, hides and other commodities. In 1898, the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek gained control of the area and the present day Louis Trichardt came into being.

## **3.2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREAS**

### **3.2.1. Population**

#### **3.2.1.1. Thohoyandou Town and Surrounding Areas**

Thohoyandou town is one of the largest towns in the Northern Province and it is estimated that over 402 900 people live in the Greater Thohoyandou TLC area. This constitutes approximately 7,7% of the total population in the Northern Province. Approximately 57 131 people live in the proclaimed townships of Thohoyandou whilst approximately 345 761 people live in the surrounding villages, that is the peri-urban



areas.

The ten largest settlements/villages that account for the population size are:

Greater Thohoyandou, Tshisaulu, Tshikororo, Makonde, Mukula, Vondwe, Matatshe, Khubvi, Matangari and Tshitopeni

A number of settlements in the TLC area have over time proven themselves as points of natural growth. They are points/nodes that have larger populations with somewhat better developed infrastructure and services. In order to establish which of the nodes can be classified as "points of growth," the TLC was consulted and the following settlements were cited:

Thohoyandou, Shayandima and Sibasa, Tshisaulu, Makonde, Matatshe, Vhufuli, Dumasi and Phiphidi.

Thohoyandou town is important because of numerous factors.

- Offers job opportunities;
- Provides social services and amenities to the residents of the surrounding areas, for example hospital services and clinics among others;
- Is the main trading centre in the area that constituted the former Republic of Venda;
- Boasts important institutions such as the University of Venda, the Teachers'

Training College, and Nurses' Training College as well as other tertiary educational institutions.

Thohoyandou services the sub-region and creates a market for entrepreneurs to exploit. In the local context, the town of Thohoyandou plays a major role. It is however restricted to its resource base, namely agriculture and to a limited extent to the provision of community and social services as well as commercial and light industrial development.

### **3.2.1.2. Louis Trichardt and its Surrounding Areas**

Louis Trichardt town and its surrounding settlements has a population of about 100 000 people within a 50 km radius. Greater Louis Trichardt has an estimated population of about 8 072 people according to a study by Urban-Econ, a company contracted by the Thohoyandou TLC to carry out a study on the town.

Surrounding peri-urban areas all have growing populations. Vleyfontein has a population of about 9 550, Eltivillas 1 200 and Tshikota 3 950. However, it is the villages/settlements that account for the biggest population of over 80 000 people. The most prominent of these villages/settlements are Bulfontein, Gogabole, Ravele, Kutama, Sinthumule, Ha-Tshikota and Senthumule. Most of the population in the settlements depends on Louis Trichardt for social services, employment and other

facilities that the town provides.

Louis Trichardt has some of the best schools in the region and the Province. In addition, some of the banks that serve the whole of Soutpansberg Region are based in Louis Trichardt. It also has the only computerised Post Office in the region.

### **3.2.2. Population Growth and Distribution**

#### **3.2.2.1. Thohoyandou Area**

The population of the Greater Thohoyandou TLC area is spread throughout the area and reside in approximately 90 different villages. However looking at the areas individually and at certain groups of settlements, it is obvious that a certain degree of concentration has occurred over time.

The total population of the study area in 1997 amounted to 402 892 persons, of which 57 131 persons or 14,2% resided in Thohoyandou and 345 761 persons or 85,8% resided in areas surrounding the town. It can however safely be assumed that the town of Thohoyandou has grown rapidly in comparison with the villages/rural area surrounding the town predominantly due to large scale in-migration from rural areas. When the average population growth rate of the Northern Province is applied to the study area, it comes to light that the *de facto* population of the area will



increase to approximately 500 000 persons in the year 2005, a growth rate of 3,2% per annum.

In conclusion, it could thus be stated that there is a spontaneous urbanisation process under way in the study area. Migration towards Thohoyandou from the peri-urban areas is taking place, whilst migration on a smaller scale takes place between settlements surrounding Thohoyandou.

### **3.2.2.2. Louis Trichardt and its vicinity**

The population of Louis Trichardt is mainly resident in the rural villages surrounding the town but which are part of its neighbourhood. Concentration has occurred over time with new suburbs developing around the town in the past five years.

Population of the area stood at 94 266 in 1998 of whom 7 668 resided in Louis Trichardt town and the other 86 598 people staying in areas surrounding the town, according to a study by Urban-Econ.

Growth of Louis Trichardt town has been fast because of investments taking place in the trade and finance sectors in the CBD of the town. Most notable of these are buildings for trade being constructed by the Solly Noor Group. In addition to that the

Department of Correctional Services constructed a maximum-security jail for 3 000 inmates, providing 600 permanent employment opportunities and giving the local population room for provision of services and goods. A privately owned jail is to be opened in the area in 2003. It is estimated that the growth of the town will rise to a population of about 112 884 by the year 2005 at a growth rate of 2.2% per year.

### **3.2.3. Population Composition according to Age and Gender**

#### **3.2.3.1. Thohoyandou**

In the study area, some 45,9% of the population is 19 years and younger. The gender distribution in this age group is fairly equal, although 23,4% are males and 22,5% females. Of the total number of people residing in the study area, 49,5% are in the age group of 20 to 65. In this age group females dominate, constituting 25,1% of the total population of the study area in comparison with males only constituting 24,4%. The age group of over 65 accounts for the remaining 4.6% of the population.

This percentage suggests that a certain portion of the population forms part of the male "migratory labour force." In many families, the father is absent for long periods and the discipline of and caring for the children are the sole responsibilities of the mother. This in itself limits the mother's time for economic activities. This supports a



high natural population growth rate. Simultaneously, it also gives rise to a high birth rate and with the system of good medical services resulting in low mortality rates, a high percentage of the population is younger than 19 years. It is noteworthy that the population in the age group 0 to 14 years is declining - this bodes well for a lower population growth rate.

### **3.2.3.2. Louis Trichardt**

There are significant differences in the age and gender structure of the various communities in Louis Trichardt and its surrounding villages. The rural areas have a very youthful age structure with nearly 50% of the *de facto* population being younger than 15 years. In the case of the white population that makes up the largest number of people resident in the Greater Louis Trichardt area, the age profile is much older with only 26% of the population being younger than 15 years.

The significance of this young age structure is twofold, namely a high natural momentum in the population growth as by far the majority of the women are within their child bearing years. Secondly, such a young age structure also implies high dependency rates as those younger than 15 years are not considered part of the local labour force. The largest percentage of the rural black population between the ages of 15-65 years comprises of women. This can be attributed to the men being



involved in migrant labour. The significance of this is that the day-to-day household decisions are predominantly made by the women.

### **3.2.4. Education level of households**

#### **3.2.4.1. Thohoyandou Area**

In the study area, approximately 19% of the population has no education at all and a further 58,1% has only a limited education of less than Grade 12 (see table on next page). This coincides with the high percentage labourers in this area. The advantage for labourers, however, is that they can work in any sector. The disadvantage is that they are restricted to certain low levels of income. Upward mobility in terms of their employment situation does not exist. Subsequently, the low levels of education underwrite the low levels of income and support the subsequent low affordability levels.

Only a small percentage (8,4%) of the population have tertiary qualifications. Those who do not have employment are forced to find employment elsewhere and will eventually emigrate from the area. This will specifically apply to the group of people who have passed Grade 12 and expect to get "white collar" jobs. This will bring about a "brain drain," which is not helpful in cultivating a more capable community rendering advanced services to the economy of the study area. In addition 19.2% of

the population in the rural areas surrounding Thohoyandou cannot read or write, while 16.4% of the people in Thohoyandou cannot read or write, showing a considerable level of illiteracy in the area (see table on next page).

**TABLE 3.1: THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND THE LITERACY OF THE STUDY AREA; 1997**

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	RURAL AREAS		THOHOYANDOU		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
None	66 040	19.1	8 427	15.2	74 467	18.6
Grd.1-Grd.4	50 827	14.7	7 541	13.6	58 368	14.5
Grd.5-Grd.7	57 396	16.6	7 929	14.3	65 325	16.3
Grd.8-Grd.11	95 085	27.5	14 582	26.3	109 667	27.3
Grade 12	50 827	14.7	8 816	15.9	59 643	14.9
Diploma	14 868	4.3	4 491	8.1	19 359	4.8
Degree	10 718	3.1	3 659	6.6	14 377	3.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>345 761</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55 445</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>401 206</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>READ &amp; WRITE</b>						
YES	279 375	80.8	46 352	83.6	325 727	81.2
NO	66 386	19.2	9 093	16.4	75 479	18.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>345 761</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55 445</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>401 206</b>	<b>100</b>

SOURCE: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND LAND USE SURVEY; DEVELOPLAN, 1997

### 3.2.4.2. Louis Trichardt

According to the Louis Trichardt town council, there are no available statistics on the education levels in the area. However, according to the council there are significant differences in the education levels of the different communities in the area. For the



black population, mainly based in the rural villages near the town, the biggest percentage has no or low education. On the other hand, the white and Asian population resident in the town and suburban areas have a higher level of literacy.

### **3.3. SURVEY POPULATION**

The survey population refers to all the objects, subjects, events, phenomena, activities or cases which the researcher wishes to research in order to establish new knowledge (Brynard et al 1997:43).

The survey population for this research included all current employees and the owner/manager of the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror* newspapers who have worked with the papers since 1985 and 1990 respectively. This group was selected because they know best how the newspapers started, how they have grown and developed to the level at which they are presently. Every member of the population selected was included in the research; hence, the population and the sample are identical. This was necessary because the population was not very big. It was narrowed down to specifically include the owner/manager of the newspapers and employees who have for a long time worked with the papers. The entire population of all past and present employees of the newspapers, who could be located, was 21 people, out of which the six respondents were selected. Fifteen of the employees work for the *Mirror*,



while the *Zoutpansberger* currently employs six people. Out of these, four respondents were selected from the *Mirror* and two people from the *Zoutpansberger*.

### **3.3.1. Survey Areas**

The survey areas, Thohoyandou and Louis Trichardt, where the papers are operating, are important elements in the study due to their rural location. The two areas were selected because they are remote rural areas in the Far North Region of the Northern Province, near the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe. In addition to that, they are in close proximity to the researcher, hence less time was used to travel to get to the respondents. Accessibility to the respondents was another factor that led to the choice of the study areas.

### **3.4. SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

Sampling refers to following rigorous procedures when selecting individual units from a larger population (du Plooy 1996:49). In this study, the researcher used sampling in order to draw conclusions concerning the population as a whole within a shorter time and at a lower cost. Furthermore, it was used to select a sample most relevant to the study.

This is because the *Zoutpansberger* has been through a restructuring process in the

past four years, during which some of the employees were laid off, while some of the reporters changed to a freelance status. This means that some of the people who worked with the paper at its beginning are no longer employees and were unavailable. There was therefore the need to select people who were available, have worked with the paper since its start and hence have good knowledge of how the paper works.

On the other hand, the *Mirror* newspaper has a number of new employees who have worked with the paper for a short period ranging from one month to one and a half months. This short period of work with the newspaper would thus render their information inadequate and restricted. These new employees are correspondents and are not full-time members of staff, therefore they are not conversant with the full operations of the paper.

The above reasons dictated a need to select a group of people, a subset of the population with a deeper understanding of the topic of the study for both of the papers. The sampling procedure used to select the respondents was therefore purposive sampling.

### **3.4.1. Purposive Sampling**

Purposive or known group sampling includes subjects selected on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities, based on previous knowledge of the population and, or the aim of the study, and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria, according to Wimmer and Dominick (1997:64).

The researcher used purposive sampling to come up with a group of respondents who were specifically suitable to provide information that was relevant to the study. This means that the researcher knowingly selected the respondents who had complete knowledge of the newspaper after having worked with it over a period of ten years.

#### **3.4.1.1. Zoutpansberger**

All the respondents working with the newspaper have specialised training in their fields. However, it is necessary to note that the owner/manager also works as editor and head of the advertising department. Most of the jobs in the various departments of the newspaper are shared between a small group of people (see table 3.2. below).



**TABLE 3.2: THE STATUS OF EMPLOYEES OF THE *ZOUTPANSBERGER* NEWSPAPER, PERIOD EMPLOYED AND TRAINING**

<b>STATUS</b>	<b>PERIOD EMPLOYED</b>	<b>TRAINING</b>
Owner/manager Editor/Advertising Manager	1985 - date	Degree (Journalism)
Reporter/ Deputy News Editor	1985 - date	Degree (Journalism)
Advertising Assistant	1985 - date	Advertising & salesmanship (Diploma)
Advertising Assistant	1985 - date	Advertising & salesmanship (Diploma)
Advertising Assistant	1990 - date	Advertising & salesmanship (Diploma)
Administrator	1985 - date	Management (Diploma)

**3.4.1.2. *Mirror***

In the case of the *Mirror*, all the people selected apart from one, are trained journalists and therefore have good knowledge of the field of journalism in which they are working (see table 3.3. on the next page). In fact, this group of people is responsible for the growth or lack of growth of the various departments and areas in the newspaper.

**TABLE 3.3: THE STATUS OF EMPLOYEES OF THE *MIRROR* NEWSPAPER, PERIOD WORKED AND TRAINING**

<b>STATUS</b>	<b>PERIOD EMPLOYED</b>	<b>TRAINING</b>
Owner/Manager	1990 to date	Degree (Journalism)
Editor	1990 to date	Degree (Journalism)
Deputy Editor/Sports Editor/correspondent	1990 to date	Inspector of Works (Diploma)
Correspondent	1990 to date	Diploma (Journalism)
Secretary/receptionist /sales clerk	1993	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job
Correspondent	December 2000	On-job

### **3.4.2. The Sample Size**

#### **3.4.2.1. *Zoutpansberger***

Two respondents were selected from the newspaper. As shown by table 3.2., the newspaper has only employed six people since the paper started in 1985. The two respondents selected were the owner/manager who also works as editor and advertising manager. Whereas Anton van Zyl took over ownership and management

of the newspaper in December 2000, he was news editor of the paper since 1985. Therefore he has knowledge of most of the departments of the paper, a factor emphasised by the many positions he holds.

The reporter who also works as deputy news editor has worked with the paper since it started. The three advertising and sales assistants were not selected for the study. Their department is headed by Van Zyl who has more knowledge about its operation and could provide the necessary information. Selecting Van Zyl therefore also eliminated the possibility of repetition of information. Furthermore, the owner/manager is also in charge of administration.

#### **3.4.2.2. *Mirror***

Four respondents were selected from the employees of the organisation. As shown by table 3.3, those employees have some training. Three of the respondents have some training in journalism, while one of them has training as an Inspector in the Department of Works, but has had ten years of experience working with the newspaper as Deputy Editor, Sports Editor and correspondent.

The owner/manager and the editor are both permanent employees, as well as two regular correspondents. The secretary/receptionist who is also permanently



employed acts as a sales clerk who sells papers to organisations within Thohoyandou and the newspaper vendors. Of the two regular correspondents, one acts as sports editor and deputy editor.

The eight new correspondents have worked with the paper for a short period and the secretary/receptionist has also worked with the paper for less than ten years, therefore did not qualify for selection. The eight new correspondents are stationed in some of the settlements surrounding Thohoyandou, namely Sinthumule, Nzhelele, Vuwani, Giyani, Malamulele, and others within Thohoyandou (see table 3.3.).

### **3.5. DATA COLLECTION**

Personal interviews were conducted with the respondents, during which data was collected for this research. A pilot study was done to streamline the process of data collection.

#### **3.5.1. Pilot Study**

The interview schedule was piloted on the correspondents who are working with the *Mirror* paper, but who were not involved in the research because they have recently joined it. This helped to streamline the interview schedule, identifying questions that were unclear and ambiguous, and removing others that were irrelevant or would

cause repetition. This resulted into a need to design different interview schedules for the employer/owner, the editor who is also a permanent employee and the freelance journalists who are long-time correspondents of the paper. The same interview schedule was used for interviewing respondents working with the *Zoutpansberger* since the matters under study were more or less similar to the two newspapers.

### **3.5.2. Data Collection Method**

#### **Personal Interview**

Personal interviews were used during data collection.

Personal interviews involve one-on-one interview between the interviewee and the interviewer to obtain information on the research topic (Wimmer and Dominick 1997:156).

Interviewing using unstructured interviews was relevant to this research in that it allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the people being interviewed, thus gaining access to a wealth of information from them (see questionnaire, Appendix A). The researcher was able to probe particular responses and follow up ideas that were put forward by the respondents.

The interviews schedule also allowed informal observation to be made of non-verbal



reactions and gave the respondents room to reply in their own words. The researcher was able to clarify questions and immediately follow up respondents on answers that were unclear or incomplete.

The researcher personally conducted the interviews because use of other interviewers could have led to misinterpretation of the questions. In addition to that, given that some of the respondents are correspondents, the researcher had to search for them at alternative places of work, which could not be delegated easily to other people. Furthermore, the sample size of six people was manageable for interview by this researcher.

### **3.5.3. The Interview Process**

The researcher made appointments with all the six respondents. In the case of the owner and editor, this was necessary as they had many meetings to attend, given that the management of the newspaper had changed. One of the two correspondents was found at his usual place of work while the other one had gone to work on a story outside the office, hence an appointment had to be made to see him. Short interviews were carried out since all the respondents were busy and an appointed time and place were agreed upon. At the scheduled time and place, the researcher went to interview the respondents. After the purpose of the interview was



established to be educational, rapport was easily made with the respondents.

All respondents were interviewed in English and since the questions were unstructured (see questionnaire, Appendix A), the respondents were able to express themselves. This limited the use of interpreters. Each interview took between 20-30 minutes. All the interviews took place in the offices of the respondents. All interviews were carried out in the morning hours and during the first two days of the week because the *Mirror* is published on Fridays and the *Zoutpansberger* on Thursdays, therefore between Wednesday and Friday all respondents run a tight schedule as they gather, put together and publish the newspaper.

#### **3.5.4. Problems encountered during the Data Collection Process and how they were overcome**

##### **3.5.4.1. Communication**

Among the respondents, some of the people could communicate in English, however, others speak English as a second language. The latter had difficulty in communicating their views in English. This was a setback given that every answer was very important to the research. The researcher therefore had to re-phrase some questions several times in basic English in order for them to understand the question.

#### **3.5.4.2. Suspicion about the research**

The field of journalism solely deals with communication. While it is good for some, to others it creates unwanted exposure. Some of the respondents felt as if they were "baring all" that concerns the paper to a non-employee. They were apprehensive about giving such detailed information to a person who was not working with them.

#### **3.5.4.3. Irrelevant answers**

Some of the respondents tended to wander off while answering questions put to them. The unstructured interview gave them room to express themselves in detail but in the course of answering the questions, they gave answers that were irrelevant. These were time consuming. The researcher sometimes had to intervene by politely requesting the respondents to move to the next question.

#### **3.5.4.4. Few available statistics**

While some of the information had to be cross-checked with statistics from professional media bodies, it was not available. Some of the organisations contacted, like ABC South Africa, said they could not ascertain the circulation figures given by the newspaper employees, because the newspaper is not registered with them. The researcher therefore had to make the best use of the available information.

### **3.6. DATA ANALYSIS**

Analysis of data was done in order to define the responses. With the unstructured interview, there were tendencies of respondents giving broad and sometimes "off-topic" answers during the interview. Analysis hence became necessary to clarify the data. Analysis of the data involved establishing what the respondents had to say, by summarising their points, interpreting and presenting it in tables and figures.

#### **3.6.1. Editing**

Editing had to be done before the data could be regarded as ready for coding, tabulation and analysis. It was also done to ensure accuracy, completeness, consistency and uniformity.

#### **3.6.2. Coding**

Coding was undertaken after editing and was intended to classify the answers to a question into meaningful categories. In this exercise, the researcher attempted to reduce the data from detailed to summarised and understandable data. This applied both to the open-ended questions and statistical information from media bodies.

#### **3.6.3. Tabulation**

After editing and coding, the researcher put the responses into tables and figures.



Tables, charts and graphs assist in making the analysis and interpretation of data easier. Specific percentages and response frequencies were calculated, tabulated and cross-tabulated to enable the researcher to come up with specific conclusions. This helped to make the analysis and interpretation of the data cheaper and easier.

### **3.7. CONCLUSION**

Although the researcher experienced problems in the process of data collection, she tried as much as possible to overcome them.

# CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

A total of six respondents were used in the study. They were the owner/manager of the two newspapers, the editor and two correspondents of the *Mirror* as well as a reporter working with the *Zoutpansberger*. Data collected from the interviews was analysed and interpretation of the data was done with close reference to the hypotheses, which guided the entire research process.

The hypotheses were as follows:

- Rural community newspapers struggle for survival and existence.
- Some rural community newspapers have survived closure but experience a slow growth process, limiting their efficiency in society.
- Geographical, social, economic and political factors have all combined to hinder the growth/development of rural community newspapers.

This chapter shall examine the data from the respondents who were interviewed.

Furthermore, a comparison will be made of the factors affecting the growth of the two newspapers using the available data.

#### **4.2. GROWTH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENTS OF THE NEWSPAPERS**

Newspaper organisations are usually divided into different departments for purposes of efficiency and effectiveness in operation. The different departments combine input to contribute to the growth and success of any newspaper. While big newspaper organisations can afford to have all departments operational and maintain them, most of the smaller newspapers operate with few departments and contract outside organisations to carry out the functions of the missing departments. The departments of a newspaper organisation include editorial, management/administration, advertising, circulation and production. Small newspapers usually operate with the basic, maintainable and most necessary departments namely editorial, advertising and circulation/distribution.

Growth of the two newspapers and factors affecting growth/development will be compared and analysed according to the departments of the newspaper which are available as well as those which are non-existent.



#### **4.2.1. Growth within the Editorial Department**

Respondents from the *Zoutpansberger* agreed that the paper had not experienced any growth since it was started in 1985. Structurally the editorial department has experienced negative growth and the number of pages of the newspaper remains the same (see figures 4.1 and 4.3).

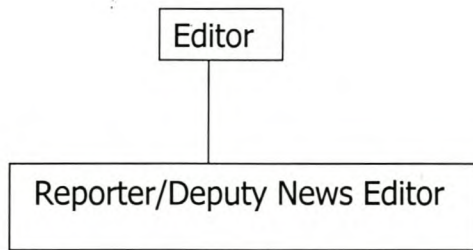
Four respondents were asked whether the *Mirror* has experienced any growth in the editorial department. The owner/manager explained that it had grown relatively, meaning that growth was not very fast. The editor said the paper had definitely grown since he started working with the *Mirror* in 1990. The two correspondents both said there was growth in the paper with an increase in the number of staff members as well as an increase in the number of pages (see figures 4.2 and 4.3).

All respondents explained that there was a noticeable but gradual growth in the editorial department. This growth was specifically noted in terms of growth in the number of pages.

##### **4.2.1.1. Editorial Structure and factors affecting growth**

Structural growth of the *Zoutpansberger* has been negative, as the number of

members of staff has declined. The two respondents noted that the editorial department had three reporters in 1985 of whom two were laid off in 1997. Currently the department utilises the services of a part time secretary. Reporters who are not affiliated to the newspaper account for most of the news that the paper utilises.

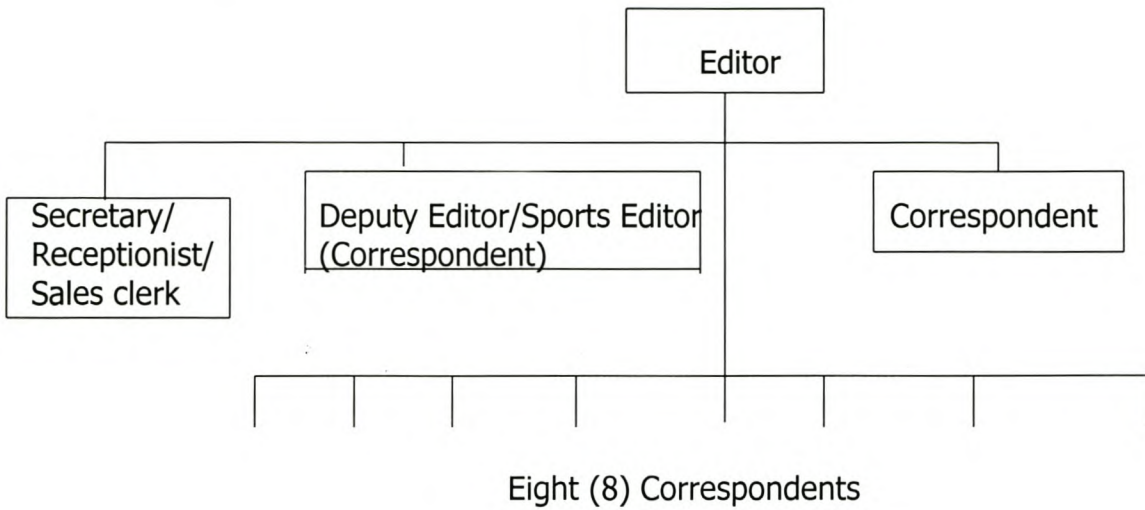


#### **4.1. Block diagram: The current structure of the editorial department of the *Zoutpansberger***

As shown by the diagram above, the department now has two people; the owner also acts as the editor of the paper while the reporter doubles as deputy news editor.

In comparison, all four respondents agreed that the *Mirror* had grown in terms of the editorial structure from three people in the editorial department in 1990 to thirteen people in 2001. In 1990 when the paper started, it only had the editor and two part-time correspondents. Three years later, the secretary to the editor, who also doubles as the receptionist, was employed. In December 2000, eight new correspondents

were appointed to report for the paper.



#### 4.2. Block diagram: The structure of the editorial department of *The Mirror*

Figure 4.2. shows that within the editorial department two of the employees take up more than two positions. One employee works as secretary to the editor, receptionist and sales clerk. One of the correspondents works as the deputy editor and sports editor. This reveals that the editorial department has not grown in terms of independent desks and employees. The few employees available have been utilised to fulfil the other functions as and when they are required.

It was explained that this lack of growth was due to lack of skilled journalists and the fact there is no institution teaching journalism courses within the area. The editor of



the *Mirror* together with his deputy editor both mentioned that they have problems identifying journalists who have training to employ at the newspaper. They both mentioned that an effort to train journalists for the newspaper at the Vaal Technikon in the early 1990s became fruitless when those who were sponsored for training went to work for national papers after training. The editor also mentioned that the paper employed two full time reporters between 1993-1998, but they left for "greener pastures." The editor of the *Zoutpansberger* also cited the same problem. Thus, the problem of lack of skilled journalists affects the growth of both newspapers. However, the editor of the *Zoutpansberger* also noted that some of the few available reporters near Louis Trichardt prefer to contribute stories to all the newspapers covering the area rather than becoming full time employees of one newspaper. Therefore competition with other papers covering the area, translates into a lack of structural growth in the editorial department of the *Zoutpansberger* in that reporters prefer and find it more profitable to contribute to many papers rather than be committed to one as full time reporters and employees.

In addition, lack of adequate finances by the newspapers' owner translates into failure to employ more people on a permanent basis. The *Mirror* correspondents and *Zoutpansberger* contributors are paid for the articles that the newspaper publishes. Therefore, according to all the respondents, the editorial structure has not grown as

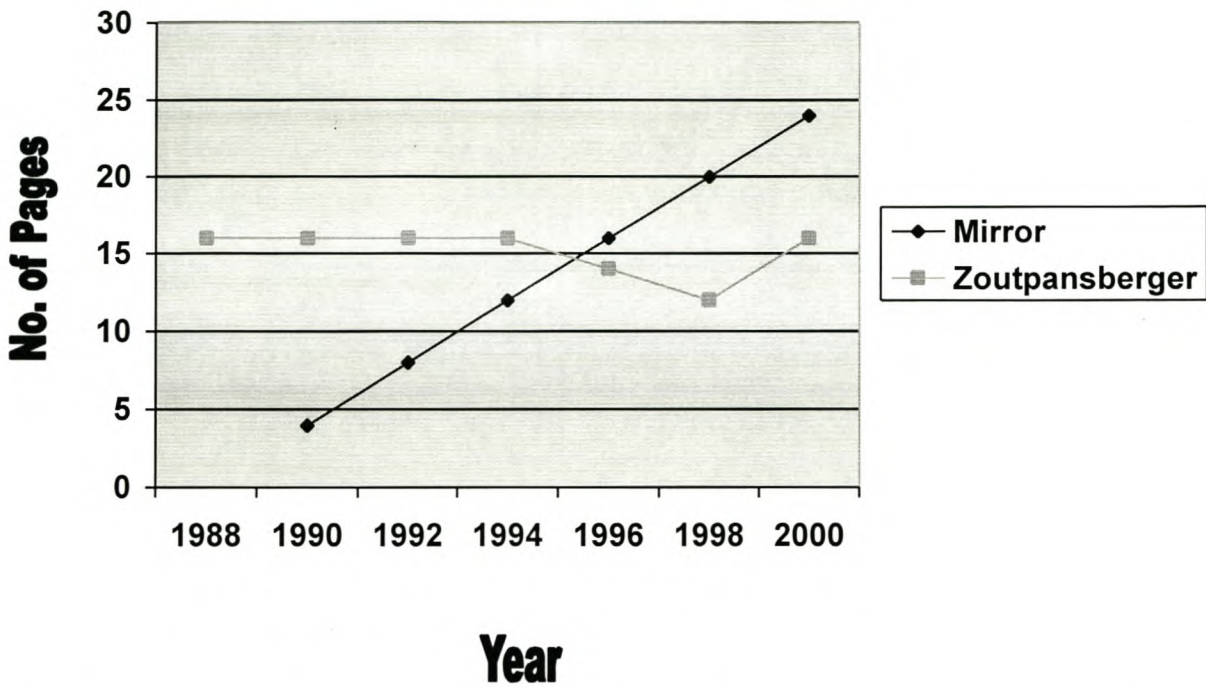
fast as it should for both of the newspapers because of lack of adequate finances to attract reporters on a permanent basis. The newspapers have limited funds, which consequently limits the number of employees to be remunerated competitively.

#### **4.2.1.2. Number of Pages**

The biggest factor affecting lack of growth in the number of pages of the *Zoutpansberger* according to the respondents is competition with the other newspapers covering the area. The newspaper is bilingual with about 30% in English and about 70% in Afrikaans. There is another paper in Louis Trichardt, the *Noordelike*, published in Afrikaans. About three more newspapers in Afrikaans and English are based in Pietersburg. They offer coverage and circulate in Louis Trichardt. Competition has not been favourable to the newspaper. There are many newspapers available in the area hence the need to minimise costs in order to survive. More costs would be incurred if the number of pages were increased.

All the respondents agreed that the number of pages of the *Mirror* has grown remarkably. This could be illustrated in a diagram as follows: -





**Figure 4.3. Line graph: A comparison between growth in the number of pages of the *Mirror* and *Zoutpansberger* from 1988 to 2000**

Figure 4.3 above shows that there has been a rapid and constant growth in the number of pages of the *Mirror* since it started. The paper started with four pages in 1990, every two years, four news pages were added to make 20-24 pages that the paper is made up of today. However, the same figure shows how the number of pages of the *Zoutpansberger* has been constant at 16 pages since it started in 1985. After 1995, the number of pages began to decline and oscillate between 16 and 12 until the year 2000 when it went back to mostly 16 pages.



This growth in the number of pages of the *Mirror* was explained to be due to the availability of a local market interested in reading the news about their area and lack of competition by other local papers. All the respondents said that the other newspapers that reached the Thohoyandou area were national newspapers with national news and little about the local area. Hence, the content of the paper and lack of local competition have positively contributed to the growth in the number of pages of the newspaper.

In conclusion, the competition by other newspapers is affecting the *Zoutpansberger* negatively in that it has constant or no growth in order to minimise costs and ensure survival. It is affecting *Mirror* positively in that the paper is growing because there is lack of competition by other local newspapers therefore a bigger demand for increase of coverage of local news, hence increase in the number of pages.

#### **4.2.1.3. Frequency of Publication**

The respondents mentioned that the newspapers have been weeklies since they started, thus have not grown in terms of frequency. They all agreed that it is not viable to publish the paper more than once a week. In addition to that, the people in the area in which the papers are operating, cannot afford to buy the paper twice a week as they are already struggling to buy the weekly paper.

#### **4.2.2. Growth within the Management/ Administration Department of the Newspapers**

The *Zoutpansberger* has not experienced any growth in this department. Johan du Plessis was the former owner in 1985 and handed over to Anton van Zyl in 2000. There were two other people working in the administration department before 2000, including a receptionist who has since been laid off. A part-time secretary assists with secretarial work.

Growth within the administration department of the *Mirror* was also a point of focus in the study. The respondents were asked whether there was any growth in the department from 1990 to date. They all agreed that the department had not experienced any growth.

It was explained that the newspaper started with the owner/manager, Du Plessis, managing the newspaper in 1990. He was not a qualified manager or journalist. He started the newspaper after working with an organisation that printed newspapers, therefore his area of knowledge was printing. However, in December 2000, Van Zyl, who had been working with the sister newspaper, *Zoutpansberger*, as the news editor, took over management of the newspaper. A secretary who doubles as the telephone operator/receptionist assists the manager. Hence, in effect, the



management/administration of the *Mirror* is made up of one person - the owner and manager.

Asked about the factors that are affecting the growth of the management department, some of the respondents including the editor and two correspondents of the *Mirror* said they do not have a say in management of the newspaper, hence did not identify anything. The owner said that for both newspapers, the main factor affecting lack of growth in the management department is finance. There is lack of funds to employ more personnel, because that would mean spending more money on paying salaries and maintaining staff.

#### **4.2.3. Growth in the Advertising Department**

##### **4.2.3.1. Advertising Departmental Structure**

The advertising department is one of the most important departments of the newspaper. This is because advertising is responsible for the maintenance of community newspapers as it is the main source of revenue. Thus, it was of vital importance to find out the extent to which this department had grown in both the newspapers.

The advertising departmental structure of the *Zoutpansberger* is the most staffed



department of the paper. The department has three advertising and sales representatives (see table 3.2) and is headed by the owner/manager. One of the representatives also serves the *Mirror*. The reporter said he had no knowledge of this department. The owner/manager said the department has been given a lot of attention because the number of advertisements directly affects the paper. He said this is further reflected by the variation of the number of pages (see figure 4.3). The more advertisements available, the more the number of pages.

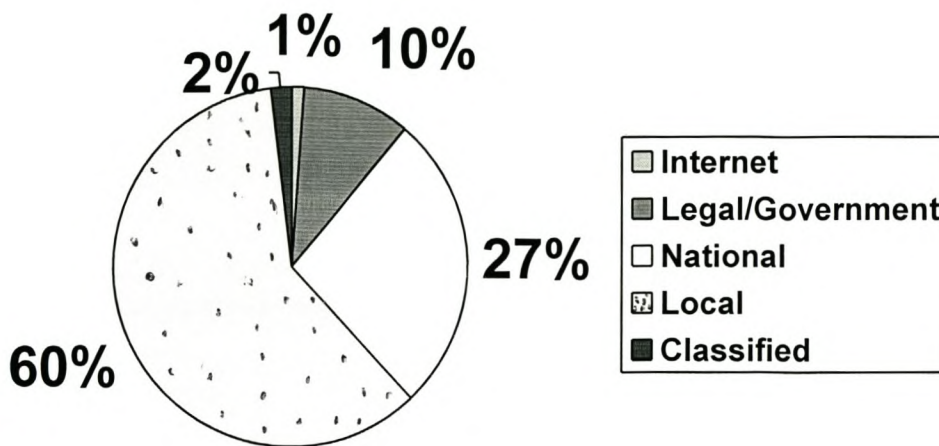
On the other hand, for the *Mirror*, it was found that the department only has the owner/manager doubling as the advertising manager and an advertising and sales representative who moves around the area for advertisements. Even then, the sales representative works for the two sister papers, is not solely employed under the *Mirror* and cannot be considered to be an employee of the newspaper.

The main factor limiting the structural growth of the advertising departments of both of the newspapers is the decrease in advertisements, according to the owner/manager and advertising manager. Most of the national advertisements, he said, are not as forthcoming as they used to be in the past, yet most of the stores in both study areas to which people go, are national chain stores.

#### 4.2.3.2. Growth of Advertising Revenue

Advertising revenue is the backbone of any community newspaper. The researcher therefore wanted to establish how this is handled in the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror*.

The *Zoutpansberger* has experienced remarkable growth in advertising since 1985, the owner/manager said. He noted that the growth trend in advertising is very similar between the two papers.



**Figure 4.4. Pie chart: The percentage of advertising in the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror*.**

As shown by the pie chart above, local advertisements by local traders including hardware shops, local car garages and shops are responsible for the most profitable

type of advertising and account for 60%. National advertising secured through Capro, a national advertising agent and Caxton, combine to form 27% of the advertising. National stores like Shoprite, furniture stores, shoe and clothing stores, which are national, make up the national advertising.

In addition to that are legal notices and local government tenders, which constitutes about 10% of the advertising in the newspaper. These include advertisements by estate agents, auctioneers and government departments. Classified advertising is very low, as shown by the pie chart and accounts for 2%, with newly introduced Internet advertising covering a mere 1%. The owner said that advertising alone accounts for over 60% of the total income of the papers with the other 40% being made up of sales.

Respondents from the *Mirror* were asked about growth in all aspects of advertising. The editor and the two correspondents said they did not know anything about the advertising department. The owner/manager who deals with this department said the advertising revenue had grown from nothing to where it is now since the paper started in 1990.

When asked what factors affect the growth of advertising, the owner/manager said



the presence of local traders who can best reach their local market using the local newspaper is the biggest factor boosting advertising for both of the newspapers. He however said that unlike the *Zoutpansberger*, the lack of competition from other newspapers allows the *Mirror* to "enjoy the advertising cake" on its own.

Therefore, the presence of local traders and the absence of other local newspapers in the area were named by the respondents as the factors boosting the growth of advertising for the *Mirror*. Whereas the *Zoutpansberger* does not enjoy autonomy like its sister paper, a rigorous advertising campaign according to the owner/manager is responsible for the growth in advertising for the paper, which explains why it has a bigger advertising department than the other.

#### **4.2.4. Circulation growth of the *Zoutpansberger* and *Mirror***

##### **4.2.4.1. Circulation**

It was important to find out how circulation had grown. Respondents said the *Zoutpansberger* grew from about 4 000 copies a month, about 1 000 copies per week in 1985 to about 12 000 copies a month, almost 3 000 copies per week in 1996. The number declined to about 11 000 copies a month between 1999 and 2000.

The respondents were asked whether circulation of the *Mirror* had grown since it started in 1990. They mentioned that between 1990 and 1996 circulation of the paper grew from 2000 copies, about 500 copies per week to almost 9 000 copies per month, about 2 500 copies per week. Nevertheless, since then, the circulation oscillated between being constant at 9 000 and being less than 9 000. The newspaper is not registered with ABC South Africa; hence, audited figures of circulation were not available for crosschecking. The owner said that 9 500 copies are printed every month.

All the respondents said the main factor limiting the growth of circulation for the *Mirror* is poor distribution of the newspaper. The study area is situated in a rural remote area, where some of the places cannot be reached by car, hence making distribution of the paper difficult. This factor does not affect the *Zoutpansberger* because of its mostly urban setting with a better infrastructure than the circulation area of the former.

The respondents also noted that most of the people who live in the area in which the *Mirror* circulates are illiterate (see table 3.1), therefore cannot buy the paper because they cannot read. The paper is also in English which approximately 40% of the population cannot understand. They said most of the readers are the people working



in government departments and service departments. It was further mentioned that poverty is another limiting factor to circulation. Most of the people are too poor to afford to buy a newspaper. They said even if the cover price had been set to as low as R1,80, the people could still not afford the paper. Illiteracy does not also affect the *Zoutpansberger* a lot, although some of the people in the villages surrounding Louis Trichardt are illiterate.

The biggest limiting factor to growth in circulation for the *Zoutpansberger* is stiff competition. The market becomes selective as a result of having many newspapers available to choose from.

For both newspapers, the owner/manager blamed the national lottery and cell phone purchases as being other factors that are decreasing circulation. He said since last year the circulation has decreased because people would rather use an extra R2,50 to buy a lottery ticket in the hope that they will acquire more money, than buy a newspaper.

Poor distribution due to bad infrastructure, illiteracy of most of the population and poverty are the biggest factors affecting the *Mirror*. Both papers are affected by the would-be readers' diversion of income to buy national lottery tickets and cell phones.



#### **4.2.4.2. Subscriptions**

Subscription to a newspaper is important because a regular group of people can pay for the paper in advance. It was therefore important for the researcher to establish subscriptions for the two newspapers.

Respondents said subscriptions for the two papers are similar. Both of the newspapers have subscriptions of between 70 to 200. This is made up of libraries, government officials and individuals. The owner said for both papers individuals accounted for 50 to 70 subscriptions. The owner however said the newspapers' Internet site receives about 4 000 views per month.

Availability of subscribers is due to the fact that people are interested in the local news provided by both of the papers. In addition, the Internet makes it easy for people to visit the site and for traders to place and pay for their advertisements on the Internet where they can get more exposure.

#### **4.2.5. Growth of the Production Department**

The Production Department usually handles production of the newspaper in terms of printing and other manual needs of the organisation like maintenance of the

equipment as well as vehicles. The study wanted to establish the extent to which this department had grown for both papers.

The *Zoutpansberger* has no production department. Before December 2000 the then owner also owned a printing company that printed the two newspapers. He relinquished ownership of the newspapers but retained ownership of the printing company that still prints the newspaper to date.

All the respondents working with the *Mirror* said that there was no production department. They all mentioned that for a small newspaper, it is not cost-effective to have a production department. The production of the "dummy" newspaper, which is sent to the printing organisation in Pietersburg about 270 km from Thohoyandou, is done by the owner/manager in collaboration with the editor.

The owner/manager said the biggest factor affecting the setting up of a production department for both of the papers, is lack of funds. He said the cost of producing the paper would be too high for a newspaper that is not yet fully established.

### **4.3. COMPARISON OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEWSPAPERS**

The respondents were asked if the newspapers have grown since they started in 1985 and 1990. Respondents said that the *Zoutpansberger* experienced negative growth leading to restructuring in which some of the staff were laid off. All the respondents said the *Mirror* had grown in a few aspects within the various departments, but the general growth of the paper was slow or non-existent in some areas.

It was explained that there are several factors limiting the growth of the newspaper. The major factors affecting the growth of the newspapers were found to be the following: -

- 4.3.1. Lack of capital by the owner to expand the organisational structure of the various departments; employing more members of staff and ensuring specialisation of the available staff in order to allow the organisation to operate efficiently. This affects all the departments, which have not grown in terms of members of staff for both of the newspapers.
- 4.3.2. Lack of training and skills for journalists. There is no institution for journalism training in the area. Many of the people working as freelance journalists are not trained. Those who are trained move to the urban areas



where there are better facilities and where they are better remunerated.

This affects the editorial departments of both of the newspapers.

4.3.3. Poverty of the local population whereby the people can hardly afford to buy newspapers. Therefore, the circulation of the newspapers is now declining. This is affecting both of the newspapers.

4.3.4. Diversion of consumable income. Money that would be spared to buy a newspaper is now being used to buy national lottery tickets by a certain group of the population and cell phones by another group of the population. This matter affects newspapers. Most of the people near the Thohoyandou area use their disposable income to buy lottery tickets instead of the *Mirror* while most of the people in the Louis Trichardt area spend their money on cell phones and related accessories instead of buying the *Zoutpansberger*, according to Van Zyl.

4.3.5. Low literacy levels of the population. The paper is in English and most of the people in the Thohoyandou area can neither read nor write English, hence cannot buy the newspaper. This factor is exclusive to the *Mirror* but affects the *Zoutpansberger* to a very small extent.

4.3.6. Poor infrastructure of Thohoyandou and surrounding areas greatly limits the distribution of the *Mirror*, as many of the areas are inaccessible. This factor does not affect the Louis Trichardt area, and distribution of the

*Zoutpansberger* is more established.

- 4.3.7. Stiff competition with other local newspapers affects the *Zoutpansberger*, but not the *Mirror*, which is enjoying autonomy as the only local newspaper in its area.

#### **4.4. CONCLUSION**

The study was aimed at establishing and comparing the factors that affect the growth/development of the *Mirror* and *Zoutpansberger*. The respondents explained that lack of capital, poverty amongst the local population, lack of skills, low literacy levels, poor infrastructure due to geographical location and diversion of available consumable income are some of the major factors that have affected the growth and development of the two newspapers.

It was found that in some areas, the *Mirror* newspaper has experienced growth. For example, in terms of size it has grown from four pages since 1990 to twenty-four pages, from four employees to thirteen; three of whom are permanent, the others are correspondents affiliated to the paper. Circulation grew from 2 000 copies in 1990 to 9 000 to 10 000 copies in 2000. Advertising which includes local, national, classified, legal and Internet forms of advertising, also grew. Other departments did not experience much growth.

On its part, the *Zoutpansberger* enjoyed some growth until 1996 after which it started deteriorating until it was sold in December 2000. For example, the size of the paper has been constant; 16 pages since 1985, sometimes dropping to 12 pages. The paper has structurally declined from ten employees in 1985 to five employees today, but circulation has grown as well as advertising.



# **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **5.1. CONCLUSIONS**

From the findings of the research, the following conclusions can be drawn: -

1. Rural community newspapers face an uphill task in carrying out their duties.
2. Economic factors place a major burden on the growth of rural community newspapers.
3. Social, geographical and cultural factors also have a significant negative impact on the growth of rural community newspapers.
4. Political factors had a negative impact on the papers in their early years.
5. Rural newspapers grow slowly due to the many challenges they face in their operations.
6. Unless rural newspapers work hard at widening their income base and making full use of the available limited resources, they are constantly threatened by possible closure.

## **5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH**

The following recommendations can be made to help the newspaper make full use of the available resources and alternative means of income. These include:

1. The owner/manager should employ people who have specialised in advertising/sales and management in the relevant departments of both the newspapers. These people would know how to make the best use of available resources and improve on the existing way of running the departments.
2. Schools in the area can be included to widen the circulation base. There are many schools, both primary and secondary, which need the newspapers for keeping up to date with current events. This avenue has not yet been exploited. Newspapers can grow by concentrating on sports and other local activities that the population is interested in. The newspapers could exploit new topics, for example education, by using them as means of education in the classrooms.
3. The content of the newspapers can be used to attract sponsorship which will increase the number of copies bought. Supplements on interesting issues which are in line with global trends, like health, women, and literacy can be included in the paper, which can be sponsored, especially by non-governmental organisations. Bodies like Print Media South Africa are also interested in supporting growth of media in historically disadvantaged areas.

4. The papers should advertise their services more. For example, advertising rates and outlets where people can buy the papers at cover price. At present, even if the cover price is R1,80, newsvendors sell the newspapers to the public at R2. This makes both papers compete with national newspapers like the *Sowetan* that is sold at R1,80, yet offers more in terms of national news to the local people.
5. The owner should consider applying the VFD model in which more advertisements could be included and the papers distributed freely. This could increase the circulation as well as the revenue for the owners, given that advertising accounts for more of the revenue received by both newspapers.

### **5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In the course of data collection and analysis, it came to light that more research could be carried out in the following areas: -

- i. A comparative study of the operations of "urban" and "rural" community newspapers and factors that affect them.
- ii. An evaluative study on the impact of national advertising on community newspapers, given that national supermarkets, clothing, shoes and furniture stores make up the bulk of stores that South Africans in the whole country, including those in the rural areas use.



- iii. An analysis of the advantages/disadvantages of corporate ownership on the newspaper industry in South Africa.

Although this study was carried out on community newspapers in rural areas of the country, it can be used as a basis to examine other newspapers serving different communities and societies all over the world especially in the developing world.

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## **GLOSSARY**

1. **Newspaper** - A publication regularly printed and distributed, usually daily or weekly containing news, opinions, advertisements and other items of general interest.
2. **Remote** - distant in bearing, connection or the like.
3. **Rural** - the country, or having to do with the country.
4. **Urban** - constituting a city or town, characteristic of the city as distinguished of the country.
5. **Circulation** - the extent to which newspapers, magazines are distributed among readers, the average number of copies sold in a specific period.
6. **Advertising** - the use of printed or spoken matter paid for, to sell goods and services.

**APPENDIX A**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CORRESPONDENTS, EDITOR AND OWNER**

**Please assist this researcher by answering the questions below. All questions are purely for purposes of academic research.**

1. When did the newspaper start?.....
2. What were its goals and objectives?.....  
.....
3. How did the paper start?.....
4. What was the structure then?.....
5. What was its circulation?.....
6. Has the paper grown in the following departments since it started?
  - 6.1 Editorial.....
  - 6.2 Management/administration.....

6.3 Advertising.....

6.4 Circulation/distribution.....

6.5 Production.....

7. If yes, in how has it

grown?.....

.....

.....

8. How (kindly provide the figures over the

years)?.....

.....

9. If not, in what areas has the growth been

minimal?.....

.....

10. In your opinion, what has affected growth in these

areas?.....

.....

**To be answered by the owner**

11. Have the goals and objectives of the newspaper been

fulfilled?.....

.....



12. If yes, how have they been

fulfilled?.....

13. If not, what has hindered

this?.....

.....

14. As the new owner of the paper, what are your future goals for the

paper?.....

.....

15. Has the growth and development or lack of it affected the efficiency of the

paper?.....

16. Does the rural location of the newspaper contribute in any way to its growth

or lack of it?.....

17. Any recommendations on how the growth and development of the paper can

be

boosted?.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for your cooperation and help.**







Appendix C

14 September 2001

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Jaargang 17 Vol. 36



Die allemintige luislang van 3,7meter het Vrydag vir heelwat angs gesorg by die munisipale stortingsterrein op die Vondeling-pad. Gelukkig genoeg was Nico Theunissen van die plaaslike Verkeersafdeling weereens laar om die "gevaar" hok te slaan. Die senuweegtige glimlag op sy gesig was te danke aan die slang wat ydens die neem van die foto stadig maar seker sy greep om Nico se nek verstewig het. Die slang is later na die natuur teruggekeer.

## Regering moet optree teen bek-en-klou

LOUIS TRICHARDT – Die regering sal ten volle aanspreeklik wees vir enige skade of verliese wat gelyk word as gevolg van die voortslepende wanorde in die Madimbo-korridor.

Hierdie ferm standpunt is deur georganiseerde landbou ingenieurs, nadat dit by herhaling aan die lig gekom het dat die land se hele beesveleisbedryf bedreig word deur die gereelde vernietiging van lewensnoodsaaklike beheerheinisings by Madimbo. Die heinisings wat in die belang van veeartseny beheermaatreëls teen bek-en-klouseer en ander aansteeklike voesiektes opgerig word, word gereeld deur die plaaslike bevolking beskaalig om hul vee in die beheerareas te laat wei, waar hulle gevaar loop om met besmette buffels in aanraking te kom.

Lede van die Zoutpansberg Distrik Landbou-unie beskou dit as die verantwoordelikheid van die regering om die betrokkenes met voorligting en opvoeding tot beter insigte te bring en met die nodige ferm strafmaatreëls orde langs die grens te herstel.

(Vervolg op p. 2)

- 3 Verwoestende brande lê streek in puin
- 5 Swiss youths visit Valdezia
- 8 What's the intention of a name?
- 9 Local businessman dies after road accident

## Vingers wys na polisie in omstrede wilddiefstal saak

### elangrike bewysstukke teruggegee aan beskuldiges

LOUIS TRICHARDT – 'n Amptelike ondersoek met verreikende implikasies is ingestel word na die manier waarop Bandeliekerkop polisiekantoor bewysstukke in 'n belangwekkende saak hanteer het.

'n Opspraakwekkende hofspraak, waarin lede van 'n staatsdepartement aangekla is, is vandeesweek onderbreek en vertraag deur sekere optredes by die polisiekantoor. Die hofspraak waarin vier mans teregstaan op 'n dagte van onwettige jag, het 'n opsigende wending geneem.

Die hof moes kennis neem dat sleutel bewysstukke, tesame met die voertuig waarop die jag gelei is, eenvoudig aan die beskuldiges teruggegee is.

Die afreiking van die bewysstukke is volgens die staatsprokureur in die diens van die Departement Waterreue. Die voertuig wat na bewering in die jag gelei is, is in plaas in die Bandeliekerkop

omgewing gebruik is, is 'n staatsgesubsidieerde voertuig.

Die voertuig, 'n byl en jagspies, wat by die Bandeliekerkop polisiekantoor in veilige bewaring was, is uit die amptelike register uitgeteken en aan die beskuldiges teruggehandig – vermoedelik deur 'n personeel van die polisiekantoor.

'n Amptelike ondersoek word nou geëis, om vas te stel wie vir die ongereguleerde optrede verantwoordelik was. Op die amptelike hof dossier word geen magtiging verleen vir die teruggee van die voertuig of die wapens nie.

Die Soutpansberg Distrik Landbou-unie het met verontwaardiging gereageer op die nuwe wending in die saak en dit as onaanvaarbaar beskryf. Met die eerste verskynning van die beskuldiges op Bandeliekerkop, het die landbou-unie bestuur 'n memorandum aan die landdros oorgehandig, waarin inderdaad versoek is dat die voertuig verbeurd verklaar moet word en as

patrollievoertuig teen georganiseerde wildstootte op plase gebruik moet word.

Toe die verhoor van die vier mans vandeesweek op Louis Trichardt voortgesit is, het beskuldigde nummer een, Ngwako Marcus Raphuswana, wat volgens die hofstukke in diens van die Departement Waterreue is, daarop aangedring dat die bewysstukke (jagspies en byl) voor die hof geplaas moes word. Hy was nie tevrede met fotos van die bewysstukke wat by die hof ingedien is nie.

Op versoek van die aanklaer, Me. Hlilke Jansen van Rensburg, het Landdros Smit die hof omstreeks 12:30 verdaag, sodat die bewysstukke vanaf die polisiekantoor op Bandeliekerkop na die hof op Louis Trichardt gebring kon word.

'n Genuïene tyd na 14:00 is die verhoor hervat en moes die hof vernem dat die polisie op Bandeliekerkop nie die bewysstukke kan lewer nie, aangesien dit aan die beskuldiges terugbesorg is.

(Vervolg op p. 2)

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# Wrongfully arrested and assaulted - Government to be sued for R1 million

wo Musetha

**ANDOU** - Three suspects, allegedly wrongfully arrested in order of a taxi boss, plan to sue the Ministry of Safety and Security for R1 million. They also accuse the government of dragging their feet in their criminal case against the suspects, who allegedly assaulted officers during their arrest.

road in 1999.

The three were also accused of killing another taxi boss Donald Dzagana. During that time, it was alleged that the three were hired by Dzagana to kill Mukatuni when they later killed him (Dzagana) after failing to pay them.

The suspects were released on November 26, 1999, after it was established that they were not linked to the two cases.

In an about turn, three other suspects, David Mandiwana, Simon Nengovhela and Titus Rabothata, all taxi bosses, were arrested by the Special Investigating Unit from Pretoria early this year in connection with the same case. The three suspects were refused bail several times and they still remain in custody, while they are being investigated for other serious related cases.

Thathaisa, who together with his co-accused opened a criminal and civil case against the disbanded Taxi Violence Unit, which was based in Pietersburg, claims that they were assaulted during their arrest where they sustained serious injuries. Thathaisa suffered a broken left hand, swollen chest, abdomen, neck, face, and cut mouth, damaged eyes and bleeding ears, while Matibe suffered a back injury. Masithi was allegedly given electricity shocks during the interrogation.

Besides that, the identification parade, which was scheduled for June 28, 2000, never materialised. Thathaisa said they were concerned that their criminal case would never succeed as the members of the disbanded unit have now been transferred to different areas.

Thathaisa who is suing the department for R1 million, said their names are seriously defamed and their reputations in the community will never be the same, because of the "unlawful arrest". Police spokesperson Captain Ailwei Mushavhanamadi said it was their duty as police to arrest and question any suspect if so required.



Mr Maanda Thathaisa (28), pointing at his hand that was allegedly injured during his arrest and interrogation.

## Black Leopards beat the mighty Chiefs?

**Black Leopards** will journey to Johannesburg to honour the late manager of the South African Breweries, Mr Steve Phoshoko is presenting a cheque to the coach of Black Leopards, Mr Gavin Hunt. Hunt was nominated coach of the Premier Soccer League. Apart from the cheque, Hunt also received a trophy, a bottle and 36 cases of Castle Lager. Next to Hunt is the marketing manager of Leopards, Masiyanaga. The sales representative of South African Breweries, Mr Tshililo is looking on.

record of the two teams shows that the game can go either way. Chiefs have played three matches and collected full points in all to date. On the other hand Leopard

have played five matches, won three, drew one and lost one so far. Their last league match was against Manning Rangers with whom

they drew 0-0 at the Thohoyandou Stadium last Saturday. Leopards will have two points to prove in the match. In the first instance they have an obligation to prove that they were not promoted to the elite division by mistake. It will also be their duty to show the soccer fraternity that the judges did not err when they chose Mr Gavin Hunt as the coach of the month, August 2001.








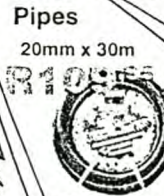
In the other PSL fixtures Thembisa Classic will play against SuperSport United in Thembisa.

Manning Rangers will have a date with Sanlam Santos at the Chartsworth Stadium in Durban. Orlando Pirates will pay a visit to Free State Stars at the Goble Park Stadium in the Free State. The other fixtures are Ria Stars vs Golden Arrows, Ajax Cape Town vs Bush Bucks, Moroka Swallows vs Jomo Cosmos and Sundowns vs Wits University.



manager of the South African Breweries, Mr Steve Phoshoko is presenting a cheque to the coach of Black Leopards, Mr Gavin Hunt. Hunt was nominated coach of the Premier Soccer League. Apart from the cheque, Hunt also received a trophy, a bottle and 36 cases of Castle Lager. Next to Hunt is the marketing manager of Leopards, Masiyanaga. The sales representative of South African Breweries, Mr Tshililo is looking on.

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<p><b>Arma Tile</b> R29,95</p> 	<p><b>Hose Pipes</b> 20mm x 30m R10,95</p> 	<p><b>15mm x 30m</b> R69,50</p>



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