

**An exploration of the self-regulation of the
media since the start of democracy in South
Africa**

by

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Declaration

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Date: March 2016

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I dedicate this study to the loving memory of my late parents, Winefred Lucille and William Owen Thompson.

To my mother Winnie, I have no words to express my gratitude for all the sacrifices you made for your daughters and family. You taught me that through hard work, discipline and commitment, I could be anything I wanted to be. I am still working on that long list I made as a young girl, but I know you would be proud of the woman I have become.

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis 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.

Signature:

Date:

(Reneé Thompson)

15 February 2016

Abstract

This study examines the self-regulation of the South African media in respect of the interactions between the media and the post-apartheid government, with a specific focus on the current mode of the regulation of the press and its successes and failures in the context of South African society, focusing on the period January 2012 to December 2013, with a specific emphasis on opinion pieces, columns and news reports published during this time in the Afrikaans newspaper, *Rapport*.

Attention directed to the self-regulation of the South African media has been driven, in recent years, by a debate generated by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party concerning the existing mode of regulation of the media, specifically relating to the Press Council of South Africa. The party has noted that the establishment of a Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) would be in the “public interest”, as this would strengthen and support the current system that was provided by the office of the Press Ombudsman. In contrast, media practitioners have argued that this could restrict many of the freedoms that have been achieved in the new democratic South Africa.

The liberal-pluralist theory was selected as an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it is a normative theory dealing with the political role of the media. A qualitative research methodology, and specifically the research technique content analysis was applied in this study. The study found that in the post-apartheid South Africa, a robust debate has developed between the government and the media, where an “us versus them” approach still seems to exist; notwithstanding that the dynamic of the government-media relationship has changed since pre-democracy times. The study has drawn attention to various ANC motives for attempting to change the method of press regulation, also highlighting existing flaws in the media system, flaws in journalistic practices, and capitalistic tendencies due to the conglomeration and controlling of what it deems newsworthy. Thus, this study has found that although the government or state misdemeanours were the essential reasons for maintaining press freedom, the current press self-regulatory system is inadequate. True media transformation would be needed to instil ethics and achieve basic journalistic standards that are not based on the relic of the apartheid propaganda machine, and which do not operate with impunity, character assassination, racial stereotyping, or the peddling of corporate interests over the public good.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie ondersoek die selfregulering van die Suid-Afrikaanse media in terme van die wisselwerking tussen die media en die post-apartheid-regering, met 'n spesifieke fokus op die huidige modus van regulering van die pers en die welslae en mislukkings daarvan binne die konteks van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Die fokus is op die tydperk van Januarie 2012 tot Desember 2013, met spesifieke klem op nuwe berigte wat gedurende hierdie tyd in die Afrikaanse koerant *Rapport* gepubliseer is.

Aandag gerig op die selfregulering van die Suid-Afrikaanse media, is in die afgelope jare gedryf deur 'n debat wat deur die regerende party, die African National Congress (ANC) ontlok is en wat verband hou met die bestaande modus van regulering van die media, spesifiek ten opsigte van die Suid-Afrikaanse Persraad. Die party het genoteer dat die stigting van 'n media-appèltribunaal (MAT) in openbare belang sou wees, aangesien dit die huidige stelsel wat deur die kantoor van die persombudsman voorsien is, sou versterk en ondersteun. In teenstelling hiermee het mediapraktisyns geredeneer dat dit baie van die vryhede wat in die nuwe demokratiese Suid-Afrika verwerf is, sou inperk.

Die liberaal-pluralis-teorie is geselekteer as 'n toepaslike teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie aangesien dit 'n normatiewe teorie is wat aandag gee aan die politieke rol van die media. Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodologie, spesifiek die kwalitatiewe navorsingstegniek, inhoudsanalise, word in hierdie studie toegepas. Die studie het bevind dat, in die post-apartheid-Suid-Afrika, 'n skerp debat tussen die regering en die media ontwikkel het, waar dit lyk asof 'n "ons versus hulle" benadering steeds bestaan, al het die dinamika van die regering-media-verhouding sedert pre-demokratiese tye verander. Hierdie studie vestig die aandag op verskeie ANC-motiewe wat poog om die metode van persregulering te verander, terwyl dit ook die lig laat val op gebreke in die mediastelsel, gebreke in joernalistieke praktyke en kapitalistiese tendense weens die konglomerasie van die media wat beheer uitoefen oor dit wat hulle nuuswaardig ag. Terwyl regering- of staatsvergrype dus deur hierdie studie as die wesenlike redes vir die handhawing van persvryheid aangeteken word, is die huidige pers-selfreguleringstelsel onvoldoende. Ware mediatransformasie, wat etiek en basiese joernalistieke standaarde inskerp, is nodig en nie een wat op die oorblyfsels van die apartheidspropagandamasjien gebaseer is of wat bedryf word met strafloosheid, karaktermoord, rassestereotipering of die verkondiging van korporatiewe belange bo die openbare welsyn nie.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Preliminary study and rationale

Prior to the abolishment of apartheid, the media in South Africa was plagued by various attempts by the apartheid government to inhibit its rights to report on what was happening, politically, in the country (Louw & Tomaselli, 1991:80-90; Stewart, 1987:29-38). The first democratic election on 27 April 1994 brought an end to the oppressive regulations that were being imposed on the media, thereby ending the media censorship and control (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005a:36). As a result, a new era for the media began and there was a conscious move from the former oppressive media regulations to a system of self-regulation; while at the same time, attempts were made to broaden the “public sphere” (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005a:37).

During the apartheid era, some of the strict regulations that were enforced by the government included control over the nature of the news reports and editorials that could be published relating to any activities against the apartheid government, and a restriction over which stories newspapers could and could not print (Daniels, 2010:54; Hadland, 2007:95; Merrett, 2007:51; Grogan & Riddle, 1987:3-4). During the two states of emergency that were declared in the 1980s, censorship regulations were tightened even further — to the extent that newspapers were banned from reporting on any of the demonstrations or protests that were taking place against the apartheid government (Merrett, 2007:53; Grogan & Riddle, 1987:4). There was, therefore, a significant emphasis placed on the “national interest” of the country, according to the interest of the apartheid government, with little emphasis on the “public interest” (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005a:36-51).

The Media Institute of South Africa (MISA) has deliberated the concepts of “national interest” and “public interest” (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005b:192). The institute notes that “national interest” is very restrictive in relation to newsgathering and dissemination, and it can have a narrow political connotation according to which “politicians of a ruling party may decide that there should be secrecy over an issue in the ‘national interest’ – where the meaning of ‘national interest’ is defined by the politicians” (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005b:192). MISA suggests, rather, that

journalists work in the “public interest”, which is a “sounder, much wider base” and which at times might override the “national interest” (Wasserman & Boloka, 2004:185).

Hadland (2007:74) emphasises that the “public interest” is a “liberal notion” that emphasises the public’s right to know. He further suggests that news and information should be framed in a manner that promotes democracy and nation-building, irrespective of whether this compromises the media’s perception of its role. Netshitenzhe (2002) defines “national interest” as “the aggregate of things that guarantee the survival and flourishing of a nation-state and a nation”, with the “public interest” being “what is in the interest of a section of a polity or nation-state”. The author argues that the “public interest”, in its extreme form, normally defines itself as a position in opposition to the state, with the “national interest” being a state-conceived ideology implemented by the government of the day. However, despite the fact that the “national” and “public interests” often oppose each other, according to the definitions of Netshitenzhe, they have common aspects and these should form the basis of national consensus, whereby, the media in South Africa should aim to serve both the “national” and “public interest” (Netshitenzhe, 2002).

A debate was presented by the African National Congress (ANC) at its 52nd National Conference in Polokwane in 2007 to challenge the current system of press self-regulation. At the conference, it was proposed that a system of state-regulation by a Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) would be in the “public interest” as it would strengthen and support the current system of the Press Ombudsman (ANC, n.d.).

This study explored the self-regulation of the South African media between January 2012 and December 2013, and thus observed the interactions between the media and government over this time. In order to conduct the study, what are meant by “public” and “national interest” were examined, with an investigation into how the concept of media regulation has evolved in the country.

The next section discusses the current problem faced by the media in South Africa, which is the resulting focus of this study.

1.2 Problem statement and focus

The debate about self-regulation versus state-regulation was brought to the fore when the ANC, at its 52nd National Conference in Polokwane, noted that the establishment of a Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) would be in the “public interest” as it would strengthen and support the current institution of the Press Ombudsman (ANC, n.d.). The counter-argument was that such a body could act to restrict many of the freedoms that have been realised in the democratic South Africa. This study focused on whether self-regulation was in fact succeeding, or whether a new system of regulation would instead be in the “public interest”. The goal of the study is presented, next.

1.3 Goal, theoretical points of departure and research question

This section deals with the goal, theoretical points of departure and research question of the study, dealing with each topic sequentially.

1.3.1 Goal

This study investigated the media self-regulation in South Africa and whether a new system of regulation would instead be in the “public interest”.

1.3.2 Theoretical point of departure

A liberal-pluralist theory was used to examine the role of the media in a democratic society and in a political economy in order to determine the influence of media ownership and management on the operation of the media. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

1.3.3 Research Question

The major research question of this study was: Should the media in South Africa be under state-regulation or self-regulation? To help answer this research question, the following sub-questions were raised:

- What role does the media play in South African society?
- Has there been a change in the role of the media since 1994?
- What is the relationship between the government and the media?
- How has this relationship between the government and the media changed since 1994?

The next section outlines the research design and methodology that were followed to answer these questions.

1.4 Research design and methodology

This section discusses the research design and methodology that were employed for the study.

1.4.1 Research design

The research was conducted as a case study. The case study approach uses a qualitative research technique that seeks to understand the dynamics that exist for a single element or trend by exhausting all of the information and data resources that are available (Eisenhardt, 1989:534; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:136).

The methodology used in this study is covered in the next subsection.

1.4.2 Research methodology

The qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate for this study. According to Du Plooy (2009:30), the focus of qualitative research is to interpret and construct the qualitative aspects of communication experiences. A broad definition of content analysis is the application of techniques to arrive at objective and systematic conclusions about the specific characteristics of messages (Stemler, 2001:1), which are ideal for communication research (Du Plooy, 1997:153). According to Kolmer (2008:117), content analysis has developed into a significant method to analyse the way in which journalists work and the nature of the cultural, political and economic agendas behind media content and messages.

For this study, various media resources were probed with a view to gathering data that would form the basis for answering the proposed research questions. The resources were opinion pieces, columns and news reports, with a focus on publications that had appeared in the Afrikaans weekly newspaper, *Rapport*, from January 2012 to December 2013. This Afrikaans weekly is published by Media24, a subsidiary of Naspers, which was established in 1970.

The Afrikaans media historically supported apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism (Wasserman, 2010a:32; Wigston, 2007:35). Therefore, this research benefited from

studying opinion pieces, columns and news reports that related to media regulation, self-regulation by the press, the relationship between the government and the media, and how the media has recently portrayed the government.

The full discussion comprising this thesis has been clearly laid out in chapters. The ordering of the chapters is described, below.

1.5 Chapter layout

This thesis is structured as described below:

Chapter 2: Background to South African Media – This chapter provides the background to South Africa’s media industry, and how it was affected by apartheid.

Chapter 3: Media Regulatory Frameworks – This chapter examines the media regulatory frameworks that are currently in practice in South Africa.

Chapter 4: Literature Review – This chapter covers the literature reviewed, with a focus on topics that pertain to the regulation of the media.

Chapter 5: Theoretical Framework – This chapter covers the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 6: Research Design and Methodology – This chapter covers the research design and methodology that was performed for this study.

Chapter 7: Research Findings and Data Analysis – This chapter reports on the findings of the study, along with an analysis of these findings.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations – This final chapter provides the conclusions of this study and recommendations for future research.

The following summary ends the introduction to the study.

1.6 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the research topic and provided a discussion of the rationale for the study. It also explained the problem statement and focus, and introduced the central research question and sub-questions. The research design and methodology were also presented.

The next chapter provides a background to the media in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

Highlights of the History of the South African Media

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background — though not exhaustive — to South Africa's media industry, including how the industry was affected during and after the apartheid regime. The chapter begins with a look at the history of the South African media, where the media in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries is briefly discussed along with the media in the first part of the twentieth century. It also looks at the media during the apartheid era, followed by a brief discussion of the South African Press Council and the history of its creation. The chapter concludes with a discussion on media ownership in South Africa, how this has changed in the new democracy, and the impact it has had on accountability.

The chapter begins, next, with the history of the South African media.

2.2 A brief history of the South African media

The media in South Africa has been plagued by various attempts to impede its right to report on what was happening in the country, especially during the height of apartheid (Louw & Tomaselli, 1991:80-90; Stewart, 1987:29-38). What follows is an overview of the media in South Africa in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

2.2.1 The media in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries

According to De Beer and Tomaselli (2000:9), very few publications were released during the first 200 years of the founding of the Cape of Good Hope halfway station in 1652 by the Dutch East India Company (DEIC), which could be perceived to fall within the category of journalism. This was aside from the protest letters by Adam Tas in rebellion against the colonial rule, and newspapers by Thomas Pringle such as the *South African Journal* and the *South African Commercial Advertiser* — published in 1824 after the British occupation of 1806. The publications were beset by censorship from the government, which ultimately forced Pringle to resign (SAHO, 2014).

From the 1880s onward, following efforts by international journalists such as Henry Stanley, a lively (though often-repressed) Black press went into production to

represent Black Nationalism (Switzer, cited in De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:10). Tomaselli and Louw (cited in De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:10) note that the origins of the 1980s “progressive press”, which confronted the domination and control of apartheid, began during this period. Journalists such as Sol Plaatje are also acknowledged for their significant contribution to journalism in the early parts of the twentieth century with the founding of publications such as *Koranta ea Bechuana* and *Tsala ea Batho*, in 1916 (Switzer, cited in De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:10).

The next section discusses the media in South Africa in the first part of the twentieth century.

2.2.2 South Africa’s media in the first part of the twentieth century

Subsequent to Afrikaans becoming the official language of South Africa in 1925, De Beer and Tomaselli (2000:11) point out that Afrikaans speakers used the print media to endorse their political and cultural agendas. They further note that Afrikaner-owned newspapers and publishers were largely credited with the National Party’s (NP) rise to power in 1948, as well as South Africa’s withdrawal from the Commonwealth and the development of apartheid. They emphasise, however, that the Afrikaans press also “played a decisive role in preparing its readers for the eventuality of representative democracy”.

Although the English-language press was opposed to apartheid, De Beer and Tomaselli (2000:11) criticise it for failing to persuade the White English-speaking population to oppose it. In the next section, the environment of the media during the apartheid era is discussed, as well as how the media was affected by the apartheid government.

2.2.3 The media during the apartheid era

The apartheid government repeatedly passed decrees to control the media and their coverage of what was happening in South Africa (Grogan & Riddle, 1987:3). A four-pronged approach was employed to restrict the media: legislation and regulation; the Bureau of Information; government control of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), which included the general tightening of advertising costs; and the control of advertising within the SABC (Stewart, 1987:29).

In 1985, the government of South Africa imposed a prohibition on audio and visual recordings of demonstrations to ensure that protesters were not given an international audience, which thereby reduced the amount of protest-related violence in the country (Singer & Ludwig, 1987:315). In 1986, the government launched a series of additional restrictions on civil freedoms (Stewart, 1987:29-38; Grogan & Riddle, 1987:3) that extended to the coverage of any violence — not only involving photographs and sound recordings (Singer & Ludwig, 1987:333). The South African newspapers responded by publishing daily notices that they were being placed under restrictions, which could only be described as censorship (Grogan & Riddle, 1987:3).

These restrictions were not only imposed on South African journalists. In June 1986, the Department of Home Affairs (DoHA) requested that all newspapers submit a list of their employees who had foreign citizenships (Stewart, 1987:30). The then-foreign minister Pik Botha, however, denied that there were any press restrictions in the country (Grogan & Riddle, 1987:3). The Internal Security Act and Public Safety Act were also amended: firstly, to allow for 180-day detentions, and secondly, to declare no-go riot areas, where both journalists and photographers would be barred from photographing and reporting (Stewart, 1987:29-30). Although the House of Representatives and the House of Delegates (consisting of Coloured and Indian members respectively) were opposed to these amendments, the government threatened to use its majority in the President's Council to override the two Houses and force the amendments into law (Stewart, 1987:30).

On 12 June 1986, the government kept its promise and pre-emptively declared a second state of emergency (Grogan & Riddle, 1987:4; Stewart, 1987:30), with regulations that were even more severe than the first state of emergency in 1985. Conditions relating to the treatment of those detained under these regulations were also stricter than the first (Stewart, 1987:30). The regulations included a ban on publications that the government termed “subversive statements”, and they gave powers to former Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, to seize any publications that he deemed contained information that was rebellious, could negatively influence public safety, hindered the safeguarding of public order, or promoted the termination of the state of emergency (Stewart, 1987:30). In accordance with the new set of regulations, the minister could independently ban any publication that was found to

contravene these regulations, for the full period of the state of emergency (Stewart, 1987:30). His powers also extended to the banning of any further publications by individuals who had contravened this law (Stewart, 1987:30).

Regulations were enforced on the day that the second state of emergency was declared. The security police descended on the *New Nation* newspaper's offices in Johannesburg, as well as on the *Grassroots* community newspaper in Cape Town and on numerous trade unions and community organisations, resulting in hundreds of people being detained (Stewart, 1987:30). On 13 June 1986, unsold copies of the *Sowetan* and *Weekly Mail* were confiscated by the security police, and while the Bureau of Information published a statement declaring that these newspapers had been confiscated, no explanation was ever provided (Stewart, 1987:30).

Censorship was also exercised over visual images, whereby police prohibited any photographing of police barricades at the entrances to Port Elizabeth's African townships (Stewart, 1987:30). The Bureau of Information announced that instead, it would provide photographs to local and foreign media; it also downplayed the number of people who had been detained, without providing evidence to support its claims (Stewart, 1987:30).

In December 1986, the government broadened its restrictions, and journalists were ordered to submit every report on protests, in writing, for censorship (Merrett, 2007:52). Soon thereafter, on 30 January 1987, police commissioner General Johann Coetzee was given the authority to ban the publication of material on "any matter", while at the same time, Bureau Chief of *The New York Times* Alan Cowell was expelled from South Africa, and his replacement, Serge Schmemmann was barred from entering the country (Singer & Ludwig, 1987:333). Throughout this time, journalists were warned by the Department of Information about the content of their writing and the use of words and phrases such as "White minority regime", "riot-torn", and "draconian" (Merrett, 2007:52).

During the 1980s, resistance movement groups opposed to the apartheid government increased their defiance through the expression of strikes, direct confrontations with security forces, mass rallies, and covert political and military operations by the banned ANC (Rivers, 2007:19). In retaliation, the South African media censors responded in two ways: first, they restructured their system of regulating film and

video distribution; and second, they broadened their definition of racism and race to include the regulation of film and video distribution (Rivers, 2007:19). For instance, censorship regulators began to govern the way that the state discussed the concepts of “Whites and non-Whites”, which helped significantly to promote the racial image of Whites “as civilised, and non-Whites as savage” (Rivers, 2007:19). These censors also attempted to divert the blame for the political conflict of the 1980s away from the government and towards specific groups or individuals. Thus, Rivers argues, the concept of "governmentality" became a mechanism for enabling the apartheid censors to talk about race without referring to apartheid as a racist ideology.

The next section discusses the background to the South African Press Council and how it was established.

2.2.4 The history of the South African Press Council

In 1963, the press industry body of South Africa, the Newspaper Press Union, set up the Press Board of Reference (PBR) to regulate the press in an attempt to curb the apartheid government’s threat to set up a statutory council (Press Freedom Commission, 2012:12). As tensions between the government and the English-press heightened in the 1960s, following the press coverage of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, the mandate of the PBR was tightened (Press Freedom Commission, 2012:12).

In the late 1980s, the South African Media Council was seen to have little credibility as it was observed to be doing the government’s “dirty work” (Press Freedom Commission, 2012:12). In the next section, the Afrikaans press is reviewed, with a focus on the major players in the Afrikaans media industry both in the pre- and post-apartheid eras.

2.3 The Afrikaans press

During the apartheid era, the Afrikaans media and the SABC were accomplices of the apartheid government (Wasserman & De Beer, 2009:384). During the period from 1960 to 1990, the Afrikaans press and the SABC helped to consolidate the White South African opinion of the National Party (Tomaselli, 1997:23), when daily

newspapers such as *Die Burger*, a Western Cape-based Afrikaans paper, were “mouthpieces” of the ruling National Party (Wasserman & Botma, 2008:1).

Wasserman and De Beer (2009:383) emphasise that during the transition to democracy, the English-language and alternative press largely succeeded in becoming the “guardians of South Africa’s media freedom”. The English-language press was predominantly owned by mining capital, and it gave a narrow and partial report on human rights transgressions; although it did so without defaming the capitalist foundations of the system. The Afrikaans press opposed English-dominated capital, and supported the accumulation of Afrikaner capital, although Tomaselli (1997:23) argues that English capital still dominated the economic segment in the period post-1948.

Adjusting to the post-apartheid media environment was, therefore, more complex for the Afrikaans-language media than for their English counterparts. The Afrikaans media was compelled to reposition itself in a far more complex process due to its legacy of being the “mouthpiece” of the apartheid government, its doctrine of Afrikaner nationalism, and its reinforcement of the White-minority regime (Wasserman, 2010a:21). Aspects that complicated the transformation of the Afrikaans press included the desire to preserve its allegiance to the Afrikaans audience, which continued to attract advertising revenue while orientating itself towards the new dynamics of political power in the country (Wasserman, 2010a:20).

Newspapers such as *Die Burger*, for example, had to adjust their socio-political positioning to align with the tenets of the new democratic government. In the case of *Die Burger*, this meant distancing itself from former political inclinations and instead embracing a “supposedly apolitical market ideology” (Wasserman & Botma, 2008:1). The perspective of the newspaper was shifted to align, therefore, with the capitalist principles of South Africa’s commercial market. De Beer and Steyn (cited in Wasserman, 2010b:244) assert that, as part of commercialisation in many instances among the Afrikaans press, veteran journalists who had been associated with the apartheid regime were replaced with fresh young journalists, resulting in a widespread “juniorisation” of the Afrikaans press corps.

In the marketing brochures of Naspers, the parent corporation of mainstream Afrikaans publications such as *Beeld*, *Die Burger*, *Rapport* and *Volksblad*, Afrikaans

has since been depicted as a language of “thousands of consumers” who rank among the top household consumer spenders (Ads, cited in Wasserman, 2010a:21). Afrikaans has also been presented as a language that has successfully withdrawn from the “baggage of apartheid” by adapting to the changing circumstances of the country (Wasserman, 2010a:21).

This, however, has raised questions about the editorial independence and other such orthodox journalistic practices of the newspapers (Wasserman & Botma, 2008:1). Wasserman (2010b:244) argues that the “juniorisation” of the Afrikaans media has also negatively impacted the quality of investigative reporting in South Africa, resulting in a “dumbing down” of published and broadcasted material.

Motives for this commercial restructuring and the “commodifying” of Afrikaans have been described by Wasserman (2010a:21) as a means of securing the language from extinction in a nation where the numbers of previously disadvantaged population groups, including Blacks and Coloureds, outnumber the White Afrikaans-speaking population (Giliomee, cited in Wasserman, 2010a:21). The author emphasises this point with a quote from former *Die Burger* Editor Arrie Rossouw (cited in Wasserman, 2010a:21): “Serve an economic purpose and people will be interested in you. Be marketable and it will be difficult to become extinct. Afrikaans is marketable”.

These assertions have been supported by agencies such as Statistics South Africa, which found that at least 5.9 million people spoke one or other dialect of Afrikaans as a home language in 2001, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Home languages of the South Africa population in 2001

Demog. Lang.	African	Coloured	Indian or Asian	White	Percent of the Population	People (millions)
Zulu	30.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	23.8%	10.6m
Afrikaans	0.7%	79.5%	1.7%	59.1%	13.3%	5.9m
Xhosa	22.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	17.6%	7.8m
English	0.5%	18.9%	93.8%	39.3%	8.2%	3.6m
Other	46.4%	1.0%	4.2%	1.4%	37.1%	16.5m

Source: Statistics South Africa, 2001, cited in Milton, 2011:253

The proportion of Afrikaans-speakers amounted to 13.3 percent of the country’s population in 2001, the third-largest language group behind the Zulu and Xhosa-speakers, which comprised 23.8 percent and 17.6 percent of the country’s home languages, respectively (Milton, 2011:253). At the time of the survey, English was spoken as the home language in only 8.2 percent of households (Milton, 2011:253). Among the demographics for Afrikaans-speakers, 79.5 percent of the Coloured population and 59.1 percent of the White population spoke Afrikaans as a home language, in contrast to the Indian and Asian populations in which 93.8 percent spoke English at home.

The SABC, for example, has published the advertising spend per population group in its 2008 market segmentation guide. As shown in Figure 2.1, the “Global Citizens” contributed the highest advertising revenue while representing only the median population size. This group comprised mainly White and Indian “urbanite” English and Afrikaans-speakers, who were highly educated individuals between the ages of 16 and 25 years old and from the mid to upper LSMs. This was followed by the “Now Generation” (the predominantly Black, 16 to 34 year old, materialistic, urban consumers), “Nation Builders” (LSMs five to seven), “Rooted” (LSMs eight to ten), “Upper Distant” (older, untrendy White, Indian and Coloured consumers), and “Lower Distant” (Black, over-50 year old consumers, who spoke Venda, Xhosa or Afrikaans as their home language) (SABC, 2013; Milton, 2011:255).

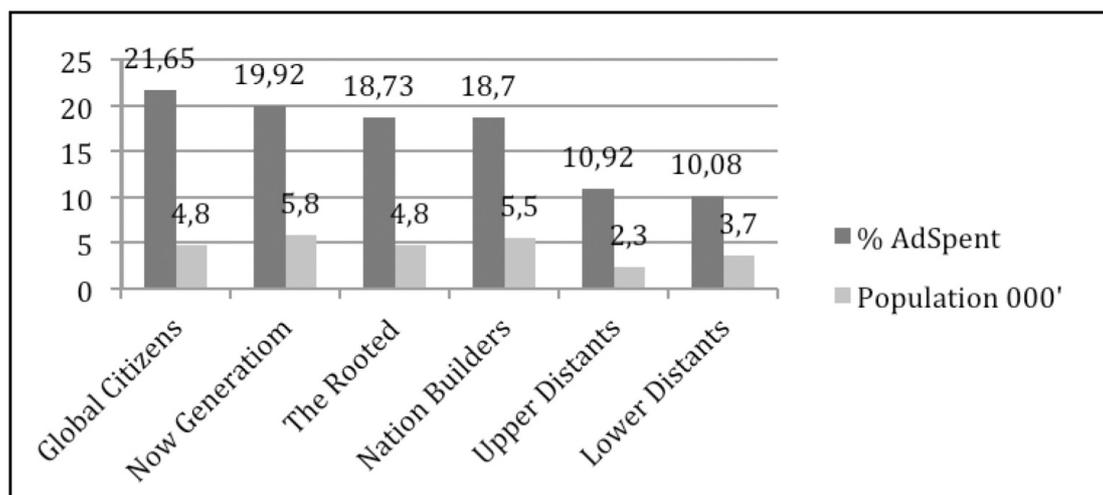


Figure 2.1. SABC audience segmentation and ad spend per group
Source: SABC Market Intelligence, 2008, cited in Milton, 2011:255

The next section discusses media ownership and accountability, specifically in the South African context.

2.4 Media ownership and accountability

Before 1994, the print media in South Africa was divided into two distinctive groups: the Afrikaans media and the English media (Ekron, 2008:83). These, in turn, were made up of two groups, with the Afrikaans press comprising Nasionale Pers (Naspers) and Perskor, and the English press comprising the Argus group and Times Media Limited (TML) (Ekron, 2008:83). In an attempt to represent the country's demographics more closely in the era post-apartheid, companies and publications from the privately-owned print media changed ownership in a drastic transformation process (Wasserman & Botma, 2008:3).

Following the abolition of apartheid and the beginning of democracy in South Africa, various organisational changes occurred within the print media. The Argus Group was acquired by the Irish Independent Group in 1995, which later became the Independent Newspapers Group; and TML sold its controlling share the following year to the Black empowerment syndicate Johnnic Communications, now Avusa (Hadland, 2007:109). In 1994, Primedia was established and later listed on the JSE, while in 1998, Perskor sold its controlling shares in a merger with South African media powerhouse Caxton, resulting in a radically more diverse print media structure (Ekron, 2008:83; Tomaselli, 1997:38; MDDA, 2009:81). The Independent Newspapers Group has now also sold a majority share to the Cape Town-based investment consortium Sekunjalo Investments (Sanchez, 2013:1).

Tomaselli (1997:66) notes that Black-held investment capital, amounting to approximately R20 billion, which supported the mergers and acquisitions within the post-apartheid media sector, came predominantly from Black union pension and provident funds. These had been accumulating during the apartheid era and were predominantly free and waiting to be assigned to immediate investment opportunities.

Within the radio broadcast media, ownership is currently divided between the Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) and the private broadcasters. Kagiso Media, the largest Black-owned media corporation in South Africa, together with Primedia have the majority share of private radio broadcasting listenership in the country; while

organisations such as African Media Entertainment Limited (AME) also own shares in major private radio stations. The SABC has 18 radio stations, of which 15 are PBS radio stations and three — *5fm*, *MetroFM* and *Good Hope FM* — are Public Commercial Services (PCS) (MDDA, 2009:64). There are also 126 community radio stations that are licensed by ICASA, 87 of which are on air across all nine of South Africa's provinces.

There is, however, a debate around the mainstream South African media still being restricted to the same commercial logic as before democratisation, in that even while the racial profiles of the ownership and executive management of media organisations has changed, the target of the material has still been slanted towards the more lucrative audiences (Wasserman & Botma, 2008:3).

Harber (2014:220) notes that despite the commercialisation of South Africa's media, the media — and the private media in particular — is still a “watchdog” for the country, and acts as an “enforcer ... of public accountability”. Harber further states that in spite of all its faults and inadequacies, “the private media has become the primary institution holding the government and the private sector to account, exposing corruption and the abuse of power, and keeping a torch shining into the dark areas of our society”.

The reverse form of accountability is also true. Thus, while a fundamental right of the print media is freedom of expression, they also bear the responsibility to ensure transparency, accuracy, respect for people's rights, the prevention of incitement of violence, and accountability of professionals within the print media that encroach on these rights (Duncan, 2011:91; Wasserman, 2010b:246). Accountability of the media remains a considerable issue in South Africa because large corporations still own the majority of press organisations and holding such organisations accountable is complex, especially in a self-regulatory environment.

This ends the background to the South African media. The chapter ends with a short summary of the main points of the chapter.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a review of the key published literature relating to the background of South Africa's media industry. Beginning with the history of the press

up until the twentieth century, the early newspaper agencies and publications were discussed with a deliberation on how they were affected by — or were instrumental in supporting — the apartheid regime.

The media before and after the era of the apartheid regime were considered in detail with a focus on the restrictions and censorships that were imposed around the times of the country's first, second and third states of emergency; along with some of the controversies that surrounded the media during these periods.

Literature on the history of South Africa's Press Council was discussed, followed by a review of the Afrikaans press. Various authors suggested that the transition to the new democracy was more difficult for the Afrikaans press than it was for the English press, and arguments were presented on how the Afrikaans press coped with this transition into the new South Africa.

Finally, ownership of the media was deliberated with a brief history of the changes that took place before and after the democratic transition, and of the accountability of the media in the new South Africa. Chapter 3 follows next with a discussion of the existing media regulatory frameworks with an emphasis on the agencies and organisations that have been established for this purpose.

CHAPTER 3

Media Regulatory Frameworks

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 reviews the media regulatory frameworks that are in place in South Africa. The Chapter begins with a discussion on the main acts, agencies, and institutions that are influential in South Africa's regulatory context. The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), Film and Publication Board (FPB), and Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) are all considered.

The chapter ends with a review of the regulatory systems that are in place in South Africa's advertising and print media sectors, and the purpose of these regulations. The organisations that have been influential as "watchdogs" in the print media are also considered with a focus on the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF).

The first section of the chapter deals with the legal and regulatory frameworks governing South Africa's media.

3.2 The legal and regulatory frameworks of South Africa's media

Chapter one of the Constitution of South Africa guarantees the right to freedom of expression and the right to equality and human dignity (Republic of South Africa, 1996; African National Congress, 2002). Legislation was enacted to give expression to the meaning and rights guaranteed by the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996; African National Congress, 2002).

In 1999, the Broadcasting Act (Act No. 153 of 1993) was passed by parliament to repeal the Broadcasting Act No. 73 of 1976 and to create a new broadcasting policy (Hadland, 2007:105). The new act also amended certain provisions of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) to stipulate and clarify the powers given to the minister of communication with regard to the formulation of policy. The act further outlined the powers of the IBA in terms of the regulation and licensing of the broadcasting system. It also made provision for classifying broadcasting activities in the "public

interest” (Broadcasting Act No 4 of 1999). The three fundamental objectives of the Broadcasting Act were to:

- Contribute to democracy, the development of society, gender equality, nation building, the provision of education, and the strengthening of the spiritual and moral fibre of society;
- Safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of South Africa; and
- Encourage ownership and control of broadcasting services through participation by persons from historically disadvantaged groups.

Content and rating advisory bodies are some of the other ways in which the media regulates itself in South Africa. The Films and Publications Act passed by parliament in 1996 provided for the establishment of the Film and Publication Board (FPB) (Film and Publication Board, 2015). The FPB is a government agency and a unit of the South African Ministry of Home Affairs, which acts as a regulatory body to adjudicate the media by classifying what media content may be distributed, and to protect children from harmful and inappropriate content (Rivers, 2006:221). The body imposes age restrictions and provides consumer advice (Film and Publication Board, 2015).

While the media industry has a system of self-regulation, it is also subject to various regulatory systems in the “public sphere”. There are several civil organisations or stakeholders who protect the media, such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). MISA is a non-governmental advocacy group that represents members in Southern Africa to promote a free and independent media by acting against media freedom violations.

The next section discusses the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), how it came into existence and its main purposes within the media environment in South Africa.

3.2.1 The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA)

The Media Development and Diversity Act of 2002 was passed with the aim of creating the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) to provide an

enabling environment for the transformation and diversification of the media landscape in South Africa (Lloyd, 2011:12). In addition, the MDDA was intended to service the needs of previously disadvantaged groups with a particular focus on those who, according to the government, had been ignored by the media (MDDA, 2009). As set out in the Media Development and Diversity Act (African National Congress, 2002), the main objectives of the MDDA were to:

- Give a voice to the right to freedom of expression as entrenched in the Constitution. This includes the freedom of the media to disseminate information;
- Encourage media access, ownership and control by previously disadvantaged communities, including historically indigenous languages and cultural groups;
- Promote the growth of human resource capacity and training for those in the media industry, again with an emphasis on those from previously disadvantaged groups;
- Boost funding to small and community media;
- Increase public awareness with regard to media transformation in South Africa; and
- Further aid any initiatives that promote literacy and embed an ethos of reading among South Africans.

In the following section, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) is discussed, along with how it was established and its main objectives within the South African media.

3.2.2 The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA)

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) was founded in 2000 by the ICASA Act to regulate the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors in South Africa (Moyo & Hlongwane, 2009:279). This followed the amalgamation of the communication sectors' two prominent independent regulatory authorities (IRAs): the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) of 1993 and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) of 1995 (Moyo & Hlongwane, 2009:279; Rivers, 2006:224). In 2006, under the ICASA amendment Act of 2006, the regulation of the South African Postal Services was also included

under the auspices of ICASA. The main sectors of the media that are regulated by ICASA include television and radio, and the primary objectives of the regulator are as follows:

- To license broadcasters, signal distributors, providers of telecommunication services and postal services;
- To make regulations and impose license conditions;
- To ensure international and regional co-operation;
- To consult and liaise with the Ministry of Communications; and
- To decide and make rulings on complaints.

The institutional independence of ICASA is currently of paramount importance as it has supposedly been guaranteed in the Constitution as a means of ensuring that the sector is “never again abused by any government for the benefit of one section of society at the expense of others” (Moyo & Hlongwane, 2009:282). Therefore, ICASA is protected under a category of Chapter 9 of the South African Constitution as a state institution that supports constitutional democracy (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Since its inception, there has been considerable debate over the independence of ICASA and IRAs in general. Moyo and Hlongwane (2009:279) argue that the independence of ICASA’s regulatory activities has been “severely undermined” by meddling from Minister of Communication Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, as well as by under-funding and a lack of clear constitutional protection.

It should be noted that the definition of ICASA and its placement under Chapter 9 of the constitution has come into question by the Department of Communications (DoC), suggesting that its autonomy as an independent body could be annulled. This is especially pertinent since the Constitution speaks of a broadcast regulator and not a converged broadcasting and telecommunications regulator; and ICASA itself is not unambiguously mentioned in conjunction with other Chapter 9 institutions (Moyo & Hlongwane, 2009:283). Regardless of this, ICASA has been defined in the ICASA Act of 2000 under section 3(3) as an “independent agency, subject only to the Constitution and the law” and “without any political or commercial interference” (Rivers, 2006:225).

Moyo and Hlongwane (2009:284) have raised questions about the ability of ICASA to circumvent commercial interference. To examine this issue, Moyo and Hlongwane conducted a study into ICASA relative to three variables: its independence from government and private institutions, how transparent its decision-making process was, and how its funding structure facilitated its independence. This was done by analysing, firstly, its independence from governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Communication; secondly, its independence from major broadcasting and telecommunications institutions; and thirdly, its independence in the decision-making process.

Moyo and Hlongwane (2009:284) concluded that there were limitations to ICASA's independence and cited the case where the regulatory authority attempted to impose a regulation on Telkom's price structure. When Telkom refused and threatened to embark on a lengthy and costly litigation process, the authority was obliged to reach a settlement out of court — and on the operator's terms (Horwitz & Currie, 2007:445).

The next section discusses the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), as well as its regulatory structures, functions and objectives.

3.2.3 The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA)

The South African broadcasting industry also has its own representative body: the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). Like the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASA), it is financed by its members (National Association of Broadcasters, 2014). The regulatory arm of the NAB is the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), which was established by the NAB in 1993 and is funded and managed by South Africa's broadcasting industry (Rivers, 2006:219). Although financed by the NAB, the BCCSA is an independent judicial tribunal and not subordinate to the NAB. The BCCSA's core function is to ensure high standards by South Africa's broadcasters and that the industry upholds the codes of conduct signed by all of its members; as well as to promote freedom of speech and access to information (National Association of Broadcasters, 2014).

The BCCSA is tasked with responding to what it considers “actionable hate, by governing racial constructs and notions of racism in ways that contradict the predominant trajectory of South Africa's transition from an apartheid dictatorship to a

multicultural democracy” (Rivers, 2006:221). This may be described simply as the protection of the public from subjection to racist remarks, expressions of hate, or the “racial constructs upon which hate depends” (Rivers, 2006:219).

Regulations on advertising in South Africa are discussed in the next section.

3.2.4 Advertising regulation

The advertising industry has a similar regulatory body to the FPB, notably the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASA). The ASA is an independent body, financed by the marketing communication industry to regulate the advertising industry (Advertising Complaints Authority, 2015). Furthermore, to ensure the independence of the body, it employs a president from outside of the advertising industry. The ASA also has a professional code at its core, which acts as a guiding document. This code of advertising practice is based on the International Code of Advertising Practice and is internationally accepted as the basis for self-regulation by the advertising industry. Members of the public can lay a complaint with the ASA if they are offended by an advertisement or if they feel that any content is “untruthful, misleading or harmful” (Advertising Complaints Authority, 2015).

In the final section of this chapter, regulation of the print media is discussed in the context of South Africa’s press.

3.2.5 Print media regulation

Globally, South Africa is among the minority of countries that have an ombudsman, and among the majority that have a mediation process or a waiver to the rights to further recourse (Lloyd, 2011:17). A press ombudsman is a person who is employed by the media industry as a facilitator of press self-regulation with the charge to deal with public and governmental complaints. Although employed by the media, the ombudsman must act impartially when investigating any complaints, and in South Africa, all findings by the ombudsman are, in turn, subjected to an appeals panel that is headed by a retired high court judge (SANEF, 2014).

The current system of press regulation in South Africa consists of the Press Council of South Africa (PCSA), hereafter referred to as the Council, which was established in 2007 to replace the Office of the Press Ombudsman (Duncan, 2014:168). It was noted

that the Ombudsman's Office was largely under-resourced, resulting in it "lacking visibility", such that several press houses ignored its rulings. In response to growing criticism about the body's ineffectiveness, the press launched a better-resourced, more complex body (Berger, 2010:295). Until October 2012, it was constituted by six media and six public representatives, an ombudsman and a deputy ombudsman. However, this was changed after October 2012 to include a director, a public advocate and a retired judge as chair (Duncan, 2014:168).

Initially referred to as a press self-regulatory body, it is now labelled an independent co-regulatory body between the press and the public. According to the PCSA, the Council, the ombudsman and the Appeals Panel are "an independent co-regulatory mechanism set up by the print media". In unity, they provide "impartial, expeditious and cost-effective adjudication to settle disputes between newspapers and magazines, on the one hand, and members of the public, on the other, over the editorial content of publications" (Press Council of South Africa, 2014).

The Council's code of ethics represents the sector's process of self-regulation, which strives to establish internal standards of professionalism and act as a guide for journalists (Press Council South Africa, 2011). More than 640 publications subscribe to the Council's code, and most are members of the industry's representative body: Print and Digital Media South Africa (PDMSA). Currently, the PDMSA has more than 700 newspaper and magazine titles comprising its membership, and it represents four different language groups (PDMSA, 2014).

All newspaper and magazine owners that subscribe to the Press Council's code must include the organisation's logo in all publications, along with details of how to complain about any material in the articles. Any complaints are first considered by the ombudsman, while mediation occurs between the plaintiff and the publication. If a hearing is required, either the ombudsman or his deputy presides over the case in addition to a representative from the media and the public. All decisions can be appealed by the Appeals Panel (Lloyd, 2011:14).

The Press Council can order a publication that is found to be in violation of the code to publish the ombudsman's and the Appeals Panel's rulings, correct the story, and/or publish an apology to the affected individuals or groups (Lloyd, 2011:14).

Media institutions and “watchdog” organisations like the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) and the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF) have been established to uphold freedom of speech and media independence (Wasserman, 2010a:20). SANEF is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1996 as a non-racial professional body through the merging of the Black Editors Forum and the body established by the predominantly White middle-class English and Afrikaans newspaper editors: the Conference of Editors (SANEF, 2014).

Through SANEF, members of the public have been given recourse to formal complaint mechanisms for issues with the media (Wasserman, 2010b:242). The history of the organisation has been characterised by vigorous debate over controversial topics in the media industry. Its membership includes senior journalists, journalism trainers and editors from all sectors of the South African media. Two prestigious peer recognition accolades are awarded by the association, which include the Nat Nakasa Award and the Sanef-Wrottesley Award (SANEF, 2014).

This ends the discussion on media regulatory frameworks in South Africa. The chapter finishes with a short summary of the main points of the chapter.

3.3 Chapter summary

Chapter 3 presented a detailed outline of the legal and regulatory frameworks pertaining to the South African Media, covering each of the media sectors. The review included articles from various leading authors in the field on the sections of South Africa’s media regulatory system and the acts and agencies that are in operation to enforce or otherwise encourage the compliance of the media organisations.

The debate on the self-regulation of South Africa’s print media was also covered in detail. This included an explanation of the systems of South Africa’s Press Council and the press ombudsman. Media regulation in South Africa was discussed in terms of the various methods of affecting this, including statutory, co-, and self-regulation. The chapter ended with a review of SANEF and when it was created, as well as its purpose as an observer in the country.

Chapter 4 follows with a detailed literature review on the media in post-apartheid South Africa, the concepts of “public” and “national interest” and the role of the media in a democracy.

CHAPTER 4

Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises the literature review part of the thesis. It begins with a review of the terms “public interest” and “national interest”, followed by the concept of the “public sphere”. These concepts are discussed as they all closely relate to media regulation and self-regulation of the press. The role of the media in society and in a democracy, in general, are then considered with the metaphors of the media as a “watchdog”, “lapdog”, “mirror” or “fourth estate” each being explored.

The chapter then flows into a debate on some of the key literature that has been published on the “framing” of the news, in which the aspects of “agenda-setting”, “framing” and “priming” are each defined. The media is also considered for its function as a “problem machine” and the commercial motives for this function are reviewed.

The literature review subsequently changes tack to consider “media governance” in South Africa and self-regulation in Africa, with a review of the regulatory systems currently in place for the print media in South Africa, as well as the debates that have been created by this system. Finally, the ownership of the media in South Africa is deliberated with a focus on the impact that it has had on media regulation in the country.

The first section of the literature review follows, now, with a discussion on the role of the media in society and in a democracy in particular.

4.2 Role of the media in society

One of the primary tasks of the media within the civic state is to generate an all-encompassing national identity, and to foster national civic solidarity and nation-building (Bornman, 2013:443). This is because the mass media provides a nationwide communication resource where all citizens can see, hear and read the same messages and values. As a result, it fulfils the primary role of promoting a sense of unity and solidarity in society (Bornman, 2013:443).

The media has also been noted for its role in democratisation and economic growth, with authors such as Berger (2004:46) stating that, along with urbanisation, the density of media infiltration into society is one of the critical variables that correlates with economic growth and democratisation. It may be, for example, that as a society becomes more prosperous, more funds are available to spend on the various forms of media.

The next section reviews the role of the media in a democracy.

4.3 The role of the media in a democracy

This section reviews the role of the media in a democracy. It begins with a discussion on the concepts of the media as a “watchdog” or the “fourth estate”, followed by a discussion on the media as a “mirror”. The media as a “watchdog” or the “fourth estate” is discussed next.

4.3.1 The media as a “watchdog” or the “fourth estate”

The media is often referred to as the “fourth estate” (Ekron, 2008:80). According to O’Neil (1998, cited in Hofmeyr, 2001:209), “as the fourth estate, or watchdog, of government, the media are expected to critically assess government action and provide such information to the public”. Thus, the press should be a “watchdog” of the country’s political environment (Hofmeyr, 2001:209). This suggests that the role of the media is to act as a “watchdog” or informant that can limit the concentration of power and prevent the imposition of illicit or unethical action by the government; or to prevent the enabling of such behaviour as a “lapdog” (Hofmeyr, 2001:209).

Despite the highly consolidated and commercial nature of the media, it has still been possible for the print media in South Africa to exist as a “watchdog”, thereby maintaining considerable independence from the “ruling elite”, and some significant stories have been published about the misconduct of the elite (Duncan, 2009:8). Investigative journalists from *The Guardian* and *The Sunday Times*, for example, studied leads that had been circulated in *Nosweek* on the arms deal and the corruption that had been occurring in this and other such high-profile government tenders (Duncan, 2009:8). The attitude of former President Thabo Mbeki toward Zimbabwe and the country’s issues with HIV and AIDS also came under scrutiny

(Duncan, 2009:8). In other cases, reports were published that openly criticised former Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang's hostility toward the use of antiretroviral treatment for HIV and AIDS, and her recommendation instead to use natural remedies to treat the disease (Duncan, 2009:8).

The next section looks at other metaphors that are applied to the media.

4.3.2 Media metaphors

The media is described using a variety of metaphors. McQuail (2005) illustrates seven "communication images" that describe how the media may be perceived to connect society with reality. These include:

- a mirror;
- a window;
- a filter or gatekeeper;
- a forum;
- a signpost;
- a disseminator; or
- an interlocutor.

While there are many metaphors to describe the media, this literature review focuses only on three: the "mirror" metaphor described by McQuail (2005); the "searchlight" metaphor, as described by Braham (1982:268); and the "flashlight" metaphor, as described by Stoker and Rawlins (2005:177).

In order to support the media's role as the "fourth estate" described previously, it is often referred to using the "mirror" metaphor, which suggests that the media and the contents of the media should simply be reflections of the reality in a society, and that journalists should act in a manner that "holds up a mirror to society" (Ekron, 2008:80). The notion behind the "mirror" metaphor is that the reflection created by the media should serve the need of society to have a critical, objective and unbiased view of itself, thereby allowing society to observe, evaluate and change accordingly.

Ekron (2008:81) argues that while the media is meant to offer a clear reflection of society, factors such as commercialisation and media concentration affect and distort this reflection. McQuail (2005:83) supports this with the assertion that while the

media should ideally present a faithful reflection of the state of a society, this image may include possible distortion or inversion of the image, since the direction or angle of the “mirror” is “decided by others”.

Conversely, Braham’s (1982:268) description of the media as a “searchlight” implies that the media acts as such by highlighting certain issues and aspects of society, while leaving others in the dark. Stoker and Rawlins (2005:177) instead use the metaphor of a “flashlight”. They argue, for example, that in the modern commercial world, the media has changed from a broad “searchlight” on publicity, into a “narrow ‘flashlight’ of positive information in the hands of public relations experts” that has enabled governments and businesses to shape public opinion instead of being influenced by it (Stoker & Rawlins, 2005:177).

This view of the “searchlight” metaphor tends to correlate with the view of former Secretary of Health Alfredo Bengzon in the administration of former Philippine President Aquino, who described the media with both the “searchlight” and “mirror” metaphors (Teer-Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1994:217). According to Bengzon, the media is a “mirror” when it shows “what we are and will become”, and a “searchlight” when it shows “what we can [become].”

This ends the preliminary portion of the literature review on the role of the media in society in relation to some of the most common metaphors. The chapter continues now with a review of the concept of “public interest”, and how this relates to the media.

4.4 Public interest

In countries with democratically-elected governments, it is generally expected that policy formation by the government will be guided by the objective of improving the definition of the “public interest” on behalf of the people (Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003:182). Van Cuilenburg and McQuail (2003:182) suggest that the definition of “public interest” has “widely varying interpretations”, but notes that it is helpful to consider the concept relative to its sub-goals, which are typically “social welfare”, “economic welfare”, and “political welfare”. There are many elements of society that are cited as being in the “public interest”, and the broadcasting,

telecommunications and media industries are often noted for their role in supporting the “public interest” (De Lanerolle, 2011:47).

DiCola (2007:101) describes the concept of “public interest” as the realm of concerns that affect a society — either in sections, or as a whole — rather than only the individuals who are directly affected or immediately involved within the society. The author suggests that, despite the trend in capitalist societies to move towards an individualistic lifestyle, a growing range of issues are arising that present universal concerns to the people, which demand regulation on a wider scale. The most common of these concerns include:

- Threats on the grounds of the environment, personal health, security and “economic welfare”; and
- The potential benefits that should be shared in a society, including social, technological and economic developments in the society.

The next section presents a discussion on the first of the primary categories of “public interest” and “political welfare”.

4.4.1 Political welfare

The main elements that are related to “political welfare” include those that advance or support democracy in a nation’s political institutions (Cottle & Matthews, 2013:562). This includes freedom of expression, which is closely linked to freedom of publication, and (depending on the respective political culture and national context) voting equality and the right to participate in national decisions (De Lanerolle, 2011:47). DiCola (2007:101) observes that to facilitate this equality, wide public access to the types and contents of communications are essential, and that the policies relating to the universal provision of communication largely stimulate this equality. The participation of the people in civic life also necessitates suitable access to — and dissemination of — information and ideas.

Social welfare is discussed next, as one of the primary categories of “public interest”.

4.4.2 Social welfare

DiCola (2007:101) and Van Cuilenburg and McQuail (2003:185) argue that the objectives of “public interest” concerning “social welfare” are more divergent. The elements of “social welfare” that relate to the rights of the citizenry include their ethnic, linguistic and cultural desires. While these authors note that the criteria of the policies of governments for ensuring “social welfare” cannot be easily defined, they suggest that regulations for ensuring “social welfare” by the communication sector include those that prevent public offence or any harm that may arise from public communication. Steenveld (2004:95) defines “social” and “economic welfare” together as “citizenship rights”, which guarantee an individual’s social rights and general lifestyle in a society and state. These include the elements of education, social security, and healthcare.

The “economic welfare” aspect of “public interest” is discussed in the following section.

4.4.3 Economic welfare

Economic welfare is defined by Murdock and Golding (1989:182) as the right to share completely in the social heritage of a society, and to live at the standards that prevail in a society. The promotion of “economic welfare” involves various aspects of the communication sector (Cottle & Matthews, 2013:562), including the promotion of the infrastructure necessary to allow the efficient functioning of the national economy (Wasko & Meehan, 2013:150). Due to modern technological developments and the increasing reliance of economies on communication and information facilities, the communication sector has become an increasingly integral part of the economy; hence, “economic welfare” (DiCola, 2007:101). Aside from the general aspects of the communication sector relating to profitability, employment and efficiency, regulation and policy are generated by governments in aid of the “public interest” through innovation within (and the interconnection of) the communication sector (Wasko & Meehan, 2013:150).

Economic welfare is often invoked, for example, to justify regulations in support of the “public interest”, and Van Cuilenburg and McQuail (2003:181) suggest that in the US and European policies, the rationales for adjusting telecommunications and

broadcasting policies are structured to align predominantly with the principles of “economic welfare”.

Steenveld (2004:109) asserts that outside of the framework of legislation, journalists also have the power to counter market and institutional forces in the “public interest”, for example, to benefit the economically less-powerful. However, whether or not this is realised depends on the autonomy of journalists within their work environments and whether they construe professionalism to mean “serving their profession” or serving the “public interest”.

The next section discusses government policies on communication and how these are related to the notion of “public interest”.

4.4.4 Government policies on communication

The implementation of government policies on communication for the sake of the “public interest” has perpetually created ambiguities relating to the freedom of the media and the expression of the citizenry. While governments are often viewed as the primary “enemy of freedom of individual expression”, they are also often seen as the primary custodian — through legal systems and constitutions — of other freedoms that are also important aspects of societies (Wasko & Meehan, 2013:150).

Van Cuilenburg and McQuail (2003:184) argue that the main factors that affect policies on communication and telecommunication are largely determined by the following:

- The objectives or goals that are being pursued;
- The criteria and values by which the goals are recognised or defined;
- The communication services and content that the policies apply to;
- The type of communication systems, such as broadcasting, satellite, print, cable or telephone technologies, and so forth; and
- The appropriate means of implementing the policy, such as through market practice, constitutional law, self-regulation, regulatory protocols, or otherwise.

Figure 4.1 outlines the relationships that exist between these factors on a broad scale, though it should be noted that the diagram only refers to the policy of governments in aid of the “public interest”, as opposed to the policies that are created in an increasing

trend by media organisations to pursue the “public interest” within self-regulatory frameworks.

In Figure 4.1, the concept of “media policy” is positioned mainly on the left-most side of the model. Positioned as such, it focuses on broadcasting, cable, newspaper, print and other such forms of media, affecting aspects of diversity, freedom, public accountability and quality of content. Conversely, in the case of “telecommunications policy”, which lies on the right-most side of the model, the focus is on market conditions, technical infrastructure and the regulation of monopolies.

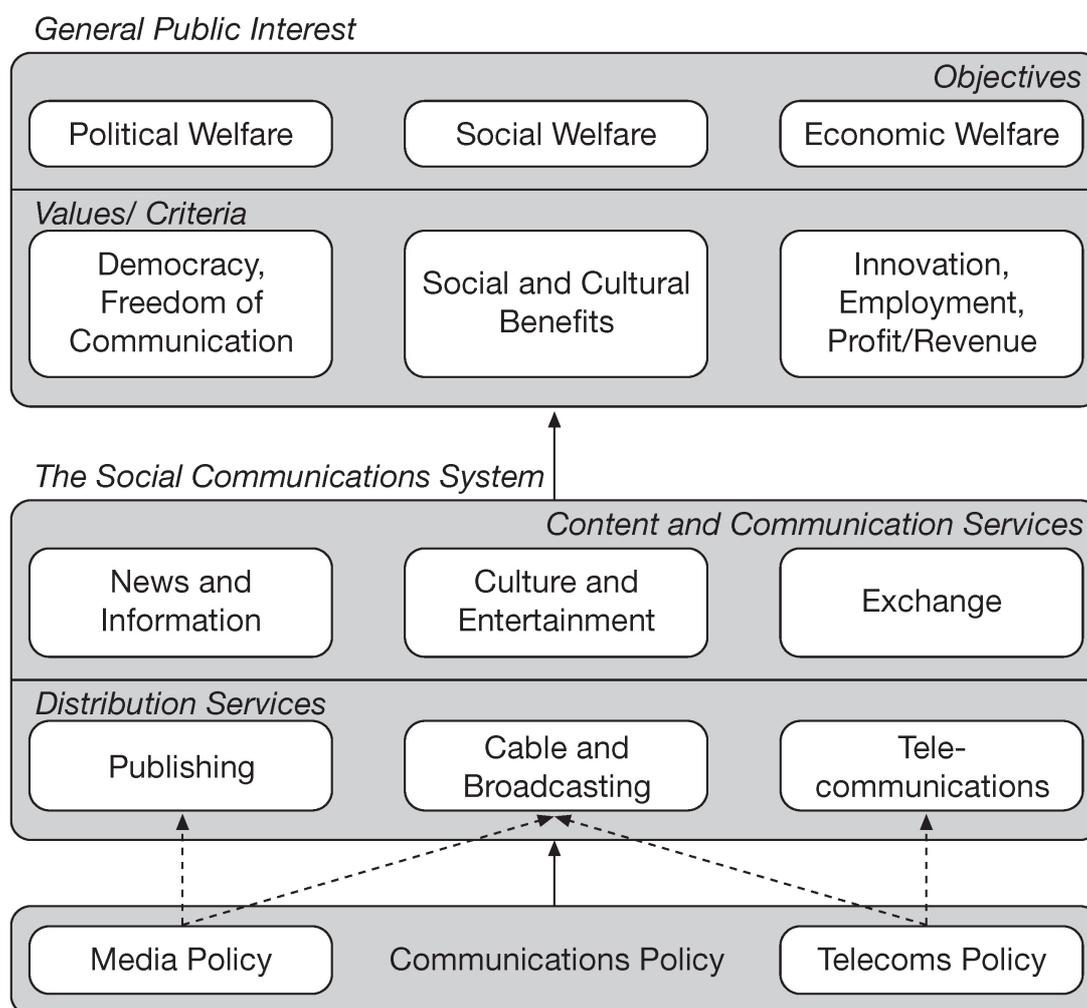


Figure 4.1. Regulatory policies on communications for the “public interest”

Source: Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003:184

Discussed in this section are typical government policies on communication and how these are related to the notion of “public interest”. The policies that have been

presented by the South African government to support the “public interest” are discussed next.

4.4.5 Government policy in South Africa to support the “public interest”

De Lanerolle (2011:47) suggests that within South Africa, the practise of “technological convergence” is an aspect of the communication sector that is substantially regulated by the state for “public interest”. Technological convergence is a term that arose in the late 1970s to denote the changes in interaction among the various communications technologies, such as among the media, computing, and other such communications technologies (Lind, 2004). As is noted by Pool (1983:23):

“a single physical means — be it wires, cables, or airwaves — may carry services that in the past were provided in separate ways. Conversely, a service that was provided in the past by any one medium — be it broadcasting, the press, or telephony — may now be provided in several different physical ways.”

Technological convergence, therefore, allows for the distribution of the necessary “content”, via the available communication systems, in the most efficient and cost-effective means possible. “Content” refers to educational material, information, business data, entertainment and other such content that may exist in the form of pictures, videos, audio or text (De Lanerolle, 2011:47).

For example, the internet has been enabled by technological convergence, as has the amalgamation of telecommunication- and voice-technology using fibre-optic cables, in the form of Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Internet Protocol Television. While technological convergence refers to what is possible, De Lanerolle (2011:48) argues that it does not imply that such merging will, or even should happen. Benkler (1998:183) asserts that the extent to which convergence occurs is not defined by the technologies, but rather by the choices and actions of political, economic and social actors such as regulators, policy makers, civic organisations, lawmakers and community platforms for the people.

Within a “public interest” theory framework, therefore, regulators and policy makers are expected to consider what is best for the society as a whole and to structure regulations to promote or limit the convergence of technologies in a way that best

enhances “social welfare”; yet without these laws and regulations acting as barriers to innovation (DiCola, 2007:101).

Over the last decade or so, the government has offered regulatory frameworks that indicate an intention to promote “technological convergence”. In 2000, the telecommunications and broadcasting regulators were merged to form ICASA, while in 2006 these two sectors were encouraged to promote convergence through the Electronic Communications Act (ECA) (Moyo & Hlongwane, 2009:279), which also introduced regulations on the South African postal services.

In a case study on the regulations and policies relating to convergence in South Africa, Gillwald (2002:29) suggests that combining the policies and regulations of telecommunication and broadcasting are essential for a modern South Africa. The author notes that it would “no longer suffice to develop national broadcasting separately to communication and information policies”.

De Lanerolle (2011:59) states, however, that the policies and regulations on broadcasting in the country have, in fact, changed very little over the last decade and they are no further aligned to telecommunication policies now than they were before the changes were made to the country’s regulatory policies. The reason, it has been argued, is that the government’s rationale for regulating broadcasting is very different from the rationale for regulating the telecommunications sector (Moyo & Hlongwane, 2009:279). Thus, De Lanerolle argues that if the two sectors were to undergo truly convergent policy regulations, a restructured regulatory framework would need to be introduced.

Former Chairperson of SANEF Mathatha Tsedu raised important issues relating to what was meant by “the public”, “the nation” and “the state” in a 2006 presentation; and indeed, “which public” was being referred to by this definition (Barratt, 2006:48). Tsedu defined “the public” as the “people as a whole”, while “the nation” he described as “the people of one or more countries or races organised in one state”. Finally, he defined “the state” as the government (Barratt, 2006:48). Tsedu continued to note that when discussing the interests of the public, one should define “to which public” one was referring. For example, this could denote, firstly, “the vociferous, well-organised public who can push their own interests” and influence which stories

are carried in the media, or it could denote “the silent public who do not understand many of these issues and just hope the Lotto money will deliver”.

In 2002, former-Head of South Africa’s Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) Joel Netshitenzhe argued that the dichotomy between the “public” and “national interest” did not imply that the two were antagonistic or otherwise contradictory (Netshitenzhe, 2002). Instead, he asserted that the dichotomy between the people and the government did not mean that the people were anti-government or that the government was anti-people. Rather, Netshitenzhe (2002) argued that the state existed to serve society, as opposed to serving its own ends, and that legitimate states derived their mandates from the people. He went further to describe the rights of both the state and the public, and asserted that the state had the right and responsibility to apply leadership, while the public had the right to contribute where they felt necessary regarding how they should be governed (Netshitenzhe, 2002). Thus, “under popular democracy”, Netshitenzhe argued, the “public” and “national interest” can and do coincide, and the two should in fact be complementary.

The next section discusses the concept of “national interest” in more detail, with a review of some of the key instances of the literature on the topic.

4.5 National interest

Dugger (2010:A4) defines “national interest” as all of the matters that relate to the promotion of the public good, as well as the “survival and security of the state”. Wasserman and De Beer (2005b:193) argue that the concepts of “national interest” and “public interest” should be perceived as “fluid” and open to interpretation, instead of vis-à-vis, mutually exclusive, fixed normative frameworks.

Netshitenzhe (2002) defines “national interest” as aspects that ensure the “survival and flourishing” of a nation and nation-state. Conversely, Netshitenzhe refers to “public interest” as the interests of the combined citizenry or the “collective civil interests”, which are independent of the institutions of state. Netshitenzhe cautions against viewing “public” and “national interest” as a dichotomy, though, and suggests that the two should be understood as complementary to each other.

The emphasis of the apartheid-era government was typically on justifying control of the media using the excuse of satisfying the “national interest” (Dugger, 2010:A4).

Under the new democratic government, though, this shifted to an emphasis on predominantly self-regulation for the sake of the “public interest”, with regulation by bodies such as the BCCSA, the South African Press Council and the press ombudsman (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005b:194). Wasserman and De Beer (2005b:194) argue that a downfall of this move towards regulation in the “public interest” is that it introduces the risk of leaving “the media’s role in society to market forces”.

In 2010, the Protection of Information Bill by the ANC-led government was proposed, which would empower the heads of government agencies with the authority to classify wide categories of currently accessible information as secret for the sake of the “national interest”. The penalty for disclosing this classified information could be punished by imprisonment for between 3 and 25 years (Dugger, 2010:A4). This has created widespread debate on the constitutional rights of the public in South Africa to freedom of information (Wasserman, 2011:588).

For the sake of diligence, the concept of “national interest” must be accompanied by a discussion on the concept of the “public sphere”. This is reviewed in the next section with a deliberation on the work of some of the key published authors.

4.6 The public sphere

Habermas (2010:64) defines the “public sphere” as “an accessible and independent realm in which each voice is equal to others” and “the means by which democratic decisions are reached”. Dahlgren (2000:315) refers to the importance of the media, from both a radical and liberal viewpoint as being enablers of a public space for discussion and dissent — a “public sphere”. The author suggests that the media do so by reporting on aspects of social participation in all areas of society, whereby all members of society can see their “life-worlds” and values fairly represented by the media.

The extent to which the mass media functions as a “public sphere” that is representative of the citizenry serves as a “barometer” of the condition of democracy (Gillwald, 1993:65). This is because the media is typically positioned at the interface between the government and those who are being governed. Therefore, the “public sphere”, in a traditional liberal position, is the domain between civil society and the

government that “guarantees the protection of the individual”. Gillwald (1993:65) further argues that democracy is a relative concept with its character and the perception depending on the flow of public information within the society, as well as the capacity of the public to hold the government accountable and take action based on informed judgment.

While the media’s primary function as a guardian is well emphasised in democratic states, its role does not end there. According to Mazwai (cited in Hofmeyr, 2001:209), as part of the “public sphere” it must also contribute to the strengthening of the social fibre and rights of the nation, and the institution of its established laws, practices and customs.

Community broadcasting, for example, provides an “access point” for diverse members of a community to express their individual, artistic, cultural, spiritual and political opinions (MDDA, 2009:128). Community broadcasters aim to empower their citizens by supplying them with pertinent information about their community, which in turn, empowers them to access and grow their societies (MDDA, 2009:128).

Apartheid in South Africa inhibited the growth of an even minimally-homogenous national culture or “public sphere” (Tomaselli, 1997:67). However, following the advent of democracy in the country, TV, radio and “print voter education programmes” created a national “public sphere” for the first time that addressed all South Africans on similar topics (Steenveld, 2004:104). Various broadcasting strategies were implemented, for example, using sitcoms such as *Suburban Bliss* and *Going Up* to provide entertainment that was highly rated, to encourage intercultural dialogue between South Africans and to motivate them to approach and deal with their previous cultural and racial prejudices (Roome, cited in Tomaselli, 1997:67).

In the new democratic South Africa, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act, which established the Independent Broadcasting Authority, justified its commitment to regulating the broadcast media in the interests of diversity, democracy and development (Horwitz, cited in Barnett, 1999:651), and thereby reinforced the broadcasting system as a democratic public sphere.

Barnett (1999:667) equates the notion of the media as a cultural and political “public sphere” to a form of economic development policy because in countries such as South

Africa, the goal of expanding the media as a “public sphere” is only possible once the fundamental structures of technology and communication have been established. Therefore, the expansion of the media as a democratic “public sphere” develops in congruence with the technological and communication capabilities of that country, and thus the economic development of the society. Therefore, while there is a general tendency to “over-estimate the ability of the media [to act as] as a genuinely democratic public sphere”, Barnett (1999:167) argues that due to the limitations of widespread technological and communication facilities, such as in South Africa, there is a limit to the degree that the media is able to serve as a fully-democratic “public sphere”. A high-quality “public sphere” is also one in which the public audience is approached as citizens, rather than consumers (Steenveld, 2004:104).

This concludes the discussion on the “public sphere”. The next section reviews the concept of “framing” the news.

4.7 Framing the news

Entman (2007:164) defines “framing” the news as the “process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation”. Framing acts to alter and shape the interpretations of an audience, thereby raising the apparent importance of certain concepts above others through variations in their presentation, and encouraging the audience to feel, think and decide about the concept in a controlled way (Gross & D’Ambrosio, cited in Entman, 2007:164).

Scheufele (2004:405) describes the practice of “framing” as the stressing of certain objects and their relations, while applying certain standards to the objects; for example, identifying the victims of an event. Framing emphasises specific aspects of reality to recipients to inspire specific decisions, attributions or evaluations (Snow & Benford, cited in Scheufele, 2004:402). Framing influences the attitudes, schemata, decisions and emotions of users or recipients of the media through the application of biases and other such emphases.

Fully developed frames are generally said to perform four functions (Entman, cited in Entman, 2007:165), which are the following:

- They define a problem;

- They analyse the cause of the problem;
- They initiate a moral judgment; and
- They promote remedies to the problem.

Entman (2007:163) suggests that bias is a broadly applicable word with various definitions depending on the application. In the case of news that allegedly falsifies or distorts reality, the term “distortion bias” is used. Where the news favours one side over another and provides unequal treatment to each side, such as in a political forum, the term “content bias” is used. A “decision-making bias” may also occur where the mind-sets and motivations of the journalists who control the news present a bias.

Therefore, according to Entman (2007:166), “framing” is a form of “content bias” where an influence is exerted over an audience using consistent patterns of “framing” in media communication. Entman (2007:165) distinguishes bias differently from “news slant” though, suggesting that “slant” characterises how individual editorials and news reports are framed to favour one side over another in political or societal disputes. While mainstream news corporations often deny any “slant” in their reports, it is notable that political players often still complain, at times strategically, that the media has favoured their opponents.

The next subsection delves deeper into the principle of “framing” the news by discussing the concepts of “agenda-setting”, “framing” and “priming”.

4.7.1 Agenda-setting, framing and priming

“Agenda-setting” refers to the first step of “framing” and denotes the defining of problems that are worthy of government and public attention; however, while it may involve government-related issues that should be carefully represented, it is independent of government and is not bound to the government or confined to government-related issues (Scheufele, 2004:406). Conversely, “priming” refers to the method of reaching the final outcome or intended effect of “framing” (Entman, 2007:164).

The similarities between “agenda-setting”, “priming” and “framing” have been highlighted by several researchers (Scheufele, 2004:406). Two views of “agenda-setting” exist. One is that “agenda-setting” is a global concept incorporating both

“framing” and “priming”, while a second is that “agenda-setting” is a variation of “priming” that must be distinguished from “framing” in terms of its mechanisms of activating the schema (Ghanem, 1997:3).

“Agenda-setting” is the process of “telling people what to think about”, as opposed to *how* they should think (Cohen, cited in Scheufele, 2004:406). Media “priming” refers to the technique of repeatedly covering certain issues so that through repetition, the media not only establishes an issue on the public’s agenda but also provides the criteria by which the issue should be evaluated (Iyengar & Kinder, cited in Scheufele, 2004:407). Thus, an issue that is covered by the media serves as a “prime”, whereby Scheufele (2004:407) suggests that the effects of “priming” tend to be more intense when the subjects have been frequently or recently “primed”; though there is contrasting evidence to suggest which method is dominant. Different models of observing human cognition are used to observe the effects of “priming” relative to how frequent or recent the “priming” activity was (Ghanem, 1997:3).

Wyer and Srull (cited in Scheufele, 2004:407) note that in the “storage-bin” model, memory is comparable to a cognitive bucket, and schemata that are recently “primed” can be more easily recalled as they reside “at the top of the bucket”. According to Wyer and Carlston’s (1979, cited in Scheufele, 2004:407) “storage-battery” model, frequent “priming” is more effective as it causes the schemata to be “repeatedly charged”.

According to Higgins, Bargh and Lombardi’s (1985:59) “synapse” model, if schemata have been recently “primed”, the synaptic activation is more rapid. Thus, in cases where there are short periods between “primings” of target audiences, recent “priming” dominates. Conversely, where there are longer periods between “primings” of target audiences, more frequent “priming” is more effective.

A perception of the news is that it is “framed” to operate as a “problem machine” for society. This is discussed in further detail in the next section.

4.7.2 News as a “problem machine”

A paper by Altheide (1997:649) discusses “framing” of the news to generate fear. The author suggests that popular culture and the mass media influence social life in different ways but that much of the content of the media, such as the news, revolves

around large volumes of images and information relating to fear. This includes violence, crime and actions that alert the audience to potential danger, such as local and global energy problems, inflation, wars, disease and unemployment. In the Altheide paper, it is noted that audiences therefore generally perceive social life as being “very dangerous”.

The question surrounding the system of “framing” is whether people’s experience of crime in their everyday lives drives them to be more interested and attentive to crime-related programmes, such as the news, in order to achieve a commercial end. Thus, it makes logical sense, according to Altheide (1997:665), to suggest that much of the mass media is a “problem machine” that attempts to “frame” events in light of their problems. TV news formats, for example, favour dramatic, visually exciting, short, “conflictual” reports as they are ripe for treating circumstances as problems.

Devji (cited in Altheide, 1997:648) presents the issue of fear in the media in a bold column, in which he states:

“Fear stalks this nation every day. Fear of making a wrong turn in a neighbourhood in Los Angeles, riding the subway or jogging in Central Park in New York, fear is symbolised by locks, guns and alarms, to protect ourselves. Fear of talking to those who don’t look like us. Fear of growing old in a country that does not have the resources to care for us. Fear of the government and civil war.”

Altheide (1997:648) asserts that while it is not definitive whether the reports by the television and newspaper about fear and crime are an “effect” or “cause” of the public’s concerns on these topics, but based on the principle that “framing” of the media is the control of “*what* people think about”, the author suggests that the media are the “cause”. Aside from just crime and fear, the debate on “framing” by the news proliferates onto every aspect of society, with the media contributing to people’s interests in everyday life, their perceptions and their political agendas (MaxKuen & Coombs, cited in Altheide, 1997:649).

While most of the studies on “framing” in the media focus on the news, a study by Mulligan and Habel (2011:79) shows that “framing” within the fictional entertainment industry of the media, such as in film, is also able to significantly influence the

opinions of the audience in ways that are consistent with “framing” in the context of the news.

A third subsection, which relates closely to the “framing” of the news, is the commercialisation of the media and the effect of commercialisation on “framing” the news. This is discussed in detail next.

4.7.3 Commercialisation of the media

While journalists see themselves as objective observers, “watchdogs” and messengers, Fourie (cited in Ekron, 2008:82) notes that commercialisation is a major determining factor in the political economy of the media. This is because the mainstream media is a capitalist enterprise that is “directed by economic considerations” in its effort to turn a profit (Wasko & Meehan, 2013:150). The author likens the media in a free-market media industry to a factory producing any other commodity that may be produced in a capitalist environment; however, in the case of the media, the aim is to sell content in the form of digital, broadcast or print media. Ekron (2008:82) argues that it is therefore unreasonable to assume that the “public interest” would prevail among the executive levels of media houses if it contradicted the companies’ interests.

While the business approach is not in itself contradictory to the ideals of the media, overemphasising the generation of profit and “skewing ... media content” towards commercial objectives is the basis upon which misrepresentation arises (Picard, cited in Ekron, 2008:82). The content that is published in newspapers, for example, includes material that is designed to appeal to the widest possible audience, while the attention of this audience is peddled to the highest-paying advertisers. Thus, only stories that are deemed to be entertaining or appealing to the target market of a publication are considered to be newsworthy and those that may be perceived as offensive to readers’ sensibilities are excluded. Ekron (2008:82) cites the example of the South African newspaper, *Volksblad*, which is targeted at predominantly older, White, Afrikaans-speaking readers, and which would more likely “devote column space to the popular ‘soapie’ *7de Laan* than to health or educational issues in a Black township community”.

Another issue suggested by Picard (cited in Ekron, 2008:82) is that this also causes a “homogenisation” of newspaper content (or media concentration) to cover generally

similar issues, resulting in a decrease in the scope of the ideas and opinions that are expressed. This media concentration and its effect on media diversity are discussed in the next subsection.

4.7.3.1 Media concentration and its effect on media diversity

Meier and Trappel (cited in Ekron, 2008:83) make an important distinction between the variety of available media and media diversity, where variety refers to the variety of choices of products while diversity represents the range of contrasting views. Although the variety of mainstream media has increased, many authors argue that it has done little to expand the diversity of the media and this has been compounded by the concentration of media ownership nationally and internationally. For example, a multitude of tabloid newspapers have arisen in South Africa since 2000, including *The Voice*, *Die Son*, *the Daily Sun* and *Sondag*. However, since all of these newspapers belong to one or other of the four main print media institutions, their range of stories, views and opinions expressed remains limited (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005a:40).

This concludes the discussion on “framing” the news. The next section continues with a deliberation on “media governance” and the principles that are observed for governing the media.

4.8 Media governance

Freedman (2008:14) defines “media governance” as the sum of all the mechanisms, both national and multinational, formal and informal, centralised and distributed that aim to organise media systems. Thus, “media governance” refers to the way in which the media is regulated in societies (McQuail, 2005:234), considering the regulatory structure as a whole with the entirety of all the rules that aim to organise the media system (Puppis, 2010:138).

Hamelink and Nordenstreng (2007:232) define “media governance” as the “framework of practices, rules, and institutions that sets limits and gives incentives for the performance of the media”. Conversely, McQuail (2007:18) describes “media governance” as the many forms of accountability and management of the media, as well as the “institutionalised relations” between society and the media.

Puppis (2010:139) argues that while regulation remains a concept that is essentially tied to the state, governance encompasses all forms of rules that attempt to organise the media system. As shown in Figure 4.2, it therefore encompasses all the horizontal and vertical extensions of media control, including statutory or state-regulations, self-regulations and co-regulations on the horizontal plain, and national or global control on the vertical plain (Puppis, 2010:139). The vertical plain of governance, for example, includes agreements and memorandums between provinces and nations, as in the case of the internet, which was collaborated under an international agreement promulgated by the UN in July 2006 through the Internet Governance Forum (Kleinwächter, 2008).

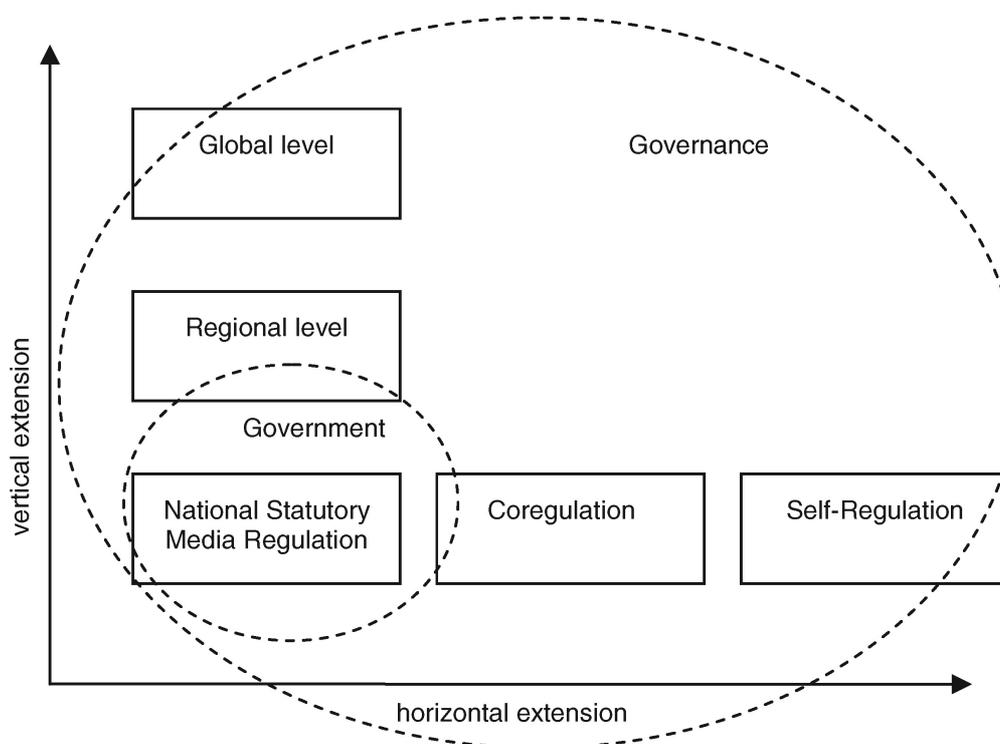


Figure 4.2. “Media governance” as horizontal and vertical extension of government

Source: Puppis, 2007:331, cited in Puppis, 2010:140

A second mechanism of “media governance” is imposed internally at an organisational level. Referred to as “individualised self-regulation”, or “self-organisation” (Black, 2001:117), organisational governance includes the rules and control mechanisms that individual media organisations develop and adhere to in a

bid to provide better press quality (Puppis, 2010:141). This is often practiced, for example, by news organisations that introduce internal codes of conduct, editorial guidelines or complaints departments in the form of public editors and ombudsmen.

Black (1996:27) advocates that “self-organisation” can also exist in a statutory framework, as in the case of public-service broadcasters; or in a “self-regulatory” framework where the principles are generated collectively or externally, but are enforced internally. Figure 4.3 presents an overview of the matrix of rule formulation, indicating where the process of organisational governance can initiate, relative to the outcome of a ruling.

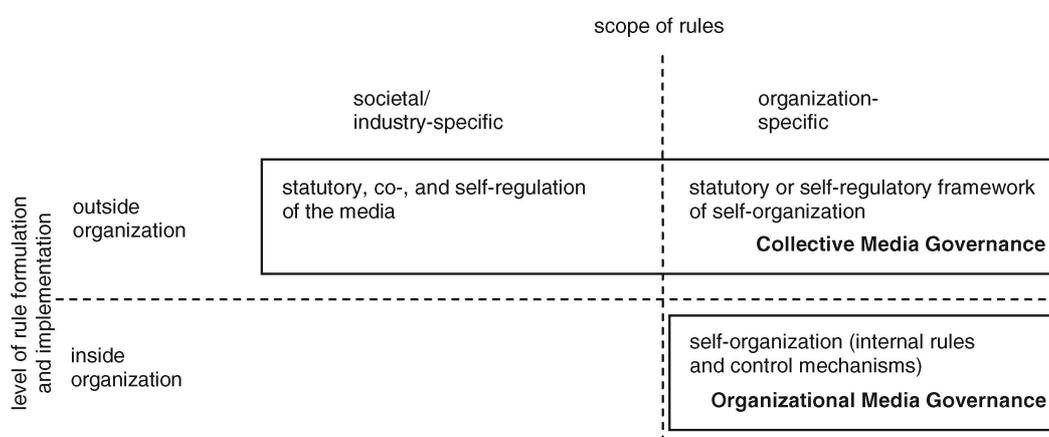


Figure 4.3. Organisational “media governance”

Source: Puppis, 2010:141

As noted by Lloyd (2011:17), approximately 87 press or media councils existed globally in 2011 with the purpose of ensuring that their media adhered to the principles of good journalistic practice — either in a single-medium or across print, broadcasting and other media. As shown in Table 4.1, the study presented various statistics on the press councils around the world. Notable in the table is the high proportion of self-regulated councils, those that are non-government funded and those that impose penalties in the form of publishing council decisions, as opposed to fines (Lloyd, 2011:17).

Table 4.1. Statistics on international media councils

Number of Press Councils	87
Percentage under self-regulation	86%
Percentage that are non-government funded	80%
Percentage with print and broadcast media under their jurisdiction	63%
Percentage charged with enhancing a free press	77%
Percentage for which public membership is at least that of owners and journalists	34%
Percentage which have at least 11 members	41%
Percentage that have a penalty requiring publication of decision (and no fines for example)	86%
Percentage for which appeal rights exist	50%
Percentage that have a mediation process	63%
Percentage that have a waiver (i.e. where complainants waive their rights to other recourse)	56%
Percentage that can take initiatives with respect to potential violation	70%
Percentage that have an ombudsman	16%
Percentage that operate under a code (setting out clear standards rather than just principles)	82%
Percentage that operate under principles only ¹⁷	

Source: Lloyd, 2011:17

In the following section, the role of the media in South Africa is discussed with a review of the ideologies that pertain to the media in the post-apartheid South Africa; or otherwise, where these ideologies are failing.

4.9 The role of the media in South Africa

Rodríguez (2009:167) claims that the role of the media in South Africa is no longer to reinforce the “sacred sources of cultural autonomy” or to emphasise obsolete cultural hierarchies, but rather to display the “changing face of the nation”. Therefore, the media must provide a tool for discourse on multiculturalism and the ways in which ethnic and cultural diversity influence the community.

Zayani (2011:48) states that the media should also safeguard cultural diversity by emphasising peoples’ rights to be different, while encouraging cultural dialogue, understanding and multicultural citizenship. Kymlicka (2009:371) warns against

creating the “myth of a post ethnic unitary state”, while ignoring the inherent needs, aspirations and heterogeneity of the society. Thus, Bornman (2013:445) argues that the media must play a larger role in the discourse on the deeper and more complex issues of the heterogeneous nature of South African society.

While the South African media have played a part in the country’s nation-building strategy since 1994, Bornman (2013:444) asserts that there has been little to reflect on the implications of this nation building on the various cultural groups in South Africa. The author attributes this to the legacy of apartheid and the fear of being branded as “an apologist for that system.”

Therefore, while the South African media has been eager to assist in overcoming the divisions of apartheid, praising the “miracle of our democracy” and the “wonder of our newly established unity”, Bornman (2013:444) argues that there is little to confirm that the media’s goal of promoting diversity and multiculturalism has taken root. As an example, the author refers to the building of the Green Point Stadium for the 2010 Soccer World Cup, which he claims revealed a fractured society with competing class, racial and other identities.

Berger (2004:49) suggests that another potential reason for any failures in the media’s efficacy could be the poor media density in South Africa. This is a measure of the per-capita numbers of publications, telephones, radios, television sets, newspaper purchases, cinema attendances, books read and household spending on information compared to other expenditures, which the author suggests is far lower than that of the developed world. UNESCO, for example, has set a minimum development standard of 50 radios, 100 newspapers, 20 TVs and 20 cinema seats per 1000 people (Berger, 2004:49). While the figures for TVs and radios in South Africa are higher than this standard, Berger suggests that newspaper coverage is far lower, and that overall, South Africa is generally “media thin”.

Ensuring that the media upholds its ideological role often requires some form of regulation. Various systems are in place for media regulation across the African continent. The following section discusses some of these systems of media self-regulation.

4.10 Media self-regulation in Africa

According to Obuya (2012:133), the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) was established by the Media Act of 2007 as a press council to enforce ethical journalism and to mediate any disputes among the public, the government and the media, through a process of self-regulation. In a 2012 study, the author found that while media practitioners embraced self-regulation as the best tool for media accountability, the consensus was that the MCK was performing below expectations as the council was “invisible and ineffective”. Obuya (2012:133) found that self-regulation of the media industry in Kenya was faced with many challenges. These included funding shortfalls, poor publicity of the role and authority of the council, lack of confidence in the council due to inefficiency, and a lack of commitment to accountability as the media industry did not genuinely desire accountability but rather saw the council as just “buying time from state control”.

The Media Council of Tanzania provides an example of a strong self-regulatory system in Africa (Duncan, 2014:175), as it has accepted the need for third-party complaints but has limited its definition of complainants to prevent abuses of the system. The council in Tanzania has defined a “complainant” as any individual acting in his or her own interest, on behalf of another person, in the name of a group or class or people, on behalf of a corporate or unincorporated body, or acting in the “public interest” (Media Council of Tanzania, 2011, cited in Duncan, 2014:175).

The next subsection provides a discussion on the regulation of South Africa’s print media.

4.10.1 Regulation of South Africa’s print media

Duncan (2014:170) argues that there is relatively little knowledge across South Africa about the Press Council of South Africa (PCSA), which may be compounded by a relatively low penetration of newspapers. The author supports this with a comparison of the number of complaints lodged in the country, which totalled 250 out of a population of 50.5 million people in 2011, or 0.5 complaints per 100,000 citizens. He compared this to Ireland and the UK, which had 9.3 and 7.8 complaints per 100,000 citizens in 2008, respectively.

The nature of the complaints that have been received by the PCSA have typically been about accuracy, issues with journalists not seeking the views of subjects in critical reporting, and a lack of context and balance in articles (Duncan, 2014:170). According to Harber (2014:217), the Council has also remained reluctant to investigate alleged breaches of its code, whereas it should be obligated to conduct investigations and not just cite its discretion to do so. Duncan (2014:170) states that by choosing a “soft law” model of self-regulation designed to cause minimal offence to the industry, the Council’s founding members have created a significant “structural flaw” in the system’s design, which is being exploited by the critics of self-regulation.

Harber (2014:217) asserts that South Africa needs a press regulatory system that is fit to defend the public’s “right to know” in a climate of growing political tensions due to poor service delivery, high unemployment, corruption, mismanagement and seemingly unending inequality. Duncan (2014:170) argues that while the investigative journalism of newspapers has led the way towards exposing the misconduct of the elite in the country — thereby ensuring a level of public accountability and in the process infuriating the government and ruling party — the working conditions of journalists are deteriorating.

This is due to the current climate in the newspaper industry, which is in a process of tough cost-cutting and long-term decline (Duncan, 2014:179). As a result, editorial roles are changing from those of the past, which focused on editorial content only, to include aspects of the media business and market savvy, and this change is affecting journalistic standards. Journalists, therefore, require organisations to defend their working conditions and to promote the uninhibited practice of their work (Berger, 2010:289).

Following a study of editors in the print media, Law (2011:275) argues that South African editors currently work in a highly unregulated industry. The author attributes this to the absence of clear standards that define the roles of editors and the tasks and skills that are necessary for working in each sector of the industry. It should be noted that there are four broad sectors in the editing industry of South Africa (Law, 2011:278). These include editing in the publishing of academic, educational and trade publications; mass media editing of newspapers and magazines; technical editing of instruction manuals, corporate business and governmental documents; and academic

editing of scientific papers and articles, studies for publication, presentations, theses and dissertations.

A solution proposed by Law (2011:287) for regulating editors is that two of the most prominent associations for editors in the country — the Professional Editors' Group (PEG) and the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) — could be tasked with implementing a standards document covering the textual and extra-textual skills of editors. The author notes, however, that the enforcement of such a regulation would still require legislation.

Various debates have been raised surrounding the media industry in South Africa. These are discussed in more detail in the next subsection.

4.10.2 The debate surrounding South Africa's media industry

Wasserman (2011:587) states that two aspects continuously recur surrounding journalism's role in the post-apartheid socio-political context. These are the composition of the industry, relative to its racial configuration and political economy of access, ownership and control, and the efficacy of the press's self-regulatory system. The author notes that while there have been significant developments in each of these areas since democratisation, questions remain as to whether they have been comprehensive enough to appropriately transform the media — and in the right direction. This has generated an enduring debate about the country's journalism practices, often resulting in clashes between the government, the ruling party and the industry.

The ANC's attitude to the print media, according to Harber (2014:218), has moved towards an "outspoken criticism of its shortcomings". According to the ANC (2002, cited in Harber, 2014:218), the media is intrusive, irresponsible, vulgar, uninformed, brash and disruptive. The main grievances raised by the ANC have been as follows (Harber, 2014:218):

- Ownership of the print media is still too concentrated and White;
- Newspapers are overly hostile to the ANC and its transformation process;
- There is a deterioration in the quality of reporting; and
- Newspapers are guilty of ethical misconduct through intrusions into privacy and dignity.

In mid-2007, the ANC raised concerns over the regulation of the press, criticising both the then-newly created Press Ombudsman and Press Council systems as being inadequate to address their interests (Berger, 2010:289). As an alternative, the ANC called for a Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) to be established, to which the press' self-regulatory system would be subordinate (Berger, 2010:294).

Two cases have been cited as triggering this anger, namely: the publication of the private medical records of Thabo Mbeki's then-Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, and stories about the "imminent rape charges facing the then-Deputy President Jacob Zuma" (Berger, 2010:297). While the ANC accepted the right of the press to freedom of expression, the ruling party contended that the constitutional rights of individuals should be upheld, including their rights to human dignity and privacy.

Although complaints were not taken up with the existing Press Council at the time, the ANC noted grievances with the current system, such as the need for members to waive their rights to approach the courts and other regulatory bodies in order to use the existing system (Berger, 2010:297). They also complained that the council was slow and unresponsive when dealing with complaints, although Berger (2010:297) asserts that no evidence was presented in this regard.

The matter regarding the implementation of a MAT was withdrawn by the ANC in 2009 due, in part, to the preparation required for national elections in 2009 (Berger, 2010:300). However, at the National General Council (NGC) of the ANC in Durban in September 2010, the issue of the media's accountability mechanisms was once again brought into question (Lloyd, 2011:5; Press Freedom Commission, 2012:118).

In a discussion paper distributed before the NGC meeting in 2010, the ANC announced that the "MAT resolution had not been resolved" and recommended an amendment to the original resolution (Lloyd, 2011:9). In this resolution, the ANC argued that Parliament, as opposed to the ruling party, should investigate how to strengthen media accountability mechanisms that would best balance the rights of individuals with "dignity, freedom of expression and freedom of the media" (Lloyd, 2011:9). At the NGC meeting, the Council reinforced the allegation that the existing self-regulatory systems of the Press Ombudsman and Press Council were ineffective

and needed to be improved. The NGC endorsed a resolution, which among others included the following recommendations:

- Studying the advantages and disadvantages of self-, co- and independent-regulation;
- Contemplating the best mode of practice without compromising the rights enshrined in the Constitution;
- Considering how to ensure that any regulatory mechanism was free to act without fear or prejudice and void of any outside commercial or political interests ;
- Transforming the print media, including its media charter, ownership, control, advertising and marketing; and
- Establishing a media accountability mechanism in the form of the Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT).

In addition, it was suggested that the Competition Commission should investigate any potential “anticompetitive behaviour” in the value chain of the print media, such as in publishing, printing, advertising and distribution. The government was also encouraged to increase its financial support for organisations that had been established to “promote diversity”, including organisations such as the national broadcasting signal distributor (*Sentech*), the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), and the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) (Lloyd, 2011:11).

Once again, in its presentation to the PFC in January 2012, the ruling party reaffirmed its belief that there should be independent regulation of the media, free of any commercial or political interests, which should have the authority to “impose appropriate sanctions” (Press Freedom Commission, 2012:119).

As a result of the debate on media self-regulation in South Africa, various “knock-on effects” have occurred. These effects on the self-regulation of South Africa’s media are discussed, next.

4.10.3 Effects of the debate on media self-regulation in South Africa

Following a series of reviews on the adequacy of self-regulation of the press and the PCSA, one major effect has been the “beefing up” of the Press Council by the press with harder-hitting rulings against editors for contraventions of the codes of conduct (Berger, 2010:304).

In addition, the Press Freedom Commission (PFC) was established in July 2011 by Print and Digital Media South Africa (PDMSA) and the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF) (Press Freedom Commission, 2012:14). The purpose of the PFC was to evaluate South Africa’s system of press regulation and to recommend the most appropriate regulatory form for South Africa’s press (Press Freedom Commission, 2012:14; Politicsweb, 2012). To do this, a body of nine people — chaired by former Chief Justice of South Africa Pius Langa — was selected from outside the media community.

The report from the PFC, issued on 25 April 2012, stated that an independent co-regulatory mechanism that did not include state participation would best serve press freedom in the country (Press Freedom Commission, 2012:14; Politicsweb, 2012). The recommendation was for the regulation of the press to be based on a system of co-regulation, independent of government, and composed mostly of persons from the public who were positioned outside of the industry. An overview of the recommendations by the PFC was involved in doing the following (Politicsweb, 2012):

- Widening the role of the public in the regulatory system to include more members of the public than the media industry in the PCSA and in the Appeals Panel;
- Limiting the sole power of the Public Advocate for deciding which complaints were eligible to be heard;
- Widening the public accessibility to the adjudicating system by removing the need for complainants’ waivers and widening the basis upon which third-party complaints could be filed;
- Strengthening the press code relating to court reporting and introducing a “right of reply”;

- Revising the penalties for infractions with a measure of monetary fines; and
- Advancing content diversification, training and skills development, support for community newspapers, and the creation of a media charter.

Duncan (2014:178) praises the PCSA and its self-regulatory system. The author argues that the system has enjoyed relative autonomy and the ombudsman has been able to exercise a great deal of independence from the industry. In an analysis of the judgements made by the ombudsman between 2008 and 2012, Brand (2010:5) found that 52 percent of complaints against the press had been partially- or fully-upheld, suggesting that a systemic bias did not appear to be apparent in the adjudication process. In addition, Duncan (2014:178) referred to several editors at the PFC hearings who had criticised the severity of the judgements made by the ombudsman, claiming that they would likely have been more lenient had they been made by the South African courts.

The next section discusses the media in the post-apartheid South Africa.

4.11 Post-apartheid media in South Africa

Following the end of apartheid, the country saw major changes in all sectors of the economy (De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:11). The 1990s saw a major advance in the proportions of Black journalists and Black ownership of each of the media formats in South Africa, where, for example, Black directors were appointed as editors of many daily and Sunday papers (Mabote, cited in De Beer & Tomaselli, 2000:11).

The press ombudsman system was established in 1996 and the majority of print publications joined voluntarily and committed themselves to participating and abiding by the ombudsman system (SANEF, 2014). The press ombudsman was established on the principle that the media would regulate itself and put mechanisms in place to adjudicate any complaints that were levied by the public against newspaper articles (SANEF, 2014).

There was a feeling that the media at the time did not take account of the poor masses living in rural areas around South Africa (African National Congress, 2002). Therefore, the Media Development and Diversity Act was introduced in 2002 by Parliament (Republic of South Africa, 2002) to service the needs of previously

disadvantaged groups, with a particular focus on those groups that had previously been ignored by the media (African National Congress, 2002).

In the next section, the current dynamics of media ownership in South Africa is discussed, as well as its impact on regulation.

4.12 Current dynamics of media ownership and its impact on regulation

In South Africa in the 1990s, the broadcasting media was radically transformed as part of the political reforms in the country, leading to constitutionally guaranteed freedoms (Wasserman, 2010b:241). The broadcasting media — and especially radio — also saw many changes due to the introduction of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), which affected ownership (Duncan & Reid, 2013:484). Thus, ownership of the media has undergone a major transformation with privatisation and commercialisation of broadcasting resulting in a shift from state-broadcasting to public-broadcasting (MDDA, 2009:128).

In a study by the MDDA (2009:128), it was found that due to current policies and regulatory frameworks that have been introduced by ICASA, as well as by BEE policies in the country, transformation of the ownership of the broadcasting media has been marked. People from previously disadvantaged population groups or historically disadvantaged individuals (HDI) have gained considerable ownership of the broadcast media, and recent figures state that 58.3 percent of the private commercial or secondary market radio stations and 64.4 percent of the private commercial television stations are now owned by HDIs (MDDA, 2009:128).

It is suggested that ownership of the print media in the post-apartheid South Africa, however, has not been transformed as much in terms of ownership and control as the broadcast media (Duncan & Reid, 2013:484). Thus, despite various policies and interventions by the government through the promotion of BEE and other such transformation processes, the print media is still predominantly owned and controlled by Whites (MDDA, 2009:129). Furthermore, within the print media, the majority of organisations are also still dominated and controlled by a few companies or individuals. Four large media companies dominate the print media subsector: Media 24, Caxton, the Independent and Avusa, with Caxton dominating the newspaper

sector by the numbers of local and daily commercial paper titles owned. The circulation of newspapers is dominated by Media 24 (MDDA, 2009:129).

Broadening newspaper ownership has proven to be challenging for a number of reasons but a predominant reason is the lack of capital required for continued operations and tackling the large corporations, which has prevented new print media companies from entering the market (Wasserman, 2010b:241; MDDA, 2009:107). Printing, for example, which is sometimes offered by large print media companies to assist smaller print publishers, is often too costly for the smaller companies to afford (MDDA, 2009:107).

In relation to this discussion on media ownership, the following subsection provides a discussion on ownership of the “new media” such as internet and mobile phone media.

4.12.1 Ownership of the “new media”

Within the space of the “new media”, such as those of the internet and mobile phones, traffic is generally dominated by the large corporations that have repurposed their content for publication on online forums (Simon, 2006:52). Naspers, which owns 85 percent of Media 24, dominates the online news traffic in South Africa with 24.com websites and mobile phone media sites or “mobisites” (Harber, 2014:210). Avusa is also a major player in the online space with various news platforms including *The Times* website, and service websites such as *Careerjunction.co.za* (Harber, 2014:210). They, too, have “mobisite” functionality. The most popular “new media” sites are *News24.com*, followed by *IOL news*, *News24 South Africa* and *The Times* (MDDA, 2009:107).

A report was generated by the MDDA (2009) on the distribution of ownership of the media in South Africa. At the time of the report, as shown in Figure 4.4, Naspers had more than 27 online newspapers — more than any other single organisation in the country. In second place was Independent News with 17 online newspapers, although some of these required subscriptions for access (MDDA, 2009:107).

The third-largest online presence was that of Avusa, which had 14 websites including *The Times*, *Sunday Times* online, *The Weekender* online, and *The Sowetan* online. Thereafter, *Tabloid Media*, which was fully owned by HDIs, had ten smaller

commercial newspapers; however, the material was generally limited to topics surrounding the regions to which *Tabloid Media* supplied its printed newspapers (MDDA, 2009:107).

No	Owner/publisher	No of website Newspapers	Shareholding	
			HDI	Foreign
1	Naspers	27	0.0%	0.0%
2	Independent News & Media	17	0.0%	100.0%
3	Avusa	14	25.5%	0.0%
4	Tabloid Media	10	100.0%	0.0%
5	Caxton	4	0.0%	0.0%
6	Sky Blue Media	6	34.5%	0.0%
7	Other HDI owned	5	100.0%	0.0%
8	Community 'Owned'	4	N/A	N/A
9	Others	20	N/A	N/A
	Total	107	N/A	N/A

Figure 4.4. Distribution of online newspapers and their HDI shareholding in South Africa

Source: MDDA, 2009:108

A perhaps surprising slip on the part of Caxton was that, according to MDDA (2009:107) at the time that the report was published, although the conglomerate owned the most newspaper titles in the country, only four online newspapers existed from the company. As shown in Figure 4.4, Sky Blue Media owned six print titles, including *Fever Online*, and similar to the tabloid newspapers, their focus was on local news. Sky Blue was approximately 34.5 percent owned by HDIs. At the time of the MDDA (2009) report, only five news websites were owned purely by private HDIs.

The internet and digital media sectors are highly unregulated in South Africa, and accessibility to digital media content in rural and township communities is low, which is generally attributed to the low rate of computer literacy in the country in general, and especially among the disadvantaged communities (Harber, 2014:210). There has,

therefore, been very little transformation in this sector to align with democracy in South Africa over the 20 years since the development of these technologies (MDDA, 2009:107).

While the print media is undoubtedly the largest media subsector in South Africa, when considering its number of titles and owners it is still the most unregulated of the media subsectors (Obuya, 2012:133). There appears, therefore, to be a correlation between the rate of HDI ownership and the regulation of the media in South Africa.

The literature review chapter is concluded, now, with a summary of the main points.

4.13 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on concepts including “public interest”, “national interest” and the “public sphere”. Authors such as Wasserman and De Beer were discussed, who suggest that the apartheid-era government justified its control of the media for the purpose of “national interest”, while under the new democratic government, this has shifted to an emphasis on self-regulation for the “public interest”.

The concepts of “framing” the news and “media governance” were also covered. Finally, the debate on the self-regulation of South Africa’s print media was covered in detail with the ruling ANC party being shown to disapprove significantly of the current system. The chapter ended with a review of media ownership and how this has affected regulation of the media in South Africa. The next chapter describes the theoretical frameworks that relate to the study.

CHAPTER 5

Theoretical Framework

5.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the theoretical framework of the study. To investigate whether the media in South Africa should be under state-regulation or self-regulation, a liberal-pluralist theory was chosen. This is because the liberal-pluralist theory is a normative theory that deals with the political role of the media. The chapter begins with a discussion on the liberal-pluralist theory and how the media may be observed within this theoretical framework. Criticisms of the liberal-pluralist theory are also deliberated, where critical political economy and Marxist theory are each discussed in sequence before the end of the chapter.

The first section, next, deals with the primary theoretical framework for this study: the liberal-pluralist theory and its role in the media.

5.2 Liberal-pluralist theory and its role of the media

The liberal-pluralist theory supports the notion that the media should be free from government regulation and interference, with the media adopting a “watchdog” role and acting as an informant (Zakaras, 2013:69-72). The press is expected to criticise or oppose the government, and this role is often popularly referred to as freedom of the press and independence from government intervention (Galston, 2013:97; Skjerdal, 2001:40). The contention is that the media should operate in an environment free from any political interference or influence — from either political parties or the government (Radebe, 2007:12).

The theory implies that a country’s political system should not inhibit the press from being neutral and objective. Bennett (1982:102) asserts that within the liberal-pluralist framework, the media should function as the “fourth estate” to strengthen the country’s democracy by supplying information that is free from government or political influence. Therefore, it should allow the population to observe and supervise its government, and in doing so, force the government to implement the will of the combined population.

In terms of liberal-pluralism, the political elites should show maximum tolerance for criticism by journalists (McNair, 1998:64). Proponents of the liberal-pluralist theory place the “watchdog” function of the media above any of its other functions, and in order to sustain this independence they maintain that the media must be privately owned and independent of government financing (Radebe, 2007:13). They theorise that a free market system enables the independence of the media, such that all significant views would have an opportunity to be aired. Curran and Gurevitch (2000:128) assert that this view is informed by the belief that this allows for good governance through exposure to opposing opinions during the opinion-making process.

The liberal-pluralist theory of the media supports the idea of a free press that is unencumbered by legislation or government oversight, and which acts as a “watchdog” to inform society of the actions of the government while supporting the ends of democracy (Bassey, 2006:10). Thus, the press should be the “watchdog” of a country’s political environment (Hofmeyr, 2001:209). In terms of the liberal-pluralist theory, the media is also expected to be the “fourth estate” (Ekron, 2008:80). According to O’Neil (1998, cited in Hofmeyr, 2001:209), “as the ‘fourth estate’, or ‘watchdog’, of government, the media are expected to critically assess state action and provide such information to the public”.

Therefore, the liberal-pluralist theory of the media supports a press that is independent and freely able to operate as the public’s “watchdog”, provide a “public sphere” and accurately represent the consumer (Bassey, 2006:10). Within this theoretical framework, the media should provide a free and open distribution of ideas for initiating debate. Thus, the media is perceived as facilitating the functioning of democracy by posing as an “agent of information and debate” and providing a communication channel between the citizenry and the government. Curran and Gurevitch (2000:128) state that this debate allows a society to clarify its objectives, formulate its policies, and manage and co-ordinate itself. The media should provide the voice of the people, brief audiences, generate debate and pass the consensus of the public to its government (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:128).

It is assumed that, in terms of the liberal-pluralist theory, editorial autonomy and objectivity should be displayed by journalists and editors. The theory contends that

these professionals should be trusted as being objective and independent, and left to their own devices (Radebe, 2007:14). The concept of “objective reporting” involves the eradication, wherever possible, of any bias in the news, and implies that the media are expected to perform their duties in an objective manner (Siebert, cited in Sesanti, 2011:96).

In terms of the liberal model of media regulation, it is argued that the media is a central element of a functioning democratic society (Schudson, 2000:37) such that without the media, the citizenry would lack a system for insightful analysis, mobilisation or the ability to hold the government accountable. Therefore, a free media is an indispensable element of the liberal model, with the normative objective of providing a diversity of opinions and ideas (Street, cited in Hendricks, 2011:1). The concept of a free media holds that any intervention by the government is detrimental to the operating and functioning of the press.

According to Curran and Gurevitch (2000:128), the theory assumes that the overall structure of the press is determined only by its audience since it must respond to a competitive marketplace and provide the people with what they want — a platform to express their views and interests. Within the liberal-pluralist theory, the media provides a neutralising force to prevent the disproportionate distribution and concentration of power, which could arise in liberal democracies among either a single segment of the population or in an organ of the government (Bennett, 1982:104).

In the next section, a critique of the liberal-pluralist theory is presented.

5.2.1 Critique of the liberal-pluralist theory

A significant limitation of the traditional viewpoint of the liberal-pluralist theory, according to Curran and Gurevitch (2000:128), is that it fails to acknowledge the role of media ownership and the private interests of shareholders, political commitments, audience leanings, advertisers, editors and journalists in the press industry. Therefore, it fails to recognise the significant influences that exist within and around the media firms (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:128). By solely focusing on the ideals of the press it disregards the pressures that are exerted on it by the political and economic components of the larger system in which the media operates. The theory presupposes

that the sole objective of media vigilance is its “watchdog” role in relation to the government; however, it fails to consider the influences of structural factors that affect the media, such as ownership and advertising (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:128).

Another shortcoming of the theory is the assumption that editorial autonomy and objectivity will always be displayed by journalists and editors. The theory posits that if left to their own devices, these professionals can be trusted as being objective and independent (Radebe, 2007:14). However, according to various studies such as by Schudson (2000:35), this is often not the case as forces may be observed that act to “frame” the news, including macro-forces such as societal and external forces, and micro-forces such as internal dynamics at play during the production of the news.

The assumption of the liberal-pluralist theory of the press — that different views may be expressed in a free market — is debatable, as expressed by Curran and Gurevitch (2000:128), because “publication is expensive” and it is consequently not possible for all available views to be conveyed, thereby reducing the actual observed participation of the public. In addition, it should be noted that the reality of a free media within a free-market must be “tempered with the reality that the media would almost certainly be run by monopolies and oligopolies” (Street, cited in Hendricks, 2011:2). The literature suggests that most of the media in free market economies have developed concentrated ownership to limit the demands of advertisers and competition on the market (Harber, 2014:210; MDDA, 2009:107; Ekron, 2008:83). In turn, this would have weakened the influence that consumers have on the content of the media (Tomaselli, cited in Radebe, 2007:14).

In discussing the role of governance and regulation in the media, Hendricks (2011:2) argues that media freedom within a liberal-pluralist framework can, at times, only be achieved through policy formation, where state intervention can be a necessary intrusion.

Within the framework of the liberal-pluralist theory, the media should be free from government regulation or interference (Zakaras, 2013:69-72). There is, however, the concept of a “contemporary democracy” where the government is not necessarily perceived as an oppressor of the press but rather a form of partner (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:128). This is discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Contemporary democracy

Curran and Gurevitch (2000:128) state that in a “contemporary democracy”, “the government is no longer the sole oppressor of the press”. In such political structures, governments are not troublesome to the media but are rather in a form of partnership with the press. They act in a symbiotic relationship with the press, where the politicians rely on the media for campaigning and gaining mass electoral support while the media, in turn, are given greater policy-wide freedoms in which to act. In some cases, the relationship between the government and the private media has changed to one where decisions are made between the two parties that rely upon and affect the profits of the media firms (Radebe, 2007:15).

This ends the discussion on liberal-pluralism — the primary theoretical framework for this study. The next section discusses the theory of political economy and its role in the media, as a critique of liberal-pluralism.

5.3 The political economy theory and its role in the media

Marxism and critical political economy theory share the same basic premise that the economics of the media and the economic base of social power are largely accountable for the content of media messages and media development (McQuail, 2002:9).

Contrary to the liberal style of media action, the Marxist approach criticises the interests of ownership and argues that the media is predominantly defined by its ownership structures. In this light, media owners are seen to serve their own capitalist goals without regard for diversity, pluralism or accuracy of content (Baran & Davis, cited in Hendricks, 2011:2).

Although the Marxist approach to communication shares the liberal-pluralist theory on the importance of the “public sphere”, these theorists maintain that the threat to the media as a “public sphere” arises not only from interference from the government but also from suppression of the media sector by “unrestricted market forces” (Bassey, 2006:14). Shoemaker and Reese (cited in Bassey, 2006:14) affirm that this undermines the public sphere since a fundamental principle of a free market economy is the production of profit, which typically results in a concentration of ownership within sectors.

Political economy theory studies the relationships and interconnectedness of social life, economic forces and the politics of the day (Mosco, 1996:27). Mosco (1996:25) describes political economy theory as the relationship between the structures of control within a capitalist society and the generation of the wealth that is needed to reproduce that society. When related to media studies, political economy investigates the relations of power during production, dissemination and consumption of the media (Duncan, 2014:169). Political economy therefore examines the relationships of power in the media and how these power relations proliferate and reinforce the capitalist system of a country (Duncan, 2014:177).

The theory of political economy alludes to the growing conglomeration of the corporations that control the media, which results in “oligopolistic” structures of ownership (Hendricks, 2011:2). The framework contends that oligopolies within the media present a threat to the fabric of democracy, and Golding and Murdock (cited in Hendricks, 2011:2) maintain that public intervention is essential for counteracting the power of capitalist conglomerates.

Critical political economy emphasises an empirical analysis of the structure of media ownership, the control of the media and the manner in which media market forces operate and function (McQuail, 2005:99). This theoretical framework sees the media institution as part of the economic system, which is closely linked to the political system (McQuail, 2005:99).

Murdock and Golding (1978:390) suggest that political economy theory provides “the conceptual tools” to discern the relationships among the powers in politics, the economy and the media, and it allows for an analysis of the impact of the “commodification of the media” on the regulation of the press. Political economy research developed in response to the advent of governments playing increasingly bigger roles in the creation of news, the distribution of information, and ultimately in the regulation of information (Mosco, 1996:74).

According to McQuail (2005:218), the media is “not just any other business”, and the media, unlike other commercial businesses, is influenced not only by economic forces but also by politics, the constant evolution of technology, and society in general. McQuail further states that media activity is an economic process leading to a

commodity such as a media product or content, and the essence of the political economy approach lies in its ability to make assertions about market determinants.

Political economy theory primarily examines the socially detrimental effects of media concentration and the deregulation of media ownership. Duncan (2014:169) asserts that it can thus be used to analyse whether the structures of self-regulation in the press — such as press councils — do in fact act as moderators against the commodification of the media or whether they facilitate commodification through direct collusion; or simply by inadequately penalising excesses in the media.

Murdock and Golding (1978:390) argue that the most important aspect of media operation is that it is a business geared towards generating a profit, and the material that sells most or creates the highest profit will be the primary determinant of the final product. This stems from the authors' statement that "the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations, which produce and distribute commodities." Therefore, the foundation of political economy theory, according to Murdock and Golding (1978:390), is the industrial and economic organisation of the media. This economic base, they argue, is a sufficient and necessary explanation of the ideological and cultural effects of the media.

McChesney and Scott (2004:12) discuss the political economy in the US and note that during the introduction of democracy in the 19th Century, the press was seen to have a central role in the national democracy. McChesney and Scott (2004:12) argue, however, that in the 21st century the media in the US has been "hijacked by the elites", posing a threat to the fundamental principles of its democracy. The pursuit of profit has affected media operations with the profit margins of shareholders and advertisers now ruling the operations of the media. They also allude to the role of politicians whose endorsement has provided media corporations with greater access to grow and expand their empires. Furthermore, the policies of the US government have been structured, in recent decades, to favour the corporations, thereby providing them with increased powers of media ownership (Bassey, 2006:13).

This ends the review of the primary and supporting theoretical frameworks that pertain to this study. The chapter ends with a short summary of the main points of the chapter.

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a review of the primary and supporting theoretical frameworks considered in the study, starting with the liberal-pluralist theory. In terms of this theory, a country's political system should not inhibit the press from being neutral and objective, and a government should have minimal involvement in the media so that it can freely perform its role as a "watchdog" in society. Various criticisms of this theoretical framework were also presented with a major shortcoming being its failure to consider the internal, macro- and micro-economic forces that affect the media.

The political economy theory was then explained as a critique of liberal-pluralism. The next chapter provides this study's research methodology and design.

CHAPTER 6

Research Methodology and Design

6.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the research methodology and design of the study. It begins with a discussion on the definitions of research methodology in the literature and the procedures to follow to ensure a concrete research methodology. It also discusses the principles that were applied in this study, including the reasons for using qualitative research, the case study design and the use of content analysis as a research technique. This chapter also presents the research questions, sampling and the procedures that were used for sampling, data analysis and coding of the data.

The chapter ends with a review of the principles of reliability, validity and researcher bias, with an explication of the systems that were implemented to optimise the reliability and validity of the study. It also outlines the considerations that were made to minimise any researcher bias.

The chapter begins, next, with the research methodology that was employed for the study.

6.2 Research methodology

This section provides a discussion on the research methodology that was employed for the study. Du Plooy (2009:30) notes that the focus of qualitative research is to interpret and construct the qualitative elements of communication experiences. For this study, the following methodological steps were applied, as recommended by Krippendorff (2004:89):

- Formulating the research question;
- Defining the population;
- Selecting an appropriate sample from the population;
- Constructing categories to analyse the data; and
- Coding the content based on established definitions.

This study was based on the principles of qualitative content analysis, which is a systematic procedure for examining the content of recorded information

(Krippendorff, 2004:11). The principles of content analysis are discussed in the next section.

6.2.1 Content analysis

A broad definition of content analysis is the application of a range of techniques for making objective and systematic conclusions about specific characteristics within messages (Stemler, 2001:1). Content analysis is a research technique that is apt for communication research (Du Plooy, 1997:153). According to Kolmer (2008), content analysis has developed into a significant method for analysing the way in which journalists work, and the importance of the cultural, political and economic agendas behind media content and messages. Content analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006:6), can be used for identifying, reporting and analysing patterns or themes within a set of data. Braun and Clarke (2006:6) further maintain that a theme captures important itemised information about data, which directly relates to a research question.

Newspaper editorials and reports can be analysed using content analysis as the research methodology (Bakare, 2013:36). Various researchers, including Mayring (2000:20) and Wigston (1997:152) contest about whether content analysis is a qualitative or a quantitative method. Wigston (1997:152), for example, argues that qualitative content analysis requires “no physical counting of data” and is “more critical in nature”, while quantitative content analysis rigorously applies a scientific method and requires “some form of counting”.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007:470) argue that content analysis is a system of qualitative research as it is typically used to analyse non-numerical data. Furthermore, content analysis is a system that compresses many words (in the form of one or more texts) into fewer categories of content based on explicit coding rules, and by classifying specified characteristics within the messages (Holsti, 1969:14).

Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101) distinguish the following six steps for content analysis, and these were used as a guideline when performing the data analysis for this study:

- The researcher is familiarised with the data. Scripts are thoroughly read and re-read, and initial ideas are documented;

- The researcher generates initial codes. This process is known as coding;
- The codes are analysed in combination to form themes, and then the researcher searches the data to identify occurrences of these themes;
- The researcher reviews the themes;
- The researcher defines and names the themes; and
- The researcher writes the final report on the findings.

All relevant concepts for the study were defined in order to retrieve the relevant information from the news items so that they could be interpreted and evaluated based on the following research questions.

6.2.2 Research question

The primary research question of this study was: “Should the media in South Africa be under state-regulation or self-regulation?” To help answer this question, the following sub-questions were utilised:

- What role do the media play in South African society?
- Has there been a change in the role of the media since 1994?
- What is the relationship between the government and the media?
- How has this relationship between the government and the media changed since 1994?

In order to answer the research question and sub-questions, a research design was formulated, which is discussed in the next section.

6.3 Research design

Van Rensburg (2000:146) defines the research design of a project as the “glue” that holds each of its aspects together, and the structure that allows the researcher to summarise complex concepts efficiently.

This research was conducted as a case study of various media resources including opinion pieces, columns and news reports. The case study for this research consisted of direct observation, documentation and reflection on the media industry in South Africa.

A case study approach is a qualitative research technique that seeks to understand the dynamics of a single element or trend by exhausting all of the information and data resources that are available (Eisenhardt, 1989:534; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:136).

As the name implies, the purpose of a case study is to study and analyse a case, which, according to Susam-Sarajeva (2009:38), is a uniquely-bound system that can include anything from a single individual to an entire community, institution or other singly-quantifiable phenomenon.

According to Saunders et al. (2009:146), research done via case studies has considerable potential to answer questions such as “why” and “how”. In addition, an advantageous characteristic of case studies is that they observe existing occurrences in their real-life contexts (Yin, 2003:59). Data collection techniques for case studies can comprise many sources. Yin (2003:99) identifies six potential methods for gathering data. These are: documentation, archival records, physical artefacts, direct observation, participant-observation and interviews. This study relied on documentation and archival records as the means for sourcing data, and these, as well as the complete sampling strategy for the study, are discussed next.

6.3.1 Sampling

Data used in research can be classified as either primary or secondary data. When a researcher deals with data in the form of original evidence it is termed a primary source of data (Remenyi, Williams, Money & Swartz, 1998:46). Secondary data is that which has been previously published or which is otherwise indirectly available. The samples analysed in this research constituted secondary data.

A population can be defined, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:90), as the entire set of objects and events — or group of people — that a researcher wishes to study. The target population for this study comprised various South African media resources including opinion pieces, columns and news reports with a focus on material that appeared in the Afrikaans weekly newspaper *Rapport*, from January 2012 to December 2013. The Afrikaans weekly is published by Media24, a subsidiary of Naspers, which was established in 1970 (Rapport, 2014).

The following subsection discusses the sampling procedure that was applied for the study.

6.3.1.1 The sampling procedure

Sampling is the process of “identifying and determining the units of analysis” (Burgess, cited in Bakare, 2013:37). In this study, a purposive sampling method was used to extract opinion pieces, columns and news reports from the data sources.

Purposive sampling describes the practice of choosing the sample to be studied based on what “would be appropriate for the study” (Bakare, 2013:38), and it is primarily used when a limited population sample is available for a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:206).

The selection process for this study included opinion pieces, columns and news reports dated between January 2012 and December 2013. A specific period was chosen because the extensive volume of material available made analysis from before this date impractical and too diverse. A two-year period was also deemed current and broad enough to allow the research question and sub-questions to be answered in an up-to-date and thorough fashion.

The next step of the methodology involved the coding process, which allowed the researcher to code the newspaper content for analysis. This is discussed, next.

6.3.2 Data analysis and coding

In order to formulate themes from the data, categories of topics were identified. This is referred to as “coding” and describes the process of combining data into ideas, categories and themes. Krippendorff (2004:126) defines the coding process as the interpretation phase of content analysis, which entails stating the observations from the written material in the form of codes. During this study, similar passages of text were marked with a coded label so that they could be easily retrieved later for comparison and discussion, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101).

During the content analysis process, differences exist between computer-coding and human-coding. Computer coding uses an automated process to analyse data content with a computer, while human coding uses personal interpretation (Neuendorf, 2002:132). This study used human coding, meaning that the content was analysed manually. Neuendorf (2002:132) suggests that a coding form and codebook should be employed to code data for content analysis, regardless of whether manual- or

computer-coding is used. A codebook was used in this study and it included all of the aspects that were relevant to the opinion pieces, columns and news reports, as well as the descriptions of all the relevant concepts.

Now, a background to the opinion pieces, columns and news reports will be presented.

6.3.2.1 Background to the opinion pieces, columns and news reports used

A total of 11 opinion pieces, columns and news reports were analysed for this study, consisting of nine from *Rapport* and two from other publishers. The *Rapport* opinion pieces, columns and news reports focused on the following topics: “Regulation: More questions than answers” (Llewellyn, 2012); “Constitution of God – ANC” (Steenkamp, 2012a); “The media's two mouths” (Gaum, 2012); “Snoerwet propaganda unethical and premature” (Mazibuko, 2012); “This is the media better!” (Rapport, 2012); “ANC wants more money out of you” (Steenkamp, 2012b); “Lying has become more difficult” (Jongbloed, 2012); “Judge hits out at rich media, critics” (du Plessis & du Plessis, 2012); and “Our tribunal is trite” (Louw, 2012). Opinion pieces, columns and news reports were presented in Afrikaans but they were translated into English in order to perform the content analysis.

The primary themes that were observed in these opinion pieces, columns and news reports were the following:

- **ANC’s motives**, with a general subtheme of “arguments for ANC’s motives”;
- **Anti-self-regulation arguments**, with a general subtheme of “journalistic flaws”;
- **Pro-self-regulation arguments**, with a general subtheme of “watchdog” and “other media roles”;
- **Solutions for the debate**, with a general subtheme of “arguments to support the solutions”;
- **The importance of the debate**;
- **Threats to the media and self-regulation**, with a general subtheme of “threats to media freedom”;
- **Government behaviour**, with a general subtheme of “government or state misdemeanours”, and

- **“National” and “public interest”**, with a general subtheme of “criticisms of the current government or state”.

These themes related to the research question and sub-questions and they presented the basis for answering the research question and sub-questions as shown in Table 6.1. The number of observations of each theme and the codes given to each theme are shown in Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1.

Table 6.1. Themes and codes observed relating to the research questions

Research question	Theme observed	Code	Number of observations
Role that the media plays in South African society?	“Watchdog” and other roles	(ROLE)	5
	Journalistic flaws	(FLAW)	14
Change in the media since 1994?	Importance of the debate	(IMP)	4
Relationship between the government and the media?	Government behaviour	(GOVB)	5
	Government / state misdemeanours	(GOVM)	5
	ANC motives	(ANCMOT)	9
	Arguments for ANC’s motives	(ANCARG)	5
	“National” / “public interest”	(NPINT)	12
	Criticisms of the current government or state	(GOVCRT)	17
Change in the relationship between the government and the media since 1994?	Threats to media & self-regulation	(MEDTHRT)	5
	Threats to media freedom	(MEDFREE)	8
	Anti-self-regulation arguments	(ANTISELF)	7
	Pro-self-regulation arguments	(PROSELF)	13
	Solutions	(SOL)	19
	Solution arguments	(SOLARG)	14

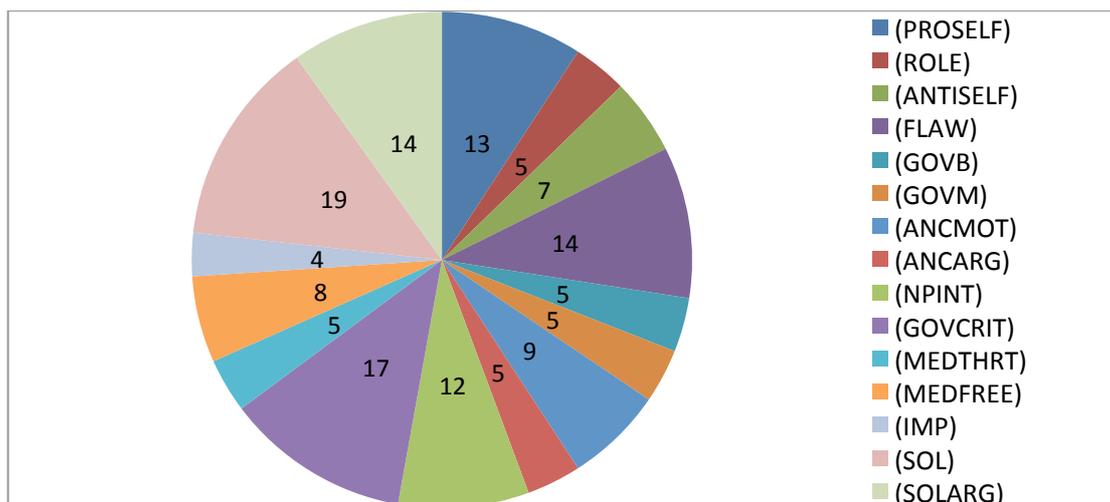


Figure 6.1. Graphical depiction of the number of occurrences of the different coded themes observed in the opinion pieces, columns and news reports analysed for this study

To ensure that the results of the research design were reliable and valid, various systems were applied. These are discussed next.

6.4 Reliability and validity

Krippendorff (2004:211) argues that each element of a study should possess the qualities of reliability and validity. However, there is a debate on the reliability of content analysis. While Braun and Clarke (2006:78) assert that content analysis is a reliable tool for analysing data, which provides the researcher with useful and flexible research tools for a rich and comprehensive account of data, Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012:17) argue that reliability is a concern due to the wide array of interpretations that may arise when observing written text. To maximise reliability, Saunders et al. (2009:194) maintain that the researcher should ensure that the data is collected accurately and adequately during the data collection stage. They assert that the researcher should also avoid any form of selectivity or subjectivity in the data that is recorded and analysed.

Researchers who perform content analysis must be confident that their data has been selected with all possible precautions for ensuring that any potential distortions or biases — whether accidental or intentional — are avoided, and that the observations may be understood clearly by untrained observers (Krippendorff, 2004). In addition, the research procedure is deemed reliable only if the researcher has responded to the

parameters equally and in a similar fashion, regardless of the circumstances of their implementation (Krippendorff, 2004:211). In this study, the following were followed to maximise reliability:

Procedures for resolving coding problems: To avoid problems with coding errors, the researcher double-checked all of the coded data in conjunction with two independent observers. This was to ensure that the categories that were recorded in the codebook were applied consistently.

Intra-coder reliability: To guarantee intra-coder reliability, the researcher coded the data set twice, at different times, to ensure that the content was coded consistently.

The validity of the research is discussed next.

6.4.1 Validity

Validity is referred to in the literature as the degree to which a particular research instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:28). Thus, if the intention is to analyse content to measure the role that the media plays in South African society, the analysis is considered valid only if the results clearly represent the actual role that a specific medium plays in the society.

Neuendorf (2002:115-117) describes different types of validity, where face validity, external validity and content validity have been considered in this study. These can be summarised as follows:

- Face validity describes the extent that a measure fits what is expected to be true, and if the findings from the content analysis generally make sense, they are considered valid;
- External validity describes the generalisability of the study, and concerns the extent to which the results of a study can be considered true for other cases. Since this study used purposive sampling, external validity did not apply; and
- Content validity is a non-statistical form of validity that involves the degree to which the content of the data covers the spectrum of necessary parameters, to provide an accurate image of the entire research question and sub-questions. This was achieved by analysing opinion pieces, columns and news reports

from *Rapport* — a broadly-read South African newspaper — over a two-year period.

One potential aspect that can affect the validity of a study is the bias that may occur from the researcher. This is elaborated in the following subsection.

6.4.1.1 Bias from the researcher

Saunders et al. (2009:327) discuss various factors that can emotionally affect the psyche of the researcher, which translates to a form of bias. These include the type of information that is sourced by the researcher, the nature of the questions posed, the degree of knowledge of the researcher, the researcher's cultural background, the circumstances within which the research takes place, and so forth. The researcher was conscious of the cultural and social background that inherently shapes the perception of a person's world, and which may have inadvertently filtered into the data collection and data analysis process of the study. To overcome this, great care was taken to minimise any possible biases. In addition, care was taken to ensure that the steps outlined in the content analysis guidelines were carefully followed when performing the data capturing and analysis.

This ends the explanation of the research methodology and design for this study. The chapter finishes with a short summary of the main points of the chapter.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a review of the research methodology and design of this study, starting with a discussion on the research methodology that was implemented. As recommended by Krippendorff (2004:89), the first step of the research design involves formulating the research question and sub-questions and the second involves defining the population. Thereafter, an appropriate sample is selected from the population, which in this study consisted predominantly of opinion pieces, columns and news reports from the South African, Afrikaans newspaper, *Rapport*.

The next step involves constructing categories for analysing the data, which was performed during the data analysis phase of the content analysis. The content was coded based on established definitions, and the data was analysed in conjunction with these definitions. Various methods were also applied to ensure the reliability and

validity of the data and to minimise any biases from the researcher. These included using two independent coders to enhance the face validity of the study.

Chapter 7 provides the findings and data analysis of the research.

CHAPTER 7

Research Findings and Data Analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings and data analysis. The primary research question of this study was to answer the question: “Should the media in South Africa be under state-regulation or self-regulation?” To answer this, the objectives of the research were to answer the following sub-questions:

- What role does the media play in South African society?
- Has there been a change in the role of the media since 1994?
- What is the relationship between the government and the media?
- How has this relationship between the government and the media changed since 1994?

For this study, various media resources were examined to gather data to form the basis upon which to answer the research question and sub-questions. The resources included opinion pieces, columns and news reports, with a focus on writings that appeared in the Afrikaans weekly newspaper, *Rapport*, from January 2012 to December 2013. Although all the *Rapport* opinion pieces, columns and news reports were originally written in Afrikaans, they were translated into English for data analysis purposes. A total of 11 opinion pieces, columns and news reports were analysed for this study, consisting of nine from *Rapport* and two from other publishers.

As noted in Section 6.3.2.1, the primary themes that were observed in these writings were the following:

- **ANC’s motives**, with a general subtheme of “arguments for ANC’s motives”;
- **Anti-self-regulation arguments**, with a general subtheme of “journalistic flaws”;
- **Pro-self-regulation arguments**, with a general subtheme of “watchdog” and other media roles;
- **Solutions for the debate**, with a general subtheme of “arguments to support the solutions”;

- **The importance of the debate;**
- **Threats to the media and self-regulation**, with a general subtheme of “threats to media freedom”;
- **Government behaviour**, with a general subtheme of “government or state misdemeanours”; and
- **“National” and “public interest”**, with a general subtheme of “criticisms of the current government or state”.

These themes related to the research question and sub-questions and presented the basis for answering the research question and sub-questions.

This chapter also covers the analysis of this study. One theoretical framework, namely liberal-pluralism, was used to analyse media regulation in South Africa. The latter part of the chapter focuses on recapturing the definition of liberal-pluralist theory. It then discusses the relation of the South African media to political economy as a critique of the liberal-pluralist theory.

Beginning first, however, the findings of the opinion pieces, columns and news reports, in relation to the research objectives, are discussed in the next sub-sections.

7.2 The role of the media

The media performs a wide range of roles or functions in South Africa. This is clearly evident in the literature, which describes the media’s functions in both a positive and a negative light. As noted in Section 6.3.2.1, the role the media plays in South African society was observed by themes that fell within two categories: “watchdog” and other roles (ROLE), and journalistic flaws (FLAW), which were each observed to recur five and fourteen times each in the opinion pieces, columns and news reports analysed, respectively. In his opinion piece, Llewellyn (2012) is emphatic on the importance of the media to maintain a “watchdog” role (ROLE), stating that “South Africa's media watchdog must be strong, but also completely free of political interference”.

Reid (2012b) describes the lengths that many journalists go to in order to provide the public with the truth and to keep the public informed. Reid presents this observation as a means of highlighting that the role (ROLE) of the media in South Africa — though usually only fulfilled by “a small collection of really courageous journalists

and editors” — is to strive to produce exceptional articles of journalism that pursue the truth and attempt to keep the public informed on issues that are important to their lives. Reid (2012b) further argues that much of the time, South Africa’s journalists who “consistently and tenaciously produce outstanding work in their dogged pursuit of the truths that matter, and ferociously battle to keep the reading public informed”, even, at times, perform such dedicated acts “at great personal cost”.

Reid (2012b) further emphasises one of the media’s roles (ROLE) by asserting that the media has an “important role in promoting the citizenry’s right to access to information”.

The opinion pieces, columns and news reports were, however, outspoken on the many flaws in the media (FLAW) and how journalistic flaws have ultimately failed the media in performing its role in the country. This criticism of the country’s journalists provided a fuller picture of the *expected* role of the media in South Africa, even though this was depicted as what the media should *not* be doing.

Gaum’s (2012) depiction of the failure (FLAW) of the media to be open-minded and unbiased was a clear indication of what role the media *should* be performing in the country in terms of being open-minded and unbiased.

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogeng (cited in du Plessis & du Plessis, 2012) was descriptive of the role that the media *should* be performing on the political stage, which is to provide unbiased and unexaggerated information in order to give individuals or political parties — whether well connected, wealthy or poor — the same voice in the media. Mogoeng (cited in du Plessis & du Plessis, 2012) asserts that currently, however, a flaw (FLAW) in the media is that:

"outspoken opposition leaders with good resources ... [or] the rich and powerful can be used against you [through] ridiculous criticism and wrong information campaigns in the media."

Mogoeng further emphasises another flaw (FLAW) in the media, which currently appears to “intimidate [people] towards a certain course of action” due to a “fear of being branded as pro-executive or conservative”. Ultimately, therefore, the role of the media appears to be failing in its duty of reporting without intimidation, branding or coercion.

Reid (2012b) also cites various flaws (FLAW), which indicate the roles that the media *should* in fact be performing. These include “poor quality journalism” and the failure of the Press Freedom Commission to “refuse to bow to political pressure from the ANC or anyone else”; the behaviour of the press in a “disappointing manner”; the failure of the press to give equal voice to all parties in a story; and the failure of the press to be “on top of stories”. Reid (2012b) emphasises the last point by illustrating the case of the Marikana shooting (FLAW):

“It was an academic, Peter Alexander, and not a journalist, who first gave us an idea that the magnitude of police violence on 16 August was catastrophically greater than what was visible on the television footage of the Marikana shooting. Alexander and his team of researchers worked the scene, recording evidence and interviewing eye-witnesses. In doing so, they came up with a very different version of events to the one originally reported in the press. But why didn’t any journalists do this?”

This brings the findings to how the media’s role has changed since 1994, described next.

7.3 The change in the media’s role since 1994

There did not appear to be many themes in the opinion pieces, columns and news reports reviewed that specifically discussed the *change* in the media’s role since 1994. However, much of the tone of the opinion pieces, columns and news reports, and the themes that were deciphered, related to its need to resist a change in its regulations so that it could continue to fulfil its roles as a “watchdog”, the “fourth estate”, or as a “mirror” (Rivers, 2007:19).

The importance of the debate (IMP) was the central theme that was observed in describing the change in the media’s role since 1994. This was because it described why it was important for the central role or purpose of the media *not* to change; and ultimately, how the system of self-regulation of the media should not change so that the media’s function as a public protector in society could be ensured.

Reid (2012b) emphasises the potential threat (MEDTHRT) that the debate on media regulation constitutes to media freedom, cautioning that:

“media freedom [MEDFREE] is massively important and must be defended with vigour. But in an atmosphere of threat [MEDTHRT], where press folk feel as if they are on the back-foot, it’s metaphorical suicide to try to open up discussions about what the press does wrong [FLAW] and how to fix it.”

Gaum (2012) asserts that “media censorship should be resisted with the utmost importance” because without it, scandals of all kinds could be covered up, thereby threatening the democratic South Africa. Gaum (2012) illustrates the issue by stating that “If speech and media freedom [is] restricted, the Shaiks and Selebi's [would become] increasingly difficult to be denounced.”

The “public interest” (PINT) was still presented as a fundamental purpose of the media that should not be compromised (Gaum, 2012) but Gaum also alludes to the current media environment in South Africa, where it is argued that “public interest” is being used as “a pseudonym for shameless ‘public curiosity’”, and for the sake of sensation and circulation, “people's bedrooms are being penetrated and exposed”.

Gaum (2012) emphasises the dichotomy of the debate by arguing that — as in the case of the *News of the World*, where Rupert Murdoch's journalists “shamelessly manipulated the world for the sake of the ‘story’” — “while media freedom (MEDFREE) is one side”, media responsibility is the other, suggesting that this media responsibility is equally important (IMP).

Thus, as noted in the previous section, considerable journalistic flaws exist, which appear to suggest that while the *role* or *purpose* of the media may not have changed at its roots since 1994, the practical application of the media has undergone some changes, which are discussed in the following two sections, and which may account for some of the reasons why the relationship between the media and the government has undergone strain in recent years.

7.4 The government-media relationship

The current relationship between the media and the government seems to be centred on two central themes. As observed in the general themes that were deciphered in the content analysis, the opinion pieces, columns and news reports centred on the current behaviour of the government (GOVB) such as the government or state’s misdemeanours (GOVM) and the motives of the ANC for its behaviour (ANCMOT).

In the opinion pieces, columns and news reports, the government appeared to be retaliating to any criticisms of its behaviour with its own arsenal of reasoning, arguments (ANCARG) and invectives of the media. The second theme of the government's relationship with the media focused on the differences that exist between the "national" and "public interest" (NPINT) for the government and media, respectively; and whether the government has been acting contrarily to the "public interest" or whether the media has been acting contrarily to the "national interest". This was defined by themes in the opinion pieces, columns and news reports that related to the topics of "national" and "public interest" (NPINT), the criticisms that existed of the current government (GOVCRIT) or media, and how this has been affecting the "national" and "public interests".

The change in the relationship between the government and the media is discussed next.

7.5 The change in the government-media relationship

There did not appear to be many themes in the opinion pieces, columns and news reports reviewed that specifically discussed the *change* in the government-media relationship since 1994. However, based on the opinion pieces, columns and news reports analysed, it appears that the tone of the relationship between the media and the government has changed markedly since the start of South Africa's democracy in 1994. This is evidenced because, in 1994, the government and state was emphatic about its protection of the media and the rights of the media to be constitutionally protected with freedom of expression and self-regulation (Obuya, 2012:133).

However, the themes that were apparent in the opinion pieces, columns and news reports reviewed here were contrary to this, presenting an indication of the current danger that now exists for the media (MEDTHRT), its self-regulation and its freedom (MEDFREE). The epitomisation of this change in the government's view towards the media's self-regulation was apparent by the arguments that were presented both *for* self-regulation (PROSELF) and *against* self-regulation (ANTISELF), and it was clear that the topic of self-regulation of the media is no longer an unquestionable right. Many, for example, were adamant of the need to revise the media's constitutionally guaranteed freedom to self-regulation.

There did, however, appear to be a consensus within the literature analysed that a solution needs to be found to resolve the debate, with arguments presented that supported each of these solutions. The pro and anti-self-regulation arguments and their proposed solutions are highlighted here.

7.5.1 Media freedom

The nature of the themes relating to the media and its self-regulation presented a considerable atmosphere of panic. It appears that the media has responded to movements by the government to pass regulations that control the distribution of information, in a very serious light. Gaum (2012) describes the day that the National Assembly accepted the controversial “Information - without a ‘public interest’ clause” as “Black Tuesday”. Gaum further emphasises the severity of the threat to media freedom (MEDTHRT), likening it to “Just like in the apartheid era when newspapers [were] closed and perssensuur [sic] from time to time [was] strictly enforced”. Mazibuko (2012) also states for example:

“We believe the bill in its current form has the potential to hamper freedom and transparency (MEDFREE) – exactly the things that are the cornerstone of our democracy.”

Mazibuko (2012) also emphasises the harsh reality of the bill, and other such controversial aspects:

“There is no mention made of the serious implications of the law poses for media freedom (MEDFREE) - or [the] 25-year prison sentences that can be imposed [on] whistle-blowers.”

Gaum (2012) argues, however, that the threat to media freedom is not a purely governmental threat, and the media corporations themselves may act to inhibit media freedom for the sake of profit. Presenting the example of the Dalai Lama's visa application for Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's 80th birthday in South Africa (which was refused), Gaum describes the media's poor response to this by arguing:

“South Africa's media giants have huge interests in China ... their voices for speech and media freedom is just as thick as in South Africa. [It is] Double standards.”

The findings of the content analysis, relating to the self-regulation of the media, are discussed in the next section.

7.5.2 Self-regulation of the media

Some arguments presented in the opinion pieces against media self-regulation (ANTISELF) were described by the ANC (cited in Llewellyn, 2012), for example, who suggests that “The press ombudsman and council is ‘ineffective’”. Steenkamp (2012a) also expresses the view of the ANC, stating that they “cannot watch South Africa in a ‘party state’ degenerate where the courts do not hold sway.”

Llewellyn (2012), however, argues in favour of the media’s right to self-regulation (PROSELF), stating that media corporations such as Media24 have:

“a new press code with much stricter rules [that have] adopted changes which [have] resulted in how we manage ethical decisions, how we manage staff, how we teach ethics and how [we reach] our findings.”

Llewellyn (2012) is confident about the existing system, suggesting that “The system works” (PROSELF). Reid (2012a) also attempts to present the matter factually, stating:

“Forget all the emotive arguments for and against self-regulation of the media. The numbers alone paint a clear picture: 70% of the top 50 countries in the Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House Press-Freedom Rankings practice self-regulation” (PROSELF).

Reid (2012b) does, however, note shortcomings (FLAW) in the current media, for example stating how:

“Sensationalism in reporting and the reasons for this, as opposed to responsibly informed reporting, needs to be discussed.”

Reid (2012a) admits that “self-regulation of the press is far from being a perfect system.” An example of the growing trend of newspapers turning into tabloids with soft sensational stories taking preference over hard news is that of a *Huisgenoot/YOU* journalist who contravened a court order and published news reports making allegations against a well-known Afrikaans singer. Another came to light in August 2012 when columnist Chris Vick, as a panellist during SANEF’s debate on the topic

of “SA Media in an Ethical Spin”, said he was aware of incidents where journalists were offered money in exchange for not running with negative stories.

Alternatively, journalists had been offered money to write favourable stories about individuals or companies but Chris Vick refused to give names of the journalists or parties involved. When questioned and pressed to divulge information, he retaliated by indicating that he raised the allegations with the respective editors at the time who failed to act against the journalists. As a consequence of these issues, Reid (2012a) notes that:

“there are only 16 countries in the world which achieve an entirely free press rating...South Africa is not one of them” (FLAW).

Thus, while throughout the opinion pieces, columns and news reports the theme of arguments *for* (PROSELF) and *against* self-regulation (ANTISELF) were presented, one factor remained consistent. This was that solutions (SOL) to the current problems with the self-regulation of the media need to be considered in order to describe resolutions that can be construed as acceptable to both the government as well as the media (SOLARG). Some of the solutions for addressing the current issues with the press regulatory mechanism are outlined next.

7.5.3 Solutions and arguments

In order to address current issues with the press regulatory mechanism, Reid (2012a) proposes that “the Press Council should accept third-party complaints” (SOL) so that “any member of the public could complain about the content of the press, instead of only persons who are directly affected by a particular news report” (SOLARG).

Llewellyn (2012) also asserts that changes to the appeal system to provide even greater responsibility mechanisms (SOL) would yield a much greater impact (SOLARG). Llewellyn (2012), citing Mmusi Maimane, the then-Democratic Alliance spokesperson, suggests that the legislation concerning press freedom should be strengthened such that the findings of the press ombudsman should be “legally binding” (SOL). This indicates that according to Maimane, the ombudsman should have power over the matters of press, with authority to assert these issues in a legal manner.

Reid (2012a) also cites a Unisa report, which argues for an appropriate mechanism for press regulation that is targeted to South Africa, and which, for example, increases the willingness of the Press Council to “extend its jurisdiction to online publications” (SOL).

Steenkamp (2012b) describes another mechanism, whereby the Press Freedom Commission should be open to the option of “self-regulation by independent co-regulation”, whereby the public and the media could be appointed to jointly co-regulate the media (SOL).

Reid (2012a) summarises the goal by emphasising that:

“Ideally, you want a situation where journalists are free to operate without fear or interference from any of the main societal centres of power such as big business or the government.”

This ends the findings of this study. The chapter focuses, now, on the data analysis of the study, beginning with a definition of the theoretical frameworks alluded to earlier in this thesis.

7.6 Theoretical frameworks defined

An in-depth discussion of the theory employed here was presented in Chapter 5 (Theoretical Framework) of this thesis. For the purpose of this chapter, only a brief definition will be provided in the following subsections.

7.6.1 The liberal-pluralist theory

The liberal-pluralist theory supports the notion that the media should be free from government regulation and interference, with the media adopting a “watchdog” role and acting as the informant (Zakaras, 2013:69-72). The theory implies that a country’s political system should not inhibit the press from being neutral and objective, and the media should function as the “fourth estate” to strengthen the country’s democracy by supplying information that is free from government- or political-influence (Bennett, 1982:102).

A brief definition of the theoretical framework of political economy, as a critique to the liberal-pluralist theory is outlined next.

7.6.2 Political economy theory

The essence of the political economy approach lies in its ability to make assertions about market determinations (McQuail, 2005:99). The political economy theory shares the same basic premise, namely that: the economics of the media and the economic base of social power are largely accountable for the content of media messages and media development (McQuail, 2002:9). The media operates as a business and is characterised by the pursuit of profit (McQuail, 2002:9).

Political economy emphasises an empirical analysis of the structure of media ownership and the control of the media, and the manner in which media market forces operate and function (McQuail, 2005:99). This theoretical framework sees the media institution as being part of the economic system, which is closely linked to the political system (McQuail, 2005:99). According to Mosco, political economy has, by tradition, given precedence to understanding social change and historical transformation, and should be firmly embedded in its research of the wider social totality (Mosco, 1996:27). One of the main influences on the development of the political economy approach, according to Mosco, was the transformation of the press, electronic media and telecommunications from modest — often family-owned companies — into major media houses (Mosco, 1996:27).

Next, an analysis of “national” and “public interest” is discussed.

7.7 An analysis of “national” and “public interest”

During his tenure as chairperson of the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF), Mathatha Tsedu (2003) stated, during a speech on whether the media should serve the “national” or “public interest”, that there was not only one public but two (Tsedu, 2003). Tsedu differentiates between a public that is well organised, understands its own interest and knows how to get that interest across, versus a public that is comprised of “silent ones” whose interests are marginalised by the fact that they are silent. He questions how the media decides which of these publics to serve without compromise (Tsedu, 2003).

The media select which stories are published and which stories are “shelved”. The storylines are often very similar, if not identical, because journalists request comment from the same people, ask similar questions and follow the same story lines (Croteau

& Hoynes, 2003:132). This leads to the serious question of whether a journalist decides prior to an interview what answers he or she is seeking before deciding whom to approach. Journalists and media houses are, to a certain extent, predictable in terms of the type of news they report on, specifically in terms of any events that happen surrounding established institutions such as government agencies and political parties (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:134). Activities taking place outside of these institutions are rarely picked up by news agencies as they are not deemed newsworthy (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:134).

It is therefore valuable to consider the South African media relative to the “mirror” metaphor, next.

7.8 Relation of the South African media to the “mirror” metaphor

Newsworthiness can be seen as being constructed by journalists and their editors (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:134). This, in turn, has a direct impact on the metaphor of the news as a “mirror”, with journalists reflecting events as they happen (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:134). The “mirror” metaphor is no longer applicable because a mirror cannot give a complete reflection of a news item or event (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:134). A mirror can only give a limited reflection since it has to be facing a particular direction and placed at a particular angle, meaning that some objects will be reflected more prominently, thereby excluding or minimising other objects not considered of value (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:134). There are often forces at play when editors determine what should go on the front page of a newspaper, and more often than not it is a story that is sensational — to draw the public into buying the newspaper — and not necessarily the most newsworthy story.

Individuals with an interest in particular events or with a different perspective on what is newsworthy (as well as those who have power) enjoy different relationships compared to individuals who actively attempt to influence the content of news items. In other words, images reflected by the “mirror” are often the reflections of power players in the society rather than those of the journalists objectively reporting on items deemed newsworthy (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:134). Events that are reported on as news are products of a social process by which media owners and the journalists who work for them decide on what is deemed newsworthy and worth following up on, and

which individuals are important or whose views and opinions are worth commenting on (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:135).

This does very little for the argument of journalists and media owners being objective when it comes to the news. None of the above-mentioned decisions can be seen as objective (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:135). Croteau and Hoynes argue that the ideal of objectivity and separating values from facts is ultimately unattainable. The production of news items is the consequence of a series of journalists and media professionals collectively deciding on which items are newsworthy enough to meet the requirements of their jobs and to ensure that they meet the deadlines set out by the media houses they work for (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:135). These deadlines are not only the printing deadlines but also the profit margins. Those in power have a major influence on which stories receive priority (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:135).

Profit margins are a major factor in the decision-making processes of media houses (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:143). Those in decision-making positions have to draw up strategic plans that are ultimately aimed at making a profit and satisfying their companies' shareholders (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:143). Selling airtime and advertising space means that those paying for the luxury of airtime and space need to be kept happy and afforded the opportunity to have a say in what media messages are broadcasted or what stories ever see the light of day.

The relation of the media in South Africa to the chosen theoretical point of departure for this study, liberal-pluralism, is discussed next.

7.9 South Africa in relation to the theoretical framework of the study

The South African media is predominantly concentrated in the hands of a group of publishing monopolies, including Caxton Publishers, Naspers, Avusa, and Independent News and Media (Moyo, 2014:114). Moyo (2014:114) argues that the ownership of the media in South Africa remains a hindrance to the diversity of political opinion, where class and race remain central to the exclusion or inclusion of a variety of radical discourses in the “public sphere”, which would create a “transformative agency and radical democracy” for the poor majority of the country.

Post-apartheid South Africa is classified as a democratic non-competitive/unstable environment, according to De Albuquerque (2011:752). The author argues that this is

due to the ANC having broadly dominated the political environment since 1994, having won all presidential and political majorities in South Africa's congress since that time.

The media in the new democratic South Africa has been tasked with maintaining a "watchdog" role in the society, but in reality it must negotiate the difficult terrain of modern business where the desire for profit and the financial bottom-line are the norm (Bassey, 2006:14). Therefore, while the liberal-pluralist approach to the media applies in South Africa with the press acting as the "watchdog" for the population, Bassey (2006) argues that a threat to the media has been the corporate conglomeration of the industry, which has tended to limit the range of expression in the country. The press therefore appears to promote media freedom, diversity and pluralism by striving to counter arbitrary intervention by the government, but the concentration of ownership restricts diversity in the media and creates communication inequalities (Bassey, 2006:14).

Hendricks (2011:3) categorises the media in South Africa as functioning in a neo-liberal economic framework, in which large media conglomerates dominate the media landscape. The author does, however, cite the ideas of policy formation by the state in the post-apartheid South Africa, and notes that state action is particularly necessary when the media publishes articles containing inaccuracies. The author suggests, therefore, that the media system in South Africa should be regulated according to the Marxist approach.

Duncan (2014:177) argues that while the design of the regulatory system in South Africa was originally based on "the principles of best practice" for the country, unequal power relations were embedded in the system that have advantaged the owners of the press to the detriment of the press users and media workers. This, Duncan explains, is because "best practices are not class neutral" but are structured by imbalances between the media owners, on one hand, and the producers and consumers of the media on the other. Duncan (2014:178) maintains that because media workers are also absent from the press council structures in South Africa, their knowledge and understanding of the effects of commercially-oriented controls over media production are not considered or employed in the decision-making process.

While the regulation of the press in South Africa was not intended to control the worst effects of a commodified media, such as violations of people's rights to privacy and technical inaccuracies, it has still stimulated commodification by confining restrictions or restraints "just to moral suasion" (Duncan, 2014:177). Duncan (2014:178) argues that the regulatory system established in 2007 in fact empowered capitalist accumulation by offering the apparatus to handle grievances relating to specific transgressions of the press.

The regulatory system has thus performed the role of maintaining the system by ensuring that profiteering is not disrupted by demands from the public for a more democratic and responsive press (Duncan, 2014:178). However, by not entertaining complaints from third parties, the self-regulatory system has "individualised grievances against the media", making class-action grievances more difficult to be considered (Duncan, 2014:177). This is because systematic problems with the distribution of media resources in a society are more often uncovered by third parties than by individual complaints. This includes, for example, biases against homosexuals and immigrants (Duncan, 2014:178). The regulatory system in South Africa has therefore presented the appearance of accountability to the public without providing a more encompassing system that would give the public a significant voice concerning the organisation of the press with a correspondingly higher system of accountability.

How the regulatory system relates to liberal-pluralism is discussed next.

7.10 The relation of the media in South Africa to liberal-pluralism

McChesney and Scott (2004:4) highlight the liberal idea that the free press is produced by private citizens without interference or regulation from government. This would imply that the media is driven by profit margins and circulation figures; but equally important are the consumers who pay for the news (McChesney & Scott, 2004:4; McQuail, 2005:227). Media ownership can be divided among media owners who pay for the right to influence editorial content with the ultimate aim of deriving profits, and media owners who have various income streams such as advertisers, consumers and the government (McQuail, 2005:227). The majority of media companies fall into three groups of ownership: commercial companies, private non-profit companies and the public sector, with further divisions existing within each

group (McQuail, 2005:227). This ownership pattern invariably influences the independence of the media, with non-profit companies being perceived as more trustworthy and neutral, and big media conglomerates being perceived as striving to influence content to reflect their personal views and advance their agendas (McQuail, 2005:227). Horwitz and Currie (2007:445) also stress that the structure of media ownership has an impact on media content.

Liberal theorists are of the view that media ownership and control over editorial content can be separated with decisions about operational issues being taken by the owners or board, leaving editors to make decisions around editorial content (McQuail, 2005:227). McQuail (2005:227) stresses that the focus of the commercial media is to make a profit and this invariably leads to owners making decisions that will increase their revenue, which has a direct impact on the editorial content.

Although publically owned media are seen to be more neutral, they often suffer the same fate as privately owned media, when it comes to economic principles (McQuail, 2005:227-278). Liberal theory argues that the ideal solution lies in multiplicity of private ownership, with several small- and medium-sized companies being in competition with each other for the interest of the public by offering a variety of news and information articles; but McQuail (2005:228) argues that this solution ignores the tension between article readership and profit.

The relation of the media in South Africa to a second theory, political economy, which is an alternative to the theoretical point of departure for this study, is discussed next.

7.11 The relation of the media in South Africa critiqued by the political economy theory

In cases where profits are the main factor in deciding which stories are newsworthy, the theory of political economy is applicable. Political-economic theory is an approach that is mainly concerned with the relations and interrelatedness of the economic structures and dynamics of media institutions (McQuail, 2005:99). Golding and Murdock (2000:72-73) define political economy as being centrally concerned with the balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention. Political

economy goes beyond the technical issues of efficiency in order to engage in basic moral issues (Golding & Murdock, 2000:72-73).

From this theoretical perspective, media houses have to be considered as part of the economy with close ties to the political systems (McQuail, 2005:99). The political economy theory argues that the media operates as a business and is characterised by the pursuit of profit (McQuail, 2002:9).

Golding and Murdock (2000:73) argue that, whereas mainstream economics focuses on the sovereign individuals of capitalism, critical economy starts with sets of social relations and the interplay of power. Political economy is interested in seeing how decisions are made and how meaning is shaped by social relations, as well as the manner in which news is structured (Golding & Murdock, 2000:72-73). The significance of political-economy theory has increased as the power of media conglomerates lies in the hands of a few power players (McQuail, 2002:9). As a result, and in order to control markets, media houses have developed monopolistic tendencies (McQuail, 2002:9), which have led to news content being influenced and generated not for its news value but to sell content — as is often seen with sensational cover stories that have no real news value (McQuail, 2002:9-10).

Media houses have also looked at other means of increasing revenue, for example by selling more advertising space or airtime and increasing circulation (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:63). This, again, has had a direct influence on the content of news since the easiest way to maximise sales is to make the content lighter with higher entertainment value (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:63). News that depicts scandal is also a new way of increasing sales. For example, the 1998 scandal involving former US president Bill Clinton and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky led to news channels changing their programming to cover the scandal (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:63).

News outlets must now produce content to lure advertisers who, according to Croteau and Hoynes (2003:72), are targeting the middle class, which has a more disposable income. With competition becoming fiercer, media houses have faced the added pressure of having to produce content that speaks to the high-end market (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:72). News about the poor and lower working class has generally been

restricted to crime and other social violations, especially when the poor commit these against the middle- and upper-classes (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:72).

The analysis in terms of the theoretical frameworks is as follows:

- On-the-one-hand, you have the media playing the victim, arguing that the government and specifically the ANC is trying to infringe on their freedom and right to keep the public informed;
- On-the-other-hand, you have the government trying to assure the media houses and the public that they are not going to amend the constitution to have the power to classify information and determine what appears in the public domain;
- Despite the allegations, the media and civil society have been given the space to publicly protest against the proposed Media Appeals Tribunal; and
- The media has been given the power to make or break people, which strengthens the argument that regulation is needed — and not by the media themselves, who decide what is gossip and what is news.

The perceived threats to media and self-regulation, the ANC's motives and government behaviour are discussed next.

7.12 Perceived threats to media and self-regulation, the ANC's motives and government behaviour

The choice of words for the headlines of the *Rapport* opinion pieces, columns and news reports for the period under investigation already gives an indication of the standpoint taken by the newspaper with regards to regulation; for example, “Regulation: More questions than answers” (Llewellyn, 2012), “The media's two mouths” (Gaum, 2012), “ANC wants more money out of you” (Steenkamp, 2012b), and “Our tribunal is trite” (Louw, 2012). The word choices already give an indication of how the opinion pieces and news reports will be “framed”.

Already, there is a stance of negativity towards the government and the ANC's proposal to strengthen media accountability. According to the newspapers, there are already strong views from the media on what the real intent behind the ANC's plans

are for the proposed regulatory body, as evidenced by Llewellyn's (2012) opinion piece.

Mazibuko's (2012) opinion piece states, for example:

“We believe the bill in its current form has the potential to hamper freedom and transparency — exactly the things that are the cornerstone of our democracy.”

The media portrays the government as having adopted a “siege mentality” against the media, where any criticism is considered anti-government in nature, and more specifically, anti-ANC.

Authors such as Steenkamp (2012a) state that one of the ANC motives behind the debate is that the party needs more money for its operations and the place to get this money is from taxpayers. The author continues to argue that, based on the ANC discussion document:

“the ANC needs money for a propaganda machine in Luthuli House to establish schools on politics, to teach political ideology.”

According to Steenkamp (2012b), political infighting and lust for power also threatens to derail the ANC as ongoing power struggles for control of the state and its coffers leads to corruption, lack of discipline and dissent, with the ANC's integrity and reputation being at stake among this “dog-eat-dog mentality”.

The public relations of government also affect the issue on many levels. The realm of public relations plays a role in determining what ends up in the news by dominating media space with “pseudo-events”: media events that are created that have little news value and serve the main purpose of gaining publicity for their clients (McQuail, 2005:325). Arguably the most prominent examples of “pseudo-events” are election campaigns, press conferences or ministerial briefings, whereby government or political parties make policy pronouncements (McQuail, 2005:325). Research on the influence of public relations on news decisions shows that the majority of journalists believe that they still determine the news agenda, while there is another group who feel that government officials in fact set the agenda or manipulate what ultimately makes it into the news (Donsbach, 2004:145).

This ends the findings and analysis of this study. The chapter finishes with a short summary of the main points of the chapter.

7.13 Chapter summary

The findings in this chapter highlighted the multifaceted and complex nature of this debate as well as the many factors that continue to influence its progression and ultimate outcome. With compelling arguments on both sides of the issue and a lot of political interest in the matter, the importance of this debate for the nation's media as well as the general public is paramount, as indicated by many of the sources consulted. This was evident by the themes that were observed in the opinion pieces, columns and news reports studied and outlined in this chapter.

As for the question of whether the South African government would mitigate the mechanisms of self-regulation of the press if the South African media improved these mechanisms, from the content analysis it was evident that there was a strong feeling that the South African media should improve its mechanisms of self-regulation.

The analysis portion of the thesis provided a discussion on the theoretical frameworks that were chosen for this study and how they applied to the findings presented above. It began with an analysis of "national" and "public interest" followed by the relation of the South African media to the "mirror" metaphor. It then discussed the primary theoretical framework of this study, liberal-pluralism, followed by an alternative theoretical framework, political economy.

Chapter 8 follows, now, with the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This study examined self-regulation of the South African media with a focus on opinion pieces, columns and news reports that appeared in the Afrikaans weekly newspaper, *Rapport*, from January 2012 to December 2013.

This final chapter of the thesis provides the conclusions and recommendations of the study. It will give an overview of the literature review, theoretical frameworks and research methodology. It will draw further conclusions from the results, followed by a conclusion on the importance of the debate, and a deliberation on the outcome of the objectives of this study.

It ends with deliberations of possible future research that may be conducted, as well as other recommendations for further advancing the volume of knowledge surrounding this topic.

The chapter begins, next, with an overview of the literature review.

8.2 Literature review

Since the focus of the study was centred on media regulation, the literature review discussed the role of the media in society in general, and specifically in a democratic South Africa. The literature review was both broad and specific. It was broad in terms of looking at the role of the media in general, and specific in terms of South Africa's regulatory landscape. The main argument put forward in the literature review was that the system of self-regulation should be strengthened.

The theoretical frameworks of this study are discussed next.

8.3 Theoretical frameworks

A liberal-pluralist theoretical framework was used to analyse whether *Rapport* fulfilled or failed in its supposed media role, according to this theory. The theoretical framework was defined and discussed along with political economy, which was presented as a critique of the liberal pluralist theory.

From the liberal-pluralist perspective, this study sought to investigate whether *Rapport* performed its role of informing its readership about the debate on media regulation and the extent to which it contributed to this debate, whether it provided diverse views about media regulation and whether it critically examined whether the media in South Africa should be under state-regulation or self-regulation.

The research methodology employed for this study and to achieve its aforementioned goals is concluded next.

8.4 Research methodology

The study was conducted within the qualitative research methodology paradigm that utilised content analysis as a research technique.

Next are the conclusions reached by the researcher in this study.

8.5 Conclusions on the positions of *Rapport*

This section gives the researcher's conclusions on the positions taken by *Rapport* using the theoretical framework mentioned above. The conclusions are considered from the aspects of state-regulation and self-regulation, as described in the combined topic of media regulation, next.

8.5.1 Media regulation

This study concludes that *Rapport*, from the perspective of a liberal-pluralist theoretical framework, did not create a platform for diverse opinions to be expressed since it exposed its bias against the ANC. It also made little attempt to consider any other positions that contradicted those of the newspaper. The study further concludes that *Rapport* did not project a neutral stance on the issue of state or self-regulation and it did not give adequate consideration for any proposals put forward by the ruling party on this issue. The newspaper criticised the ANC on what it perceived as attempts to return to an apartheid-style media regulation. *Rapport* therefore took its role as a “watchdog” too extremely, which can instead be perceived as the newspaper's way of overcompensating for being the “lapdog” of the apartheid government.

The concluding arguments of the study follow.

8.6 Concluding arguments

When looking at the debates surrounding the “public interest” or the “national interest”, it ends up being centred on the government and the views it holds about how the media should operate in a democratic society with the subsequent relationship between the government and the media being strained. Journalism is supposed to follow a people-centred approach but there are often economic powers at play that have an influence on editorial content. The media should therefore refrain from abusing its power under the shield of the “public interest” or the “national interest”.

One of the basic principles of journalism is that journalists are supposed to write from an objective point of view and not from a personal one, thereby writing stories that are balanced — stating both sides of a story and being objective. The media in a democratic society is expected to serve the “public interest” and it is often referred to as the “guardian of the public interest” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001:186). The role of the media is multifaceted due to the environment it operates in as it has to satisfy both the public and its editors. Journalists stress “that they report the news, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001:188).

However, what the public is not privy to is how the media decides which story has more news value over another and whether or not the definition of news value stays constant on a daily basis or if this definition changes. Strong arguments have been made asserting that it is the media’s responsibility to take better care of what it puts in the public domain.

There is a belief that the rationale behind any government that wishes to impose any form of control mechanism over the media is cause for concern and there is a need to look at the fundamental issues of that government, the politics of the day and its relationship with the media. There is also a perception that the relationship between the government and the media is strained from the onset, and while the media will always attempt to self-regulate, the state will always attempt to exercise some form of control over the media.

Since the Polokwane resolution by the ANC to investigate the feasibility of a MAT, the media in South Africa has been more anxious about what it sees as the government trying to control what goes to print or on air.

The media in South Africa, however, has not been without fault. For example, the media prematurely concluded that the Protection of State Information Bill, which was framed as an imminent possibility, would be the final nail in the coffin of a free media in the country. This could instead have been used as an opportunity for the media to critically engage with the government and make proposals on how the public accesses information, rather than simply focusing on a clause in the bill that has had the media fraternity and opposition parties up in arms.

Based on these conclusions, the importance of the debate is clear, as described as follows.

8.7 Importance of the debate

The importance of the media goes beyond the content that is only captured in the newspapers and the influence of the media on society extends beyond what we see at face value. We base most of our knowledge of the world, the country, the government and service delivery on what is reported in the news. In this context we are dependent on what is reported, and this ultimately has an influence on how we relate to the government of the day, forgetting that there is someone who determines what we see on television, how a photograph is captured on the front page, how a story is “framed”, and who is approached to verify and/or comment on a story.

All of the above leaves much room for manipulation and strengthens the argument that independent regulation of the media is needed. The debate is neatly summed up by Gaum (2012): “Media freedom is one side. Media responsibility is the other.”

Perhaps the most important factor in this debate is the outcome for “national” and “public interest”. A deliberation on the objectives of this study are summed up, next.

8.8 Deliberation on the outcome of the objectives of this study

The aim of this study was to determine whether the media in South Africa should be under state-regulation or self-regulation. To answer this, the four objectives of the research were to answer the sub-questions: “What role does the media play in South African society?” “Has there been a change in the role of the media since 1994?” “What is the relationship between the government and the media?” and “How has this relationship between the government and the media changed since 1994?”

Each of these objectives was completed as described in the findings and analysis chapter of the study. Ultimately, however, it remains to be concluded whether the central question has been answered: “Should the media in South Africa be under state-regulation or self-regulation?” The researcher wishes to present some opinions in the final word, next, that will offer an answer to this.

8.9 Final word

The researcher postulates that the South African media should improve its mechanisms for self-regulation and that this should not be performed simply to avoid threats of state-regulation of the media or creeping state controls. It is the media’s responsibility to take better care of what is put into the public domain. If self-regulation were to be tightened, it might alleviate any threats of state media control but this also may not necessarily be the case.

The researcher believes that the rationale of any government wanting to impose control over the media is worrying and that one would have to analyse the underlying issues of the government, its political health, the politics of the day and its relationship with the media to determine the government’s motives. If it were adversarial to begin with, the media could self-regulate as much as it wanted but the state would continue to exercise creeping controls.

The question of self-regulation or state-regulation will continue to be topical, especially taking into account the progress that has been made in South Africa since 1994. There still seems to be an “us versus them” approach, and this seems to be played on by the media to gain public sympathy. However, there is still a perception that the ANC — the party that drove the process of freeing the people of South Africa — is the party that “freed” the media. This can be interpreted with two positive outcomes for the government: firstly, the media can acknowledge the ANC’s contributions by reporting more positively on the ruling party and the government’s programmes instead of only focussing on its faults. Secondly, the media can interpret the government’s motives as being genuine when they say they will uphold all the rights contained in the Constitution as they have repeatedly stated in the past.

When looking at how the media in South Africa should be regulated, it should be from the premise that a free media is non-negotiable. The “watchdog” role of the

media should be fully acknowledged, as should the contribution that the media must make towards enforcing the government's responsibility to the people, such as through service delivery — that is, despite it being critical of the ANC. In addition, there should be a consensus that self-regulation can only be successful if the media is not controlled by the government or business.

In order to support this conclusion fully, there is further research that may be done to complement this study. This is discussed in the final section of the chapter, next.

8.10 Recommendations

There is a substantial scope for additional future research that may complement or otherwise support the results of this study. This research was done using a defined sample of predominantly *Rapport* opinion pieces, columns and news reports. Future research could be done using a wider sample or using other newspapers that have also published opinion pieces, columns or news reports relating to regulation of the media. This would allow further analysis to be done on other journalists who may have offered rich and valuable information to the debate.

In conjunction, it may also be valuable to consider *Rapport* opinion pieces, columns and news reports over a wider time scale than just from January 2012 to December 2013. This would assist in more fully answering the research question and sub-questions of whether there has been a change in the role of the media since 1994 and how the relationship between the government and the media has changed since 1994.

In future research, it would also be valuable to conduct a quantitative content analysis study to provide supporting data in the form of statistical results to support the findings of this study. Strong arguments have been made in favour of strengthening self-regulation but there are also valid grounds for the government's intervention in the press, and this needs further investigation. Further research is also needed on whether the current system of self-regulation should be strengthened, by looking at a option of co-regulation. This would offer valuable additional evidence to answer the debate on whether the media should be under state or self-regulation.

This ends the conclusions and recommendations of this study. The chapter finishes with a short summary of the main points of the chapter.

8.11 Chapter summary

This final chapter of the thesis provided the conclusions and recommendations of the study. It began with the literature review and discussed the main conclusions of the debate. This was followed by a final word from the researcher, based on the conclusions of the study. Finally, recommendations were presented for future research that may be conducted to offer additional evidence to answer the debate on whether the media should be under state- or self-regulation.

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