Critical political economy in practice; the case of an advertising/editorial conflict at Brainstorm.

Nicola Ann Patricia Mawson

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Journalism and Media Studies.

Johannesburg, 2011

Declaration

I declare that this work is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

_____ day of _____

Acknowledgements

To Joel Kopping, my husband, who took over many of the household duties while I stewed behind my laptop, offered encouragement when my energy levels ebbed, and sat through many monologues while I spoke my research out loud: Thank you.

My sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor, Lesley Cowling, whose infinite patience and insight into the academic side of journalism forged an entire new way of thinking. Without your assistance and invaluable input, this paper would never have been completed and I would forever be wading through other people's research in a vain attempt to understand what I was doing.

My thanks also to all my colleagues at ITWeb, both current and past, whose input into my research and discussions on the topic and on journalism in general have been invaluable. It is impossible to single out anyone for particular mention, as so many ITWebbers aided me in this process, in so many ways. However, my particular thanks go to Ranka Jovanovic, who made this project possible by granting permission for the study, and facilitating many of the interviews.

To my dad Jeff, Bev and Pauline – thank you for your encouragement, and input during the duration of my many years of study.

Last, but by no means least: my thanks go to Natalie Mawson-Kopping who missed many bath times, walks and reading cuddles with mom. I hope my time spent away from you will pay huge dividends in the future and spark a life-long love of studying in your heart.

Index

1. Aim

This research seeks to understand the newsroom dynamics that unfold when the commercial imperatives of a publication and the professional desires of its journalists to publish what is in the public interest come into conflict. This interaction will be detailed through a critical study into the contestation that took place when a JSE-listed advertiser attempted to influence editorial content in a supplement published by the niche ITC-focussed *Brainstorm* magazine.

The media, specifically in capitalist democratic economies such as South Africa's, are expected to serve the interests of their public by providing accurate, newsworthy and credible information. The press is also expected to alert the public to matters of importance that affect their daily lives (Curran, 2000). However, because media in a free market system have a commercial imperative, the press is reliant on advertisers for their survival, as the cover price of publications does not cover the operating expenses incurred in getting it to the newsstand. Critical Political Economists, such as Herman and Chomsky (1998), Schudson (1993) and McChesney (2001), argue that this model is inherently flawed, because it makes it impossible for the media to operate independently from those who pay the bills – the advertisers. However, others argue the need to be commercially sustainable can be balanced from interference by advertisers through a strong ethical culture within the newsroom, which is ensured through processes and procedures to ensure editorial independence (Nolan, 2009). In addition, the process of newsroom socialisation creates a strong sense of autonomy within journalists, who will defend their rights to editorial integrity (Nolan, 2009).

The success of such defence, however, can be limited by the newsroom environment in which these journalists find themselves and is generally set by people in management positions, whose job it is to be focussed on the bottom-line.

The interplay between these two apparently contradictory positions is the key focus of this research, as these theories will be tested in the context of a real-life mediation process that occurs in the *Brainstorm* newsroom. *Brainstorm* is a monthly magazine that was launched in 2001 to provide in-depth insight into issues and news within the information communication technology (ICT) industry. It is owned by niche independent publisher ITWeb, which started in 1996 as a daily online publication focussed on the IT industry. *Brainstorm's* main source of revenue is advertising and, in a bid to grow this revenue stream, the magazine launched a special focus supplement a few years after inception as a vehicle to attract more advertising. Each supplement is mostly paid for by the company featured in it, and advertisers aiming services at the featured company. However, these supplements are not advertorial, and are advertised as being independent reviews of the featured company and, as such, strict editorial principles are applied.

In researching the conflict, this paper will also seek to understand *Brainstorm's* position within the niche ICT publishing sector, as well as the specific challenges it faces as an independent publisher without the backing of a large media conglomerate in a market characterised by an increasing influx of news from external sources, easily accessible through modern technology such as the internet. This discussion will take place from within a critical political economy framework as the publication, as do most others in South Africa, relies on advertising not only to cover costs, but also to be profitable. Moreover, this paper will examine the publication's use of supplements as an additional stream of revenue, looking at the implications for media.

As the paper details a case involving an advertiser attempting to, and in some instances succeeding, in changing copy in the supplement, the newsroom reaction will be examined from the point of view of the professionalism of journalists and newsroom sociology. In addition to attempting to gain an understanding of newsroom operations and the processes associated with professionalism within *Brainstorm* – and broadly in parent company ITWeb – this paper will also examine whether the editorial integrity of general and independent news extends to the supplements, or whether these are seen in a different light because they are viewed as 'paid for'.

This paper seeks to specifically answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between ITWeb and advertisers, specifically with regard to its *Brainstorm* publication?
2. Whether the relationship between advertisers and ITWeb could lead to a potential conflict over editorial content?
3. What a conflict between ITWeb and an advertiser indicates about the publication's independence, credibility and editorial ethics?
4. How does ITWeb handle challenges that arise due to its position within the sector as a niche publication facing competition from titles within larger media conglomerates?
5. How the relationship between advertisers and publications is defined by advertisers, individual journalists and official editorial policy?
6. To what extent ITWeb's dependence on its advertisers for advertising revenue in order to remain economically viable affects its editorial independence?

2. Rationale

Critical political economy is an area that has been well-researched internationally, and several studies have examined the effects of commercialisation and a profit imperative on content (see, for example, Herman & Chomsky, 1998; Schudson, 1993 and Campbell, 2008). However, in South Africa, this is a relatively young field of study. This research will thus contribute to an emerging body of research in South Africa into the impact that advertisers have within the media sector (Hadland, Cowling & Tabi Tabe, 2007; Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe 2008 and Ndaba, 2008). In addition, my case study contrasts the profit motive with journalists' ideas of editorial autonomy; a focus that has seen limited investigation internationally and in South Africa. This research also builds on limited research into supplements as a source of revenue (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008; Ndaba 2008).

Moreover, this research deals with these issues in relation to niche publications, a previously untouched area of study in South Africa. It also looks into journalistic autonomy and the culture of professionals within the sector, which has previously largely been neglected. For the purposes of this paper, I define niche publications as those that operate within a sector of the economy, as opposed to those that cover the entire economy, which I view as being mainstream publications.

My study focuses on a conflict situation, which allows it to bring all of these disparate aspects into sharp focus, and shows how these differing values and practices play out against each other in a real-life situation. It will also provide an insight into the inner workings of a newsroom when a conflict between journalists and advertisers is mediated and how newsroom professionalism at such a niche publications holds up, although a direct comparison with mainstream publications will not be drawn, leaving the door open for further research into this area. The contestation at the heart of the research reveals ideologies and practices of the individual role players through the way each justifies their actions.

The research also seeks to make a contribution to ongoing discussion about the role of media in society. South Africa did not have a 'free' economy until around the time democracy dawned as sanctions had kept the country's economy quarantined. Local media are still grappling to come to terms with what their exact role should be in society, and where they broadly fit in, in the post-apartheid era. Much of the research into critical political economy has been limited to well-developed markets, and the theory was produced in emerged markets such as Europe and the US, which differ in several respects to the local environment including in matters relating to history, culture, class and economy. As a result, the bulk of the body of work that currently exists in the field of critical political economy, while relevant, is not directly applicable in a South African context, particularly as the country's media does not fit neatly into of the

normative structures as defined by global literature (starting with Siebert et al, 1956) or any of the later additions to this field of research.

Although the international studies are less relevant in South Africa than they would be in better-established democracies with older free-market economies, this is an area of study that is only just taking off locally. There is some research into how the media landscape changed over time, and how consolidation took place, but this is years out of date and of limited relevance (Berger, 1999; Jackson, 1993; Tomeselli, 1997). Recent studies (such as the afore-mentioned studies by Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe as well as Dlamini) have been conducted at mainstream publications to determine the extent of advertising influence on editorial copy and content. However, no research has taken place at niche publications looking into the effect that the reliance on advertising revenue has on editorial content.

Moreover, many of the international studies take place in developed markets. South Africa's economy has only been a part of the free market economic community since around 1990, when it became clear that apartheid would be abolished and a new democratic era was dawning. Until then, local media were subject to interference by the government, which would often censor reports it did not like (Sparks, 2009). As a result, the country transitioned from what Siebert (1956) would call an autocratic environment, based on his 1956 normative theories, to one that more fits his description of a libertarian society.

However, defining the space South African media operate in is not as straightforward as simply ticking off a list of characteristics, as the media is also expected to be socially responsible, and play a developmental role. This can be seen through the recent African National Congress discussions around media's role, which will be detailed in the next chapter. "Good media should demonstrate a capacity for critical, unbiased analysis of trends in the economy and society," says activist turned businessman Ramaphosa (1999, p. 20).

Locally, media are faced with specific challenges, not least of which is a consolidation of ownership power among media entities, which places additional pressure on media companies to compete for readers and advertising revenue (Van Ginneken, 1998, quoted by Hadland, Cowling and Tabi Tabe, 2007, p. 1). The South African media landscape is characterised by four large media houses and a plethora of smaller, mostly business-to-business, publications. As in most democracies, print media in South Africa run as businesses, and must return a profit to shareholders, which results in a heavy reliance on advertising. Competition for advertising revenue among South African publications is no less intense than it is in countries such as the US and in Europe. The situation is exasperated by a dwindling pool of advertising revenue: Johnnic Communications said in September 2007 that advertising revenue growth in next financial year "may slow to single digits, down from 22% the previous year" (Kew,

2007[1]). Concerns have also been raised that local press is under threat because of a heavy reliance on advertising (Harber, 2004)[2]. Yet, while competition for advertising revenue and the resultant dependence on advertising, is more acutely evidenced at niche publications (Herman & Chomsky 1998, p. 15), no local research has been located within niche publications, particularly into the role that supplements play at these publications.

The heavy reliance on advertising results in the "death" of publications that are less able to attract advertising due to their smaller market shares (Herman & Chomsky, 1998, p. 15), a view that is no less applicable in a South African environment as evidenced by the short-lived Naspers publication *Nova,* which was axed as it was not generating sufficient revenue (Motloung, 2007). The sheer size of the four media conglomerates in South Africa place independent, niche, publications at a disadvantage, as will be further explored during the course of this paper. Recent research has looked into strategies that publishers have to create additional forms of revenue. Dlamini (2008) and Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tabe (2008) investigated the creation of supplements at the *Financial Mail* and the *Star* respectively. These papers drew different findings about how the divisions are structured, how ideas are formulated and whether the concept of the Chinese Wall – which separates advertising and editorial through policies and processes as effective as bricks and mortar would be – is relevant.

The desire for profit by a publisher is often at odds with the professional desire by journalists to report news accurately. Journalists' imperatives differ from business objectives as journalists are expected to retain professional integrity and impartiality. While the publisher may set the 'policy' that a publication is expected to follow, conformity to the policy is not automatic, argues Breed (1997, p. 107). He argues that journalists may disagree with policy due to "the existence of ethical journalistic norms", staff may have more liberal attitudes towards the news they are covering and there is an "ethical taboo" that prevents the publisher from demanding that policy is followed. However, there are few if any studies into organisational culture, specifically relating to niche publications, supplements and commercial factors. Internationally, this is an area of research that has been lacking. Nolan (2009) sums up some of the most recent developments in this area in his literature review on the topic.

Critical political economy and journalistic autonomy have been the subjects of individual study, such as Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tabe's 2008 study of the special projects unit at the *Star*, Dlamini's 2008 study at the *Financial Mail*. Professionalism within the industry was investigated by Dramat's 2007 work looking at how journalists stood up to management interference at SAFM, but these issues have not been explored together in a situation that allows these theories to be contrasted against each other. This study seeks to balance these theories

---

1   http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page39?oid=162222&sn=Detail
2   http://www.businessday.co.za/Articles/TarkArticle.aspx?ID=1163895

against each other in a real-life conflict situation, which arose during the process of publishing a special focus supplement at niche magazine *Brainstorm*.

In addition, the niche publication sector on the ICT industry is an area that has – unlike motoring and travel - previously not been the subject of an in-depth examination into its credibility, newsroom operating procedures and professional standards. *Brainstorm* focuses on the information communication and technology section of the economy. Its main source of revenue is advertising, which it started supplementing a few years after launch through the addition of special focus supplements that are vehicles to drive more advertising income The supplements are intended as independent examinations of various aspects of companies within the ICT sector and are seen as important sources of income. Mostly paid for by the company featured, and advertisers aiming services at the featured company, these supplements are marketed as credible and independent insights into the company.[3]

As the researcher was present at the publication at the time that an advertiser threatened to withdraw sponsorship of a supplement if changes were not made, I have first hand experience of the ructions that flowed through the newsroom as a result of the advertiser's demands. This research will capitalise on this rare opportunity to detail how editorial staff attempted to mediate the advertiser's demands, and to what extent the magazine had to make concessions because of the financial loss it would face otherwise. Of particular importance to this research is that critical political economy critiques generally focus on the macro assumptions that commercial factors can be powerful and deterministic. However, the professional practices of journalists do mediate certain of these influences in newsrooms, and this intersection is little examined, especially within a South African context. As such, this research seeks to understand this intersection in context through a local magazine and — as a result — seeks to provide an in-depth and qualitative sense of the underlying dynamics involved in the intersection of commercial and professional imperatives. As the practical implications of political economy have not being thoroughly researched locally, this paper attempts to make a contribution to local research, which — it is hoped — will contribute to an ongoing international debate.

The research will also examine, although in a limited way, whether 'sponsored' supplements can realistically be held up as being independent. This area has value as it is a large source of advertising for many publications and bears further scrutiny based on the limited findings of this publication, which is limited to one supplement at a particular publication. In addition, the

---

[3]   Information on the workings of the special focus supplements within *Brainstorm* set out in this section are based on participant observation, as I worked at ITWeb for nine months. For a fuller discussion of the participant observation aspect of this research, and on readers' views of the publication with particular reference to the supplements, please see the methodology section.

question of whether there is a greater need for training – both in the newsroom and among advertisers and readers – will be raised. It cannot, due to the limited cope of this study, be fully explored but will open up a further area of possible research.

3. Theoretical Framework

To consider the question of how commercial pressures are mediated through the operations of the newsroom and journalist practice, I draw on five main bodies of literature and theory: normative theory that describes how the media are expected to behave in societies, particularly democracies; critical political economy theory, which examines the impact of the commercial imperative to generate revenue on the media's ability to fulfil their assigned role; the sociology of news, in particular, research and theory focused on the professional beliefs and practices of journalists and media executives; literature on the South African context and local conditions as well as marketing and media economics that examine how niche media fit into the competitive landscape. As the study focuses on a niche publication, this section will also discuss literature that deals with this sector of the media landscape.

In a South African context, the notion of a free media within a free market system is relatively new. South African media became free from state influence or control with the dawn of a new democracy in 1994 when the constitution enshrined media freedom and protected it as a right under the bill of rights (Gordhan Barker in De Beer, 1998, p. 268). However, despite its apparent freedom, local media is still grappling with the role that it is expected to play in society and several public debates and discourses have focussed on various issues, which will be outlined. Recently, government's interest in the media has grown and it has made use of the free market system that exists locally to exert pressure on the media by threatening to withdraw advertising (Harber, 2007b) and raising concerns that increasing concentration of media ownership posed threats to media integrity (Duncan 2003, p. 3). The situation that this places the media in will be detailed through the examination of relevant newspaper articles and other printed material.

3.1 Theories of the media in society

Media's role in society is defined by the type of political rule that describes the sphere in which it operates, which defines the parameters within which media can function. De Beer (1998, p.18) explains the "political philosophy of a state has a direct bearing on the structure and functioning of the media system". Four broad descriptions of how media are expected to behave within a political framework were initially outlined by Siebert et al in 1956 (McQuail, 1987, p.111). The normative press theory indicators — later developed into six by further research — argue that the most 'free' press can be found in a liberal state, which is one that is not subject to government intervention. The six normative theories are the authoritarian theory, the soviet or Marxist-Leninist theory, the developmental system, the social responsibility system, the democratic-participant system and libertarian system.

Authoritarian, or state-media systems, view press as "subordinate to state power and the interests of a ruling class" (McQuail, 1987, p. 111). The press are either expected to support, or be neutral, towards government. It also refers to situations in which "the press is deliberately and directly used as a vehicle for repressive state power" (McQuail, 1987, p. 111). Factors that can be seen to typify such an environment include a press that is subordinate to the government, a press that cannot or does not cause offence, censorship, 'attacks' on government being viewed as criminal and the threat of legal proceedings to maintain 'order' as well as the state having an input into media content (McQuail, 1987, p. 112). Press in such an environment is often a vehicle for the government to express or entrench its views. In such an environment, journalists have no freedom and are at the mercy of the state and its laws and have no independence (McQuail, 1987, p. 112). In a South African context, the press can be said to have recently come out of such a system after the first democratic elections in 1994.

Within a democracy, there are several broad systems that affect how a press can function. The utopian view of media freedom is held by the libertarian system, which views the press as sacred and free from interference of any sort. Within this system, media are 'free' to publish what they please without any worry of government censorship and operate as businesses within the free market or capitalist system. Media in such a system are free from censorship, are not punishable for attacks on government and cannot be compelled to publish anything they do not wish (McQuail, 1987, p. 113). "A free press has thus been seen as an essential component of a free and rational society" (McQuail, 1987, p. 113). This theory dates back to when the press gained its freedom from governmental controls in the seventeenth century and is "now widely regarded as the main legitimating principle for print media in liberal democracies, (McQuail, 1987, p. 112). However, he points out it is practically difficult to implement. One should bear in mind that the right to freedom of press needs to be weighed up against the economic system in which it finds itself, which political economists argue place other limitations on press freedom.

The developmental system can typically be seen in third world or developing countries (De Beer, 1998, p. 19). McQuail says, "the one thing that gives most unity to a development theory of the media is the acceptance of economic development itself". This would include the notion of 'nation-building' as an "overriding objective" (McQuail, 1987, p. 121). Several features of such a system include a press that can be restricted depending on the nation's needs, a press that should seek to unify the nation, and a press that should prioritise national culture and language. However, although journalists are free in terms of information-gathering and dissemination of news, they do have responsibilities towards the nation (McQuail, 1987, p. 121).

The social responsibility system is one that espouses that the press has a duty towards the public, which holds the press accountable for the information that it provides to the public and

must provide a broad platform so that all a country's citizens have an avenue through which to express their views. The theory was developed as a result of a "growing awareness that in some important respects the free market had failed to fulfil its promise of press freedom and to deliver expected benefits to society" (McQuail, 1987, p. 116). The theory supposes that the press has a duty to lead the public, while giving it a voice and being independent.

> "In particular, the technological and commercial development of the press was said to have led to lower chances of access for individuals and diverse groups, and lower standards of performance in meeting the informational, social and moral needs of society. It was also thought to have increased the power of a single class. At the same time, the rise of the new and seemingly powerful media of radio and film had demonstrated the need for some kinds of public control and means of accountability additional to those appropriate to the long-established and professionally organised print media." (McQuail, 1987, p. 116).

The social responsibility system includes the assumption that media serve "essential functions in society, especially in relation to democratic politics". In addition, there is a view that media must accept their responsibility to fulfil these functions. This, says McQuail, is especially pertinent in "the sphere of information, and the provision of a platform for diverse views, but also in matters of culture; an emphasis on maximum independence of media, consistent with their obligations to society". Moreover there is "an acceptance of the view that there are certain standards of performance in media work that can be stated and should be followed" (McQuail, 1987, p. 116).

> "In short, media ownership and control is to be viewed as a kind of public stewardship, not a private franchise, and there is a pronounced shift away from the relativism about ends characteristic of free press theory and from optimism that the 'free marketplace of ideas' will really deliver the individual and social benefits claimed on its behalf. Under conditions of private ownership, the media professional is not only responsible to consumer and shareholder, but also to society at large." (McQuail, 1987, p. 116).

The democratic participant theory, the latest entrant in the discussion, is seen as a compromise in that it is located mainly within liberal societies but overlaps with the developmental theory (McQuail, 1987, p. 117). Its emphasis is more on horizontal than top-down communication. Control is in the hands of the receiver of information. As such, he says, it is characterised by media being agents of those who hold political power, content is reflective of the financiers of the press, free expression is a characteristic although this definition may vary and the interests of people are paramount (McQuail, 1987, p. 117). This theory links to critical political economy theory, which argues that media that are driven by the need to gain advertising are susceptible to influence from advertisers.

Media in South Africa do not fit neatly into any of these descriptors, but rather straddle several at the same time, as the sector is still grappling with its new-found freedom in a post-apartheid society. As South Africa is a democracy with a free-market system, the libertarian system has relevance, however, media are also expected to aid democratic development and to play a developmental role by the ruling African National Congress. In addition, media are also expected to serve functions in society and act in a socially responsible manner. The democratic participant theory also has relevance as local media are reliant on advertising spend for revenue. The ruling party has lamented this reliance on advertising as the reason for the lack of coverage in the media of all of South Africa's people, rich and poor. This aspect will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.2 Critical Political Economy

Although a free market system, which is not dominated by government control or government-owned enterprises, offers media far more freedom than an authoritarian or soviet system would, this perceived freedom has drawn criticism from political economy theorists. These theorists argue the importance of accurate news that is in the public interest becomes secondary to the profit motive. Publications are run as businesses, and need to attract as much revenue as is possible. As a result, argue Herman and Chomsky, publications pander to the needs of advertisers to avoid alienating what is the bulk of the publication's revenue stream (1998, p. 17). This has the effect of defining what audiences a publication serves. News is pitched to the audiences required by advertisers: affluent and with spending power (McChesney, 2001a, p. 88). In order to generate revenue, media are tailoring their products to meet advertisers' needs, to convince those signing the cheques that keep them in business that they are the best possible outlet for advertising (Schudson, 1993, p. 67).

Campbell argues that being reliant on advertising for revenue subjects publications to advertising influence. Campbell cites several research papers that found that advertisers have forced changes to copy, or withdrawn their spending from publications (2008)[4]. "Unfortunately, these are not isolated cases and they are not limited to specific publications or types of news mediums." However, whether advertisers hold sway over content seems to come down to organisational culture, "regardless of whether the news organisation is owned by shareholders, a corporation or an independent owner" (Campbell, 2008). Organisations that are focussed on the bottom-line of profit are more likely to give into demands from advertisers than those that place a premium on editorial integrity and balanced news (Campbell, 2008). Advertising pressure will be more acutely felt within organisations that rely more on advertising revenue and have smaller circulations (Campbell, 2008). "Those newspapers and magazines with large

---

[4] This paper was accessed online and was published as a PDF file without any page numbers.

circulation and subscription revenues are less likely to bow to advertiser demands." Advertisers that spend more will also hold more sway (Campbell, 2008). "For farm publications with a very limited number of advertisers, the loss of just one can have a huge financial impact. Therefore editors weigh more heavily the consequences of publishing content that may offend advertisers. This often leads to self-censorship," Campbell says of the agricultural sector as an example of the pressures niche publications face (2008). Advertising influence could be stronger at publications that specialise in certain topics or industries (Campbell, 2008).

3.2.1 Consolidation

A second consequence of a dependence on advertising is a move towards consolidation within the industry; as companies merge and buy each other out, to tie up as much advertising spend as possible. The ironic outcome of capitalism, and the role media play within a free-market system is that media themselves have grown into conglomerates as a result of rising costs, (Murdock, 2000, p. 1). "By the beginning of this century the age of chain ownership and the press barons had arrived, prompting liberal democratic commentators to acknowledge a growing contradiction between the idealised role of the press as a key resource for citizenship and its economic base in private ownership," Murdock says. This gives a handful of large media organisations control over the world's news and the financial clout to stand up to advertisers, placing smaller publishers in a disadvantageous position.

> "A whopping three-quarters of global spending on advertising ends up in the pockets of a mere 20 media companies. Ad spending has grown by leaps and bounds in the past decade, as TV has been opened to commercial exploitation, and is growing at more than twice the rate of gross domestic product growth." (McChesney, 2001b).

The main driver behind the creation of conglomerates within the media industry "has been the incessant pursuit for profit that marks capitalism, which has applied pressure for a shift to neoliberal deregulation," says McChesney (2001b). In media, this means the relaxation or elimination of barriers leading to "commercial exploitation of media and to concentrated media ownership". In an era characterised by globalisation, technological revolution, and democratisation, media play a central and "perhaps even a defining, role", yet the result of this era has been a shrinking of available news sources and an erosion of competition, to the readers' detriment, (McChesney, 2001b). Media have sought to deregulate laws surrounding the industry and the consequence of a media operating in a deregulated capitalistic society is a "global commercial-media market". US-based media companies have spread globally in a bid to out-grow their competition and return increasing profits to shareholders as they seek to operate in untapped markets with less media penetration (McChesney, 2001b). As media

conglomerates extend their reach, smaller firms are inevitably swallowed up, leading to a handful of large media conglomerates that own several subsidiaries (McChesney, 2001b).

> "The level of mergers and acquisitions is breathtaking. In short order, the global media market has come to be dominated by seven multinational corporations: Disney, AOL Time Warner, Sony, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi, and Bertelsmann. None of these companies existed in their present form as media companies as recently as 15 years ago; today, nearly all of them will rank among the largest 300 non-financial firms in the world for 2001." (McChesney, 2001b).

As a result, global media are only "partially competitive" and cross-ownerships and other intertwining relationships such as shared major shareholders and shared directors has resulted in a media that "more closely resembles a cartel than it does the competitive marketplace found in economics textbooks". The sheer size of major media corporations gives them unequal political power, to the detriment of the public (McChesney, 2001b). "In the area of democracy, the emergence of such a highly concentrated media system in the hands of huge private concerns violates in a fundamental manner any notion of a free press in democratic theory," says McChesney (2001b). The consolidation of media that resulted in the creation of powerhouses is not distinct to global media (McChesney, 2001b) as there is what he called "a second tier" of national or regional powerhouses, or companies that dominate niche markets. In South Africa, the market is characterised by four large media houses – Independent, Caxton, Avusa and Naspers – that account for the bulk of advertising spend, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

As can be seen, the quest for advertising revenue by media companies in free-market economies has a detrimental effect on content. Advertisers, particularly those focussed on niche publications, attempt to influence copy, to the detriment of publications' credibility. Moreover, the competition for advertising spend has resulted in the creation of a media sector that is dominated by a handful of media houses. This has the effect of limiting diversity of content, but also makes it harder for smaller, niche, publications to attract revenue spending as they have smaller circulations and do not have the financial muscle to stand up to advertisers' demands. The effect this has on local media will be explored further during the course of this chapter.

3.3 Economies of Niche Publications

Advertisers have certain objectives when deciding on the placement of advertisements and need aim their products and services at specifically delineated audiences. The first step in the process is to define who uses the product being advertised and then to aim the advertisement

at that group. Having decided on what type of audience the product is aimed at, the next question a marketing strategist asks must be: where will the product be exposed to the audience it needs? Broadly speaking, this amounts to a question of place; choosing which trade publications out of the available media. Business press is seen as the most economical and efficient way of reaching the "untold tens of thousands" of hidden buyers, and reaching the largest amount of those with buying influence, argues Stansfield, the author of the *Advertising Manager's Handbook* (1982, p. 730).

> "In industrial advertising when we think of the best possible medium to disseminate the message we've put in our advertisement … think instead of a business publication – or a number of business publications." (Stansfield, 1982, p. 730).

The goal of advertising is "increasing sales and reducing the cost of selling," which can be achieved through business-to-business, trade or industrial press (Stansfield, 1982, p. 730).

> "That is what industrial advertising does if the program is well-planned and well-conceived…. People in industry who are contemplating a purchase look first to business publications for product information." (Stansfield, 1982, p. 730)

Business publications are the best and most effective method of getting news out to a captive audience. He says business publications are used for business profit, and not pleasure, and are read for working or job purposes. "Only in a business publication can you always find your sales prospect with his or her mind on business – when *editorially conditioned* to absorb your business message." (Original emphasis) (Stansfield, 1982, p. 733).

> "The business press is unique. The business publication is the most economical, most influential, most penetrating path to specialised groups. All good selling is specialized, and nothing specializes like the business press. It is good sense, and good advertising, to cultivate the people who are immediately and directly concerned with the purchase and use of your product in the business atmosphere, and reading environment of their job interest. Business publications, the working press, provide you with the opportunity." (Stansfield, 1982 p. 733).

However, publications are rated on merit. Business publications are only held in esteem if they are well edited (Stansfield, 1982, p. 732). Many readers devote as much time to the advertisements as they do to editorial content, at 31%. Some 68% of readers read advertising "on purpose", while another 27% read advertisements "by accident". The advertiser must determine whether the publication fits in with the company's objectives (Stansfield, p. 733). Stansfield explains the "advertising manager and the agency naturally look at each publication analytically – to determine if it has real merit and if it is right for the company and its product,

but they don't question the merit of the business press as a whole" (1982, p. 733). The importance of selecting the correct publication in order to get the correct message across is detailed as Stansfield (1982, p. 743) narrates a true tale, albeit with names changed, of a business publication that had sought advertising but was the "antithesis of a well-edited, useful magazine," he writes.

"It is actually a farce and provides no job-help for decision makers. This book will print anything at all that an advertiser sends in as a publicity release, however, including magazine articles – if they can be called that – written by all of the inarticulate engineers in that industry" (Stansfield, 1982, p. 743).

Stansfield makes his point by quoting from the genuine, although disguised memo, from the advertising manager to the US company's president (1982, p. 744). The scathing memo points out that the publication, which irritates no one, as it never takes a stand, has no editorial credibility.

"I might mention that the *one* thing an advertiser buys when he purchases space in a business publication is editorial content. When it's good, the magazine is read, his ad is read and the money is well invested. In the absence of good editorial, money is wasted." (Original emphasis) (Stansfield, 1982, p. 744)

A publication's image and its readership were also cited as important when selecting publications in which to advertise, and the memo also made the point that the particular magazine sold its cover, which was construed as a negative attribute by the advertising manager (Stansfield, 1982, p. 745). From Stansfield's text, it becomes apparent that credible advertising and editorial is seen as vital in persuading the intended audience of the honesty and credibility of the advertising message. Simple republishing of press releases – pastepot publishing – is frowned upon and not seen as worthy of a credible publication (Stansfield, 1982, p. 744).

"*Commercial Cooling* is what is known in the advertising field as a 'pastepot' book. That's because its so-called editorial material is largely rewritten after it has appeared originally in legitimate publications, or is material contributed at no cost to *Commercial Cooling* by manufacturer personnel. The publication has, to the best of my knowledge and that of the agency, *one* editor. No field editors, no Washington editor, no corresponding editors, no other editors." (Original emphasis) (Stansfield, 1982, p. 744)

The 'tainted' image of obvious advertising is detailed by Vise (2005, p. 47), who says the founders of Google did not want to spend vast amounts of money on advertising, preferring rather to grow the search engine's market share through word of mouth. The company wanted

to earn the same type of respect that is attributed to newspapers where, the image of credibility is upheld through clearly demarcated advertising and editorial. However, the company still needed to derive revenue from somewhere. "Larry [Page] and Sergey [Brin] had an instinctive aversion to advertising, coupled with a deep-seated fear that it would corrupt search results," (Vise, 2005, p. 47). Instead, the entrepreneurs sought an alternative source of funding, including the option of licensing their technology (2005, p. 48). When the fledgling company finally settled on advertising as a source of income, the founders insisted it had integrity, a decision criticised by the press (Vise, 2005, p. 91).

> "The newly emerging business strategy was simple: continue to produce free search results, and profit by selling ads. The key was to make it clear they wouldn't bias the search results." (Vise, 2005, p. 91)
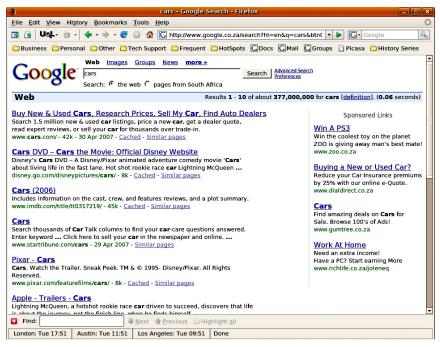
The company also separated search results from advertisements by labelling advertisements as sponsored links and delineating a section for such search results. Vise says the founders "became persuaded that, just as there was a clear distinction between news stories and ads in newspapers, they could achieve the same thing on Google.com," and decided, as a result, to rank advertisements in order of popularity, instead of selling off the top spot to the advertiser who bid the most (Vise, 2005, p 88). The company eventually listed on a stock exchange and explained to shareholders why they would not mix search results with advertising. Vise quotes from a letter to prospective shareholders (2005, p. 177-178):

> "Our search results are the best we know how to produce. We do not accept payment for them or for inclusion or more frequent updating. We also display advertising, which we work hard to make relevant, and we label it clearly. This is similar to a well-run newspaper, where the advertisements are clear and the articles are not influenced by the advertisers' payments." (Vise, 2005, p. 177-178)

This was a way of distinguishing themselves from their competitors, and a way of rubbishing how their competitors garnered revenue, (Vise, 2005, p. 178). "It was a mantra with a message. Google search results were good and pure. Yahoo's were tainted." However, a study by Pew Charitable Trusts revealed that surfers were simply unaware that Google results returned advertisements, despite the clearly delineated lines (Vise, 2005, p. 178).

> "This was a major reason why many bright people didn't understand how the company made money. The Pew study said that 62% of Google users did not understand the difference between its free search results and the ads it displayed to the right of these. If more people realised that the small square boxes were paid advertisements, they would be less likely to click on them, according to marketing experts. Google's profits were growing faster because of ambiguity in a new medium." (Vise, 2005, p. 178)

Vise adds the label of sponsored links enabled Google to avoid being precise, and to avoid the "stigma" of hosting advertisements when it displayed search results. Despite this, Google was successful; its 2004 first-half profits were more than double what it reported in the first half of 2003 (Vise, 2005, p. 179).
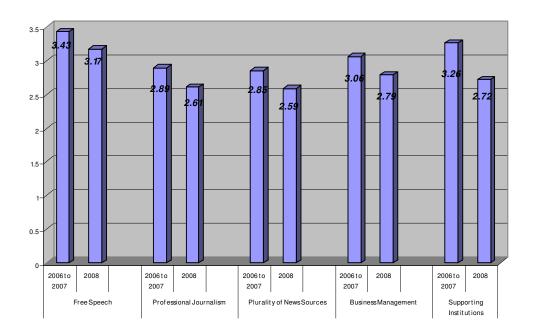

Screenshot captured on 1 May 2007

As can be seen, advertisers are very specific about where they spend their money, seeking credible publications that offer valuable information to a specific readership. Based on Stansfield's comments, the business or trade publication is a key tool for advertisers to reach a large, targeted audience economically. However, as will later be discussed in relation to ITWeb and its *Brainstorm* publication, this is a very competitive environment. Advertisers analyse each publication to determine whether it is the right vehicle in which to advertise, and whether it will reach the desired audience. This strategy means that publications need to prove their worth to the advertisers and has led to the creation of vehicles precisely to garner a larger share of advertising spend by appealing directly to advertisers' needs, as will be discussed.

3.4   South African Media in a Free-Market Context

South Africa has come a long way since the autocratic apartheid National Party was voted out of power in 1994 and the media has also benefited from that transformation process. IREX's Media Sustainability Index for 2008, states the "breadth, depth, and volume of media in today's South Africa makes it almost impossible to believe that only 15 years ago, the country was ruled by its white minority through the oppressive system of apartheid – and that scarcely

more than 30 years ago, television was banned," (2008, p. 345). The survey, which looks into the sustainability of publications around the world, notes that there is a plethora of media spanning various forms of media including print and broadcast. "In addition, democratic, majority-ruled South Africa has a constitution and laws that guarantee free speech and media," it notes. However, the report points to worrying signs that, as South Africa matures, media freedom is coming under threat. "The media sector witnessed battles in the past year that raised questions about whether political and commercial interests are undermining speech and media freedoms," it noted (2008, p. 345). The paper quotes the Media Institute of Southern Africa as stating, on World Press Freedom Day, that South Africa's "political and economic leadership was slowly showing signs all too familiar with Africa's post-colonial nationalist governments — that is, the intolerance towards criticism and leaning towards legislative power to seek protection from public scrutiny" (2008, p. 345). As a result of those factors, South Africa's sustainability score dropped from 3.10 to 2.77, placing it in the "near-sustainability" bracket. "While this score still places South Africa high among countries in Africa, its position as the leader is a bit less convincing," says the report (2008, p. 345). The report categorises ratings into four categories, 0 to 1 indicating an unsustainable or anti-free press, an unsustainable mixed system is a score of between 1 and 3, while SA falls into the near-sustainability category, 2 to 3, which is characterised by progress in "meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media". In addition, this status indicates that media "advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice". However, a score of between two and three, the second highest, also means that more time is needed to make sure that advances are enduring and that "increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable". Media sustainability lost ground in all of the five measurement areas: freedom of speech, professional journalism, plurality of news sources, business management and supporting institutions. Of the objectives, only freedom of speech, remained above three (2008, p. 346). The findings have been encapsulated in a table below:

Chart: Y-axis scale 0 to 3.5

	2006 to 2007	2008
Free Speech	3.43	3.17
Professional Journalism	2.89	2.61
Plurality of News Sources	2.85	2.59
Business Management	3.06	2.79
Supporting Institutions	3.26	2.72

As the notion of a free press in South Africa is relatively new, media is still grappling with the role it is expected to play within society. In addition, other stakeholders such as government and the citizenry are increasingly making their viewpoints heard, through several public debates, as to what role the media is expected to play. One such example is the hearings into racism in the media[5]. In 2000, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) published its report on racism in local media. Faultlines: Inquiry into Racism in the Media found that although the South African media could be characterised as racist, this did not necessarily equate to bad journalism. Writing in De Beer (1998, p. 85), De Beer and Diederichs argue that for the first three years after democracy, debate around media's role in the new South Africa centred on "ways in which the legacy of apartheid could urgently be shaken off". After 1997, however, the debate shifted towards looking at what "the proper role of media within a democracy should be" (De Beer, 1998, p. 85). South African media are under pressure to play a developmental role in an emerging market, and to foster the sustainability of South Africa's new democracy, as has been discussed.

Government raised several issues around which it was concerned in 2001 when Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad said there was a lack of demographic representation within the media[6]. He also stated that there was an "almost total lack of a public culture in SA". This speaks to the fact that media are driven by commercial interests and, as a result, will target audiences with spending power so that they can sell these readers to the advertisers, thus increasing their share of advertising revenue. Pahad, however, then called on the media to aid government in meeting all the needs of its citizens:

---

[5] http://www.polity.org.za/polity/govdocs/reports/hrc/racism-media-00.pdf
[6] http://www.gcis.gov.za/media/minister/010601media.htm

"The media can be adept at defining the issues, at writing the agenda, and creating public opinion, which can, at times, bear little relation to reality on the ground. They could benefit by remaining closer to the grassroots, by absorbing what people are saying, and by sending their reporters to what they might view as the "back blocks" and seeing what is happening out there — however inconvenient this may be to the news-gatherers. There is no doubt in my mind that things are vastly better in terms of our meeting people's needs in the new, democratic South Africa, but the media has an extended role to play in this." (Pahad, 2001)

Government is increasingly concerned that the media are marginalising the poor in an ever-increasing quest for profit (Duncan, 2003). Duncan cites several instances in which the ruling African National Congress (ANC) has sought to get media to play to its tune of developing the country and all its citizens. Among others, ANC party member Pallo Jordan has argued that the commercial interests of the press are leaving the interests of the poor behind (Duncan, 2003). This argument was encapsulated in a discussion document entitled *Media in a Democratic South Africa*, which the ANC placed on the table at its 51st national conference in December 2002 (Duncan, 2003). The authors argued:

"Commercialisation of media was reinforcing the historic disparities in the media inherited from apartheid to create a potent mix of exclusion. Given the economic inequalities in the country, it was inevitable that advertiser-driven media would exclude the poor: a problem that was becoming increasingly stark as advertising assumed ever-greater importance as the commercial media's revenue stream" (Duncan, 2003).

The ANC should, said the authors, respond to the growing problem of a "political economy" of the media through a publicly-funded media model, which would act as a voice for the marginalised poor. However, the ANC document concedes that commercial media should be left to operate as is, but should be encouraged to transform and "should be targeted for black empowerment interventions" (Duncan, 2003). To solve this apparent dilemma, the ANC wanted to reduce reliance on advertising spend by the state broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and create direct-to-public channels that would serve to get the ANC's message across (Duncan, 2003).

Compounding the concerns over the issue that the poor do not have as big a say in the media as those who can draw advertisers' attention – and therefore have copy written for them or targeted towards them – is a comment made by then chairperson of the South African National Editors' Forum, Mathatha Tsedu. Duncan (2003) quotes Tsedu as saying there are two publics – the one that can drive their own agenda, and the silent public that ends up marginalised. Tsedu pointed out the difficulty media face in giving a voice to the silent public because of the reality faced by media of needing to attract advertising, which skews priorities towards those

who can articulate their own agendas (Duncan, 2003). "Tsedu's views on the deficiencies of the media have found favour with Jordan, who quoted him stating two years ago that like banks and leading financial houses, the media have 'red-lined' the poor," writes Duncan (2003).

It is interesting to note that, according to *Media Facts 2010*, some 47% of South Africans have access to newspapers counted in the South African Advertising Research Foundation's All Media and Products Survey (AMPS), compared with 47.8% of magazines counted in the AMPS basket. Of the black population, listed as 23.8 million, 42.1% have access to all AMPS newspapers, 56.4% of the 2.78 million coloureds and 71.2% of the 836 000 Indians have access to newspapers in the basket, while 64% of the 4 million whites have access. Magazines in the AMPS pool show similar levels of access, with 41.3% of blacks having access to magazines surveyed, 57.2% of coloureds, 56.5% of Indians and 76.8% of whites, the only notable jump between newspaper and magazine access (2010, p. 15).

These statistics, however, indicate that access to publications is higher among those who have earning power, and who are therefore targeted as audiences by publications. According to Statistics SA[7], 28.1% of blacks are unemployed, and 21.3% of coloured people are also without work. Only 5.5% of whites and 7.9% of Indians are unemployed, compared to a national unemployment rate of 24%. Blacks and coloureds have the lowest access to media products, indicating that access to media is relative to earning an income. As a result of low access to media among blacks and coloureds, which have the highest unemployment rates, the ruling party's endeavours to aid the marginalised and the poor through developmental interventions in the media will fail unless access is widened. The media are likely to continue targeting those with earning power, and those who purchase their products, and not people who do not have access to publications.

3.5.   Advertising and Media in South Africa

As is the situation globally, South Africa has been through a period of consolidation and is currently characterised by four large media companies: Naspers, Johnnic Communications, since renamed to Avusa, Independent News and Media as well as Caxton. The MDDA report 2009 states that these four large media companies dominate the space with Caxton CTP leading the pack with 130 identified titles (of which 89 are wholly-owned and 41 co-owned) representing 28.3% of newspaper titles in the country. Naspers through its print media subsidiary, Media24, is a close contender for second place with more than 65 titles. Foreign owned Independent Newspapers group owns 28 titles and then Avusa has 23 titles, according

---

[7] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02114thQuarter2010.pdf

to the Media Diversity and Development Agency's 2009 report, cited by the ANC (2010)[8]. With the exception of Independent Newspapers, all these titles are listed on the JSE. None of the smaller independent publications have listings on the bourse, and do not report revenue figures publicly, apart from ITWeb, which disclosed that it turned over R30 million in 2009[9], a substantially smaller amount than either of the large listed houses. It is difficult to find data as to how much of the advertising pie each of these companies earn, or how much each title earns through adverting revenue each year. As a result, the latest-available information relating to each company's last annual financial figures – with the exception of Independent Newspapers, which is not listed locally – will be provided to indicate the relative size of these publishing houses when compared with each other. This information has been sourced from an archive of Stock Exchange News Service publications, in which the listed companies report financial figures. It has been tabulated for ease of reference and links to the financial results are provided in footnotes.

Company	Year-end	Revenue	Operating profit	Net profit	Market Cap
Naspers[10]	March 2010	R28 billion[11]	R5.4billion	R5.3 billion	R155 billion
Caxton[12]	June 2010	R4 billion	R642.3 million	R458.4 million	R7.3 billion
Avusa[13]	March 2010	R4.7 billion	R250 million	R177 million	R3 billion

From the above information, it appears that Naspers is the largest media company listed on the JSE. However, it must be noted that its print operations accounted for just more than R10billion in revenue, and R896 million of its operating profit – the number companies arrive at after taking into account cost of sales and the cost associated with running a business entity. When it published its results in June, Naspers noted:

> "[The] print media businesses, however, suffered a 5% decline in its top line because of pressure on advertising revenues…. Circulation of newspapers and magazines held up remarkably, but advertising felt the blows. In a recession people read more, but advertisers spend less."

Naspers responded to this situation by trimming operating and capital expenditure[14]. Competitor Caxton noted in August, when it published its annual results, that the "pressure on advertising revenue continues unabated and was exacerbated during the run up to the Football

---

8   http://www.anc.org.za/docs/discus/2010/mediad.pdf
9   http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13913&Itemid=124
10 http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page296897?oid=2167&sn=2009+Detail+DNS+Company&pid=296897
11 Naspers does not only publish titles, but also has significant Internet and pay-TV assets that account for the bulk of its operations. For the purposes of this review, these assets have not been stripped out as the company does not disclose net profit at unit level.
12 http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page296058?oid=1989&sn=2009+Detail&pid=296058
13 http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page296897?oid=201335&sn=2009+Detail&pid=296897
14 http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page296058?oid=2167&sn=2009+Detail+DNS+Company&pid=296058

World Cup, as additional investments were made by marketers in television advertising which received major exposure over this period, to the detriment of the print industry as a whole"[15]. Avusa[16], which has the lowest net profit margin, when compared to total revenue, of all the locally listed media companies, attributed lower advertising spend to "softer economic activity in a recessionary climate that was evident throughout the financial year".

According to *Media Facts 2010*, published by OMD in conjunction with Tony Koenderman's *Ad Review*, in 2009, daily newspapers accounted for 13.4% - or R3.2 billion – of total advertising spend, while weekend papers accounted for R1.57 million or 6.4% of the total basket of R24.4 billion – a figure that strips out in-house advertisements. Trade, technical and financial publications, which would be the category into which *Brainstorm* fits, accounted for a mere 2%, or R484.6 million (Media Facts, 2010, p. 16). The number of publications in the business-to-business sector, which would include magazines such as *Brainstorm*, has more than doubled since 1991, when there were 300 such publications. In 2000, this number reached 580, growing to 640 in 2004, 775 in 2008 before the number decreased to 735 in 2009 and then dropped further to 700 in 2010, presumably because the recent global recession resulted in some publications becoming unsustainable, although no reasons are given for the loss of several publications (Media Facts, 2010, p. 16).

Only two IT publications are listed by *Media Facts 2010*, among which is consumer computing title *PC Format*, which has 221 000 readers, a circulation of 18 600 and charges R23 760 for a full-page full-colour advertisement. *Brainstorm* is not cited by the survey, but sister publication *iWeek* is included. This weekly – now bi-weekly – magazine charges R14 700 for a full-page full-colour advertisement, and has a circulation of 9 300, although no readership figures are given. According to *Brainstorm*'s rate card[17], the cost of a full-page advertisement is R21 500. The survey, however, states that advertising spend in this trade, technical and financial space is dominated by *Financial Mail*, *Finweek* and *Engineering News* (2010, p. 27). The survey adds "pressure on printing and distribution costs forces publishers to continually cut non-core market circulation. Publishing costs and pressure on revenue is driving titles online."

The listed media companies' experience bears out the finding that all titles are feeling the pressure of an uncertain advertising pool. In 2009, advertising spending, stripping out self-promotion, dropped to R24.4 billion from R24.5 billion in 2008 (Benjamin, 2010). The research showed that total advertising spending was R36.2 billion in 2009, and increase on 2008's R34.2 billion before self-promotion is stripped out. In 2006, R20.1 billion was spent, which increased marginally to R24.4 billion in 2008, (Benjamin, 2010).

---

[15] http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page296058?oid=1989&sn=2009+Detail&pid=296058
[16] http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page296058?oid=201335&sn=2009+Detail&pid=296058
[17] http://www.brainstormmag.co.za/2010_BrainStorm_rates.pdf

In addition to the dominant local presence of three locally-listed and large media houses, Western media, as a result of their size and boundless reach, also own a large share of media in emerging markets, evidenced through the availability in SA of international broadcasts from groups such as CNN and the BBC and the buyout of the Argus group by Irish publisher Anthony O'Reilly in 1993[18]. Such a situation, regardless of the location, effectively makes it impossible for "newly independent nations to escape colonial status" (McChesney, 2001b). In trade or business publications there is arguably more competition for readers, and the advertising revenue this brings with it, as the niche players compete against each other and those housed within the large media houses. For example, ITWeb publication *Brainstorm* used to compete head-to-head with business-to-business titles such as the now defunct Avusa title *Computing SA*. Currently other magazines viewing for a share of the advertising pool, according to data sourced from the South African Rates and Data's online media directory[19], include several housed within niche, or smaller publishing houses. Among the titles are two Future Wave Media magazines, *BusinessIT Africa* and *Channelwise Africa*, *Hot List* published by Entrepreneur Media South Africa, Highbury Safika's *African Communications*, Systems Publishers discontinued *CRN* as well as EE Publishers' *EngineerIT* and *PostionIT*. However, ITWeb's *Brainstorm* magazine also competes for advertising with financial publications such as *Financial Mail* and *Finweek*, both owned by large listed publishing houses.

ITWeb Limited is a smaller publishing house, privately owned by 13 management and staff members. It employs over 100 people in offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town and has an annual turnover of more than R30 million. In its marketing material, it states that it "offers various platforms to reach all the major players in the information and communications technology industry, non-consumer buyers of such technologies and tens of thousands of business decision makers". The increasingly competitive environment has resulted in more specialist media, which are better able to focus news — and advertising — at a target audience. As a result, specific audiences have been targeted by "linking advertising of particular products or services to editorial content that covers such products, or to the context in which such products and services are offered, such as travel, health and beauty, and personal finance sections" (Hadland, Cowling & Tabi Tabe, 2007, p. 7). The trend towards niche publications is discernable in that "the number of titles has almost doubled in the last decade" (Hadland, Cowling and Tabi Tabe, 2007, p. 7).

Smaller media houses in South Africa clearly face a plethora of challenges, among which is the consolidation wave that led to the creation of four large media houses. This places smaller publications at a disadvantage, as they do not have the same economies of scale as these companies. However, the entire media sector is also under pressure due to a shrinking

---

[18] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/sir-anthony-oreilly-keep-believing-in-the-new-south-africa-421399.html
[19] http://www.sarad.co.za/SaradOnline/searchresult/page1.aspx?type=cat&id=41

advertising pool, and increasing competition, particularly within the niche sector, where *Brainstorm* operates. Magazines are vying against each other for revenue, which has led to several employing strategies to gain a larger share of advertising spend as will be seen during the course of this research.

3.5.1. *New forms of advertising content in South African media*

Magazines are facing an uphill battle to gain advertising as there is a growing number of titles from which advertisers can choose to spend their money. As a result, publications are seeking new ways of gaining more advertising. The dominant way of doing so is through launching vehicles that are specifically pitched at filling the need advertisers have to speak to a specific audience. These vehicles are also designed to be relevant to the advertiser and give them a platform from which to air their views. Most publications seem to have taken strategic decisions to launch various forms of supplements to gain more advertising spend. Generally, these supplements – however they are titled – blur the boundaries between typical independent editorial content and clearly marked advertising as it is not always clear that supplements are paid for in one way or another. *Brainstorm* also launched a supplement to the main magazine, in the form of a special focus, several years ago. A detailed examination of these supplements, their credibility and how they are viewed by advertisers and journalists forms a key part of this research.

Advertisers have been spoilt for choice with a plethora of new magazine titles entering the scene. 2006 saw an "explosion of consumer titles in the print market as a magazine minefield" (Motloung, 2007). Growth in magazine titles was spurred by economic growth, which she says has "seen South African consumers spoilt for choice with the number of magazines quadrupling in the past decade". However, several magazines have closed down in the past year, which raises questions about "the sustainability of the boom, especially in the face of increasing inflation, which is affecting advertising and consumer spending"(Motloung, 2007). As a result, magazines are under pressure due to dwindling readership, which will affect titles' ability to bring in advertising spend. Motloung (2007) says "it is clear that the game is survival of the fittest".

As a result of declining readers, which affects publications' ability to attract advertising, and increased competition for ad spend, magazines are being forced to develop new means of attracting revenue, state Hadland, Cowling and Tabi Tabe (2007, p. 1). Such measures include developing the kind of content that advertisers want, which includes supplements. In 2008, Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tabe identified a new arm of publishing that was taking root within SA media. Focussing on the Special Projects division within Independent News and Media, they found that the unit had been "established to generate advertising revenue through devising

special sections for its newspapers". The division's sole purpose is to "actively seek out potential advertisers by offering an attractive editorial environment for their products" (Hadland, Cowling & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 107). The research found that the unit merges the previously well-defined sections of advertising and editorial that "develops and blurs advertising, public relations, and journalism in an effort to attract more advertising revenue, and to produce readable content that looks and feels like editorial" (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe 2008, p. 101). A typical publication in South Africa clearly delineates advertising from editorial content, and advertising appears either as a paid-for placement, which can easily be seen as such, or as an advertorial, which is again clearly defined (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 104). Supplements, however, blur these boundaries because although the editorial content is viewed as independent, it will not appear without enough backing to justify the pages that need to be printed. The boundaries are further eroded when one considers that the unit's main writer also seeks to position the supplements in a way that would attract advertising spend, conceding that it is "her job to convince the advertiser to be associated with it" (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 109). The supplements, however, are not part of the publishing house's marketing division, which is where one may expect an advertising-driven product to be positioned, although they generate a "substantial" amount of revenue (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 108).

Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tabe found that magazines are considering advertisers' needs when it comes to producing stories. Although not endemic to the entire magazine sector, this is a worrying trend as it indicates that advertisers have some sort of say over what gets published, and what never appears in print. "In many of the companies [surveyed for purposes of the study into the *Star*'s special focus unit], the publisher, rather than the editor, has the last word if there are problems with editorial that could lose revenue for the magazine," write the authors (2007). This issue has arisen because advertising has become "absolutely crucial" for a publication's survival (Hadland, Cowling & Tabi Tabe, 2007, p.65).

The Star is not alone in seeking new ways of generating revenue. Dlamini's 2008 research into the operating relationship between specialised print media and advertisers at business magazine *Financial Mail* found "print media like the *Financial Mail* depend to a very large extent on supplements for advertising revenue" (p. 93). The recessionary environment in which publications find themselves means that it is necessary to develop innovative products such as supplements; surveys and special sections to attract advertising spend (Dlamini, 2008, p. 93). Safeguards within the magazine have been put in place to prevent a loss of credibility and independence as a result of influence from advertisers "creeping" into copy (Dlamini, 2008, p. 93). A desire among advertisers to get their product's benefits across in a manner that does not look like obvious advertising is highlighted by Haffajee (2007, p. 52), who says the "advertising industry has developed a penchant" for news products called "special project, advertorial, survey or supplement," instead of just calling the product an advertisement.

The consequences of publications seeking to position themselves in a way that is attractive for advertisers means that advertisers increasingly expect publishers, editors and journalists to report favourably on their product, or a specific company. Failure to fall in line can result in a backlash from the advertiser, sometimes in the form of withdrawn revenue. Motoring editor Egmont Sippel found this out when — after a damaging car review was published in Rapport — the manufacture withdrew advertising spend after the paper refused to retract the article (Ueckermann, 2006).

> "So today's journalists must fill a dual role: they must provide the community with accurate, truthful information and they must provide advertisers with value for money. This is a difficult balancing act to perform. This issue was highlighted by comments made in Adfocus by Chris Moerdyk, a fellow of the Marketing Institute of South Africa. Moerdyk says that, while during the apartheid years editors were powerful, and could tell advertisers to 'get stuffed', today's editors have to 'start thinking like businessmen'. The trend is not uniquely South African." (Ueckermann, 2006)

The controversy surrounding Sippel resulted in at least one follow up by another journalist. Bullard, a motoring journalist, relayed a tale of a failed monthly motoring supplement that the *Sunday Times* had attempted to produce (Bullard, 2004).

> "The motoring supplement appeared in magazine form for three issues and then in tabloid form as a Lifestyle section insert once. After that the project was canned. It was an unmitigated disaster and I am to blame. … The only problem was the advertising or, more specifically, the complete lack of it. Initial feedback was that the motor manufacturers didn't want to advertise in a publication that only went to 95 000 subscribers, even if they did happen to be large discretionary spenders. I must say I found that argument a little lame so I wasn't surprised to hear the real story through the grapevine. The truth was that motor manufacturers didn't want to advertise at all unless we could guarantee that our editorial would be favourable." (Bullard, 2004).

The threat that advertisers, and the push for a larger piece of the advertising pie, has led to a "rising sense of unease" within newsrooms, says Cowling (2004, p.34)[20]. Advertising pressure on publications is increasingly resulting in a media that no longer serves the public, but instead serves the needs of its advertisers through targeting niche markets (Cowling, 2004, p. 34).

> "Competition for audiences and the dependence on advertising for revenue is obviously not new, but a number of other factors in the last 10 years have changed (and are still changing) the relationship between advertisers and news producers. Two of these are

---

[20] http://journ.ru.ac.za/review/rjrpdf/rjr_24/rising_unease.pdf

particularly significant: first, a greater sophistication in marketing that targets specific consumers for particular products and; second, an intensive drive by many media organisations to develop strategies to attract advertising." (Cowling, 2004, p.34)

Recent research indicates that when it comes to supplements – which publishing houses have devised as a form of generating revenue – editorial and advertising boundaries break down and journalistic autonomy is no longer a given when producing copy for the supplements. The Special Projects division within Independent News and Media, for example, has a different take on editorial independence and credibility than other mainstream publications (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 110). "It is clear that editorial independence is a different concept to that that pertains in newsrooms, where there is no engagement with advertisers in decision making around stories and story ideas" (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 110). Of two equally good news stories – the one that has been submitted by an advertiser will win and find space within the publication (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 110). Quoting writer Lorain Tulleken:

"The reality is – and we would not say this too loudly – if I have two newsworthy stories, good news stories, and the one features an advertiser and the other does not, which one am I going to print? The advertising one of course, but it has to be newsworthy. It's also a fine balance, depending on the size of the business and other things that we take into consideration." (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 110)

Tulleken argues that credibility of the paper, and the supplement, is not harmed because it does not "pretend to be anything else". The publisher argues that the section still carries weight and can be seen as credible, even though advertisers have some say over content. Quoting Terry Meyer:

"If, for example, someone has a particularly good news story, and we are covering a particular subject and the company phones us and says: "Well, I have a particularly interesting and newsworthy subject, would you be able to publish it," I'll say submit it and let's evaluate the merits of its newsworthiness, and then the journalist will look at it and rewrite it in a way that is readable and not biased particularly towards any company, so … it's evaluated on its own newsworthiness." (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 110).

The effect of local media's reliance on advertising revenue is articulated through the previously-mentioned 2007 study by Hadland, Cowling and Tabi Tabe entitled "*Paid for Content and the South African Print Media*". The study found that the business environment for print media is "rapidly changing" as pressure to garner revenue is being acutely felt throughout the newsroom (Hadland, Cowling and Tabi Tabe, 2007, p. 65).

"One interviewee admitted that her magazines sometimes stayed away from contentious subjects because of possible fallout from advertising, and that, if advertisers objected to any editorial content, they would meet with them and try to persuade them of the publication's point of view. This indicates that advertisers can and do influence copy, and that editors and journalists operate with this in mind." (Hadland, Cowling & Tabi Tabe, 2007, p. 65)

The so-called third arm of publishing has implications for media credibility (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008). Students interviewed for the purposes of the research article on *The Star*'s new division generally had some difficulty in telling it apart from other content that would be generated during the course of the normal news-gathering process. Only one student in all of the focus groups was aware that the content included in the supplements was, in fact, paid for, while others could not distinguish between newsroom-driven content and paid-for content (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 114). Some students found the supplements useful as they communicated "information from the perspective of the advertisers" and this was fine as long as the information was reliable and useful. However, concerns were raised about the lack of transparency indicating that the content was paid for, and articles were biased towards the advertisers, which reduced their credibility (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008. p. 115).

Crossing the boundary between editorial and advertising content that has not been identified as such can have dire consequences for credibility, as Harber (2006) wrote when detailing *Leadership* magazine's "fall from grace" when it became known that an "appearance" on its front page could be bought. This is "one example of an increasingly common occurrence across our whole industry: the tendency to mislead readers about paid-for content" (Harber, 2006). The growing desire to be profitable has further effects on the industry and on professionalism within the sector because the so-called 'Chinese wall' that separates advertising from journalism (and grants editorial the credibility that the founders of Google sought to leverage) is breaking down (Harber, 2004). This wall is necessary to ensure that advertisers do not influence editorial content, ensuring the impartiality and integrity of the media. The demise of the wall is ascribed to the plethora of media outlets, giving advertisers power to choose where to spend their money. Government noticed this drive and called it a "real threat to media freedom," says Harber (2004) quoting Joel Netshitenzhe. The threat is that, as the wall breaks down, media will have no independence from advertisers and become lapdogs, and lose the role of watchdog.

The importance of credibility within a newsroom — and of articles that are accurate — is highlighted by Hadland, Cowling and Tabi Tabe (2007, p. 10), who argue "even Rupert Murdoch, the press baron whom many accuse of undermining the traditional tenants of quality journalism conceded in 2002 that 'good content is good business'. Locally, publishers such as

the *Sunday Times* have seen the importance of being viewed as a credible source of information and have taken steps towards improving credibility. Mike Robertson, then publisher of *Sunday Times*, points out that the paper took the steps to make sure that it was viewed as a credible source of news by its readers (Cowling, Hadland & Tabi Tabe, 2008, p. 105).

As can be seen, publications that launch supplements in a bid to drive up revenue have to walk a fine line to ensure that they maintain editorial integrity, and that the editorial content of the publication is not changed or influenced by advertisers. This, as Campbell has pointed out (2008), is especially difficult at niche publications where there is a smaller advertising pool from which publications can earn revenue. As a result, niche publications are in more danger of having content amended by advertisers. Based on the above research, it would seem that supplements within niche publications are even more at risk of advertising influence. However, what is not clearly articulated through Hadland, Cowling and Tabi Tabe's 2008 study, arguably the most recent local insight into the influence that advertisers have within newsrooms, is the extent to which such commercial imperatives meet with resistance within the newsroom. This is a key area that this research will explore.

3.6.   Sociology of the newsroom

The context within which a newsroom operates was outlined above and this section will now deal with the various factors within a newsroom that impact how the news is delivered to the public. Aspects that will be examined include the process of gatekeeping, newsroom routines the sociology of newsroom production as well as journalist professionalism.

Gatekeeping is the theory of how individual players in the newsroom act in order to evaluate the newsworthiness of items that come across their desks and then ultimately select them for the newspaper or evening broadcast as news items pass through a 'series' of gates as each person in the process – from journalist to editor – makes a decision about content and newsworthiness. Gatekeeping is a subjective and complex process of deciding which news is used, and which is not. Several factors influence this decision-making process as "the individual gatekeeper has likes and dislikes, ideas about the nature of his or her job, ways of thinking about a problem, preferred decision-making strategies, and values that all impinge on the decision to reject or select (and shape) a message," says Shoemaker (1997,p. 62). "But the gatekeeper is not totally free to follow a personal whim; he or she must operate within the constraints of communications routines to do things this way or that" (Shoemaker, 1997,p. 62).

The organisation has its own priorities, which are "buffeted" by external factors. An early study of a gatekeeper called 'Mr Gates' showed that there is individual power when the news decision is made, yet later studies found that gatekeepers tend to make similar choices, an indication that other role players in the newsroom operate according to their professional understanding (White, 1997 and (Bleske, 1997). Gatekeepers try to remain neutral even though they had admitted prejudices in selecting news, and try to meet a balance when choosing news for a diverse audience and both said the category of news did not affect their choices.

However, factors other than the preferences of the final gatekeeper factor in decision-making when deciding what is, and is not, news. Factors such as cost, time and space and internal constraints such as covering newsworthy people and the dangers in covering stories that cause offence all factor in the decision-making process, say Jamieson and Campbell (2001, p. 52-64). In addition to these factors, publishers may set certain policies, gradually learned by journalists, which influence the selection of news and determine, to a large extent, what is published, says Breed (1997, p. 115). Conformity to the policy is not automatic and journalists may disagree with policy due to "the existence of ethical journalistic norms", staff may have more liberal attitudes towards the news they are covering and there is an "ethical taboo" that prevents the publisher from demanding that policy is followed (Breed 1997, p. 107). As a result, journalists can subvert policy to a certain extent, especially when they initiate their own stories within a beat, as opposed to having a lead handed out by the desk editor, says Breed (1997, p. 116). Breed showed the ways that journalists learn how they should operate and the sanctions that will be levelled against them should they transgress the 'rules'.

However, these factors mean that journalists' aims of fulfilling what is expected of them in terms of fair, accurate and truthful reporting, could be at odds with the publication's profit-centred goals. Soloski says "professionalism is an efficient and economical method by which news organisations control the behaviour of reporters and editors (1997, p. 139). In addition to professionalism, news organisations have developed rules and news policies to "limit the discretionary behaviour of journalists" (Soloski, 1997, p. 139). Journalists' behaviour is difficult to control because of the unstructured nature of newsrooms and the fact that the news environment is "highly unpredictable" as journalists spend much of their time outside the newsroom, and out of supervisors' sight (Soloski, 1997, p. 139). As a result, professionalism is use to control behaviour in newsrooms, which are not by nature bureaucratic and therefore a bureaucratic control mechanism would be inefficient (Soloski, 1997, p. 140). Many scholars of professionalism view the practise as being at odds with the "profit motive of the business organisation" (Soloski, 1997, p. 140). Soloski cites Kornhauser's 1963 research when arguing that journalists often bash heads with those in the organisation whose job it is to ensure that publications are profitable." "To put it simply, the professionals' allegiances to the norms of the profession will bring the professionals into conflict with the profit motive of the business organization," says Soloski (1997, p. 140). However, he says – citing Larson's 1977 work –

this view obscures the fact that there is a close relationship between professionalism and capitalism, as these two ideologies "are closely related and share the same historical roots" (1997, p. 140-141).

Nolan argues that some of the theoretical discussions around whether journalism is, or is not, a profession, have their roots in the need for journalists to secure control in the workplace by establishing professional schools and implementing workplace training (2009, p. 658). Nolan cites research by Larson (1977) that states professionalism is a "structural outcome of capitalist expansion". "As monopoly capitalism facilitated the rise of large organisations, moreover, 'professionalism' came to be understood as an alternative basis for securing workplace control, particularly through the use of professional training and the establishment of professional schools," Nolan says. These practices enabled "an effective socialisation to, and reproduction of, a particular culture of service delivery, and a means of standardisation that could be achieved without recourse to mechanisms of managerial direction and monitoring" (Nolan, 2009, p. 658). Although this aided organisations – the employers – it also allowed professionals to pursue their own interests and have independent influence over their working conditions (Nolan, 2009, p. 658).

> "While employees within large organisations could not determine their own conditions of employment, professionalism nevertheless provided a ground upon which such workers could lay claim to a particular class status, articulate demands that they be afforded the respect and remuneration from their employers such status demanded, and even lay claim to a degree of independent influence over their own working conditions. At the same time, such claims to an independent and principled professionalism also delivered additional advantages to employers, who displaced the cost of investing in workplace training onto professionals themselves, exploited the professional commitment to the delivery of a vital public service by increasing workplace demands without delivering pay increases or overtime, and deployed the claim that they offer a product or service delivered by independent professionals to enhance its market value." (Nolan, 2009, p. 658).

Although journalists desire internal professionalism to protect themselves from the capitalist demands placed on them by management, journalists are inherently loath to have professionalism foisted on them by outsiders. Nolan cites Elsaka (2005) as well as Aldridge and Evetts (2003) as having found that "many journalists preferred to be viewed as a craft or a trade than a profession" Elsaka found this in relation to a New Zealand study, while Aldridge and Evetts looked into the media market in Britain. These studies found that journalists were "strident" against any attempts to regulate the market through statutory measures, as any form of licensing would "compromise journalists' independence" (Nolan, 2009, p. 659). Another school of thought Nolan speaks to is that of journalism culture. This is created through

a process of socialisation in which journalists articulate examples of 'good' and 'bad' practices, while at the same time establishing a "particular basis of authority that is distinct from that of other occupational groups and centres of social power" (Nolan, 2009, p. 660). Nolan cites Hanitzch as explaining such a culture as "journalism culture becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work for themselves and others," (2009, p. 661).

This form of socialisation could be relevant in newsrooms where journalists have not, as a norm, studied journalism at a professional level. Should such an internal culture exist, it would allow for professional practices, ethics and autonomy to be learnt from within the newsroom as junior journalists are 'schooled' by their more senior counterparts. This research will delve into the level of professionalism within the niche publication *Brainstorm*.

In South Africa, there is also resistance by journalists to bow down to publishers' demands. A study detailing how journalists stood up to management, and fought for editorial independence, at the South African Broadcasting Corporation was outlined by Dramat (2007, p. 62-63). A standoff between management and journalists came to light during an SAFM debate into the issue of the broadcaster having 'banned' certain commentators because their views did not fit in with policy (Dramat, 2007, p. 62). The debate arose after a *Sowetan* article reported that a number of commentators had been black-listed by then head of news at the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Snuki Zikalala. The corporation's spokesman Kaizer Kganyago denied that there was a list of people who could not be quoted, but was contradicted by SAFM presenter John Perlman, who claimed personal experience of not being able to have who he chose on air (Dramat, 2007, p. 62). This on-air disagreement, on 22 June 2006, placed the issue firmly on the public agenda.

> "Interviews with a range of people associated with AM Live and the SABC found that this eruption was the end point of a log period of contestation, in which the journalists and the producers of AM Live attempted to defend what they saw as threats to their professionalism." (Dramat, 2007, p. 62-63)

AM Live, the show that aired the disagreement, was launched in 1995 with the aim of being a "transformed" news and current affairs programme (Dramat, 2007, p. 62). Journalists fought hard to get ideas aired during the show, but also had to balance the conflicting demands between the station's aims and those of the SABC. Despite this, AM Live staff believed they had autonomy and resisted the SABC's attempts to influence news content (Dramat, 2007, p. 62). However, in March 2006, news filtered down through the corridors indicating that some people were not to be interviewed on air, but this was never clarified to the journalists (Dramat, 2007, p. 63). Journalists exhausted attempts at using internal procedures to discuss

their disagreement with the decision-making process that resulted in the exclusion of certain commentators (Dramat, 2007, p. 63). Eventually, six of the journalists resigned, says Dramat (2007, p. 62-63). Dramat explains that there was no discussion of the decision, it was a fait accompli, and was passed down through the corridors by middle and line managers who had not been involved in the decision-making process (2007, p. 63).

Journalists cannot simply do as they please, because journalists report into a management structure, which will be focussed on sustainability, says Ueckermann (2006). "As such their scope for rebellion against commercial pressure is limited; they are compelled to fall in line with management policies." However, journalists such as Sippel can have some influence and resist commercial imperatives to a degree by being passionate about being professional journalists (Ueckermann, 2006). "Editors with integrity will support their journalists, and help them to withstand management pressure" (Ueckermann, 2006). Perhaps an explanation for the various differing understandings of how professionalism and editorial independence, and integrity, should work within South African newsrooms can be found in Duncan's statement that "the media industry is diverse and there is no one single industry representative body" (2003). This sort of situation, in which press is answerable to itself, may also lie at the root of the ANC's discontent with the way media portray South Africans and marginalise the poor in a quest for profit. "The print media … is seen by the ANC and the government to be resistant to transformation because it is self-regulated" (Duncan, 2003).

However, not all external influence becomes detrimental to a publication's credibility. For example, Dlamini says that, despite the fact that the advertising department is allowed to sit in on editorial meetings at *Financial Mail*, the amount of space required for each weekly edition is determined by editorial staff, and not advertising, a situation that is reversed in most other publications. "The editorial team, it seems, is fortunate enough to have leeway to decide the number of pages required for editorial content, a score to editorial independence," (Dlamini. 2008, p. 59). Journalists within the company also have the backing of top editorial staff when it comes to standing up to an advertiser. Former *Financial Mail* editor Caroline Southey cites an instance in which South African Airways withdrew advertising worth R400 000 from a supplement because the magazine published a story that the airline felt was detrimental to its image (Dlamini, 2008, p. 64). The magazine's editors will also stand up for editorial space if there are situations in which the advertising department asks for more space for an advertisement, the "editorial team will never agree that editorial space be sacrificed to accommodate the advertisement," says Dlamini quoting Southey (2008, p. 59).

However, despite the editorial staff's standpoint that prevents advertisers from influencing content, the supplements could be top heavy when it comes to the space given to advertising compared with the space that editorial gets. Southey, quoted by Dlamini, says that while the project is prepared with a view towards having an advertising-to-editorial ratio of 45:55,

"there may be special cases where the ratio is inverted" (p. 64). Dlamini points out that the "importance of special sections, surveys and niched supplements to the survival of the *Financial Mail* cannot be overemphasised" (p. 65). He quotes Southey as conceding that "working together with corporate clients to create these publications" as having been of benefit to the magazine (p. 65). Advertising and editorial are maintained as different entities within *Financial Mail*, a situation that is replicated in the supplements division, and both departments produce the special sections, which allows editorial to defend the readers' interests (Dlamini, p. 66). However, despite this it is clear that bringing in advertising is key to whether a special focus is published, or not.

> "Editors would be unlikely to come up with a section unless it is likely to generate advertising, or to profile a company that didn't cooperate (so interested companies [companies that are interested in being profiled] may be overlooked because they are not prepared to pay for advertising or bad companies – that may not open themselves to scrutiny – are not profiled). This may be a factor in selection." (Dlamini, p. 66)

As can be seen from the above studies, journalists have developed professional practices and norms, either as a result of professional practices within the newsroom developed as a way of keeping control over journalists who are often out on assignment, or through a process of journalistic culture that symbiotically trains journalists in the norms and practices of specific newsrooms. As a result, journalists are loath to concede to demands from publishers or advertisers that impinge on their ability to produce editorially independent news. However, journalistic autonomy can be limited within the newsroom environment if editors are not willing to stand up for journalistic independence. This has the effect of limiting independent reporting and could impact on credibility. Whether journalists feel as strongly about autonomy when writing for a supplement, for example, is not clear from the research and is an aspect that will be tackle in the course of my research into *Brainstorm*. Editorial independence may be limited by the fact that supplements are hybrid publications and are paid for by advertisers in one way or another.

3.8   Conclusion

The media in South African is still in its infancy if one considers that just more than fifteen years ago, it was subject to censorship from the government in typical autocratic fashion, a theory previously described in an earlier chapter as the authoritarian theory. This resulted in members of the press coming under close scrutiny for investigative articles that threatened to reveal the apartheid government for what it was, with journalists often fearing for their lives when they went to work every day. Since South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, local media have been able to function in a free environment characterised by a democratic government and a free-market system. However, as a result of the infancy of the sector in a

post-apartheid situation, local media cannot easily be categorised into any of the normative theories, but rather straddle several. The press also has an implied duty to contribute towards national development, as has been seen by the demands placed on it by the ruling African National Congress, yet is also expected to act in a manner that is socially responsible, while at the same time be a platform for all South Africa's citizens to voice their opinions. Despite tehse demands, the press operates within a liberal environment in which it is free from government interference and is run as a business with a profit motive.

However, being able to operate within a free market system brings with it constraints of the possibility of journalistic integrity and editorial independence being undermined in the quest for revenue. As outlined, critical political economists theorise that publications that are in a constant battle for revenue will come under pressure from advertisers to accede to changes they wish to have made in editorial copy. This research is based in developed economies such as the US and UK, which do not have South Africa's specific characteristics such as the need to contribute to national development. Moreover, these studies are based on publications hat have operated in a free-market system for much longer than those based in South Africa. Locally, as is the situation in the rest of the world, a shrinking advertising pool and the quest for more revenue, led to a period of consolidation in the sector. As a result, South Africa's media industry is characterised by four large media houses, and a plethora of smaller titles, all in a battle for a slice of the pie. Larger media companies can offer advertisers access to a wider audience, and bundled deals, which smaller companies cannot. This leaves niche publishers in a weak position, which causes them to come under more threat by advertisers, which Campbell outlined in a 2008 study.

Across the board, the constant fight for revenue has forced publications to find alternative ways of gaining a larger share of the advertising pool. As a result, as recent studies by Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tate as well as Dlamini have shown, publications have launched supplements as a way of gaining more revenue. Yet, as has been seen, supplements straddle the boundaries between advertising and editorial, not fitting neatly into any one category. The credibility of advertising-focussed vehicles such as supplements and advertorial has been drawn into question by media practitioners, as it is not always clear to readers that these are paid for content, regardless of who pays for the final product. This places the supplements in an interesting position, as they are neither advertising nor editorial. However, those who produce the supplements defend their credibility, arguing that they are independent. This paper suggests that supplements can only be credible if the editorial department has enough backing to stand up to advertisers who wish to change copy, as was seen in Dlamini's (2008) study of the *Financial Mail*. However, if the supplement is too closely linked to a magazine's survival, this paper suggests that advertisers can have more influence over the content.

Even though publications are under increasing pressure to maintain their bottom line, journalists will not always concede to advertising pressure, although this attitude seems dependant on the type of publication, such as whether it is a mainstream offering, or a supplement that is viewed as paid-for content and therefore not seen as serious journalism. In addition, journalists rely on editorial management to intervene in situations where advertisers try and influence copy. The question of whether niche newsrooms are populated by professional journalists who have learned ethics and practices through formal education is an interesting one. This paper will also examine, although in a limited way, how journalists working for niche publications learn to be autonomous and develop professional practices, be it through access to formal education or through a process of symbiosis while at work.

The case under review in this research looks into these issues within the context of a supplement produced by *Brainstorm* and details the events that unfolded when an advertiser tried to influence copy within the supplement. It also looks at the resultant newsroom reaction, and levels of professionalism within among journalists who work at niche publications. In addition, it seeks to understand whether these publications are viewed as credible by advertisers, publishers and journalists.

4. Research Methodology

This research examined a dispute between an advertiser, JSE-listed company GijimaAst, and the niche magazine publication, *Brainstorm*, in order to investigate key factors in the commercial operation of journalism and the implications for the press and its normative role in society. This included a focus on the publication's imperative to stay profitable, the importance of advertisers in this imperative, and how the dispute, which will be detailed in later chapters, affected involved journalists in being able to carry out their role. In addition, it looks at whether the journalists resisted advertisers wishing to change editorial copy, the resultant level of professionalism within the newsroom and a general view of whether this is the norm within niche ICT publications, which will provide a broad insight into how individual gatekeepers operate within a situation in which advertisers are demanding editorial changes, and what advertisers' demands mean specifically at a niche supplement level. As the case had ramifications that rippled throughout the organisation, I also sought to understand what changes may have occurred within the organisation, its policies and procedures as a result. The study used qualitative research such as participant observation, document analysis, a series of individual interviews and an emailed questionnaire to journalists involved in the production of the supplement and in the newsroom at the time to unpack the events that unfolded and the resultant effects on both the journalists and general newsroom practices.

There were several stages to the research. I first established the background and context of the study. This was followed by an analysis of documentation, which consists of a series of emails sent between ITWeb staff and GijimaAst, provided for the purposes of this research by an ITWeb staff member closely involved in the publication of the supplement. The third stage was a series of open-ended interviews with key staff members at the publication. The fourth stage comprised emailed questionnaires to journalists involved in the production of the supplement and other staff members present in the office at the time of its production. Both sets of interviews are based on the established facts of the dispute at the core of this study to determine the protagonists', and ultimately, the organisation's reactions to the issue as it unfolded. Finally, the research sought to understand editorial staff and advertisers' general ideas on the role that advertisers play within niche publications in the ICT sector. The nature of this research limited these questions to the ICT sector as the journalists that were interviewed are specifically focussed on this sector. Each stage will be outlined in detail below.

Qualitative research, say Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p. 3) "involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials". These would include case studies, personal experiences and interviews. Qualitative research is described as a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world" and seeks to make this 'world' visible through studying "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to

them" say Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p. 3). However, qualitative research has come under fire by 'scientific' or quantitative researchers as being too soft:

> "By the 1960s, battle lines were drawn within the quantitative and qualitative camps. Quantitative scholars relegated qualitative research to a subordinate status in the scientific arena. In response, qualitative researchers extolled the humanistic virtues of their subjective, interpretive approach to the study of human group life. (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 2).

As a result, say Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is seen as too subjective and not sufficiently impartial (2005, p. 8). Qualitative research, which focuses on interaction, processes and events, is characterised by the researcher being involved and is not independent of the context within which it takes place, but it "situationally constrained", states Neuman (2003, p. 1). However, this type of research was useful in this instance as it was used to draw out not only the step-by-step account of what happened, but to understand the emotions and beliefs that the participants felt during the course of this case. In addition, as qualitative research takes the researcher closer to the subject, it was used to gain a better insight into the events than a dispassionate form of quantitative study would have allowed.

4.1   *Participant-observer*

The first stage of this research involved my own participant observation. The concept of the case study emanated from my personal involvement in writing an article for the special focus supplement that was used as the basis for the study. At the time the situation detailed in the case study was unfolding, I was employed as a senior journalist at *ITWeb*[21] and was responsible for writing business and financial-related articles for the online publication as well as contributing towards various of the publication's printed offerings. I was the journalist responsible for writing the financial article that appeared in the supplement. As a result, the research will make use of the qualitative technique of participant-observation, among other methods.

Participant-observer research, says McBurney (2001, p. 220) is when "investigators participate in naturally occurring groups and record their observations". He says this type of research is important to be able to gain access to the group, but such research is characterised by taking the viewpoint of an insider in the group. This, he points out, is problematic in terms of retaining an objective viewpoint and the "researcher must strike a balance between taking the viewpoint of the group members and maintaining scientific objectivity" (2001, p. 220). This form of research could result in criticism being levelled against this case study, as it will be

---

[21]   I was employed at ITWeb between July 2006 and March 2007 and again between June 2009 and date of writing.

difficult to remain impartial after having developed working relationships with a number of key staff members and having covered GijimaAst's results for several years. However, this method is justified as my relationship with key members of the publishing house — developed over nine months and maintained despite a two-year stint at *Business Day* — allowed access to information and key players in a way that would not have been possible to an outsider. In addition, as a result of the trust relationship, key interview subjects were much more open with me than with they would be with an outsider. The participant-observer point of view provided greater insight into the dynamics of the newsroom and was balanced against responses from other interview subjects.

4.2   *Mapping the dispute*

The second part of the research involved collating a series of emails that were sent, initially, between the supplement editor and the company. These emails detailed issues that the advertiser raised with several role players within ITWeb, initially with the editor and then escalating further to include the head of the advertising department and the editorial director. The emails also provided insight into the processes by which production takes place as they detailed each step of each article prior to publication. They also identified the various factors that influenced production from both parties involved in the case. These documented mails served to balance my recollection around the events that unfolded during the course of production of the supplement and document the demands that were placed on the editorial staff and advertising staff during the course of production. During the course of this research, I also sought to explain what type of company GijimaAst is, and to gain an understanding of how it was viewed in the market at the time of the supplement. This research involved collating press articles as well as material published by the company detailing the demands it made of ITWeb, taking into account its positioning in the market at the time, to uncover what factors inside of the organisation may have resulted in the decisions it made.

Aspects that were covered are:

- A narrative of the commissioning, compiling, writing, editing and the changes demanded by the advertiser to the special focus supplement as it went through each production stage
- A content analysis of the emailed correspondence in order to understand the advertiser's decision-making process.
- News coverage of the advertiser pre- and post-publication to understand its positioning within the information technology sector at that time in order to gain insight into the advertiser's decision-making process.

- A thorough examination of the company's history, financial results and press coverage prior to the publication of the supplement to understand what pressure were placed on the company at that time.

4.3 *Interview stage*

The third stage sought to map the dispute through a series of interviews with key protagonists within ITWeb. This section is important in light of the fact that research collected through the participant-observer model needed to be balanced against the perceptions and recollections of other editorial staff. As such, key stakeholders at ITWeb such as the editor of the publication under review, the editorial director, as well as sales staff involved in selling the supplement were interviewed on a one-on-one basis to elicit further facts relating to the dispute and to act as a counter-balance to the researcher's own recollection. This range of interview subjects was designed to limit any bias my part, as I was intimately involved in compiling the financial report for the supplement under review.

The interview questions were deliberately open-ended to position the case study within the broader editorial policy and to understand how the role players viewed the competing interests of professionalism and commercialism. Moreover, the open-ended nature of the interviews provided the researcher with insight into the challenges faced by publishers focussed on the ICT sector. The questions also intentionally sought to draw out responses from each role player to the situation within which they found themselves in order to understand their emotional involvement with the publication; and their emotional connection to professionalism and commercialisation. As such, while there was an interview schedule, there was no set questionnaire.

The open-ended interviews were expected to contradict, bear out, or supplement the researcher's recollection of events that unfolded as the situation to be examined played itself out. It was hoped that by using open-ended questions, I avoided making presumptions about the answers, responses and emotions at the time of the interview. McBurney states open-ended questions permit "the respondents to answer in their own words," while closed questions limit answers to a predetermined set of alternate responses (2001, p. 238). He says open-ended questions allow for more complete answers, and are able to flesh out reasoning and emotions. However, they are harder to interpret and require more effort from the respondent to answer (2001, p. 238-239).

The interviews with the editorial director, the special focus editor, the business development manager and *Brainstorm*'s acting editor sought to broadly elicit aspects around the organisation and an understanding of the role that advertisers play and to flesh out the

researcher's understanding of the demands GijimaAst placed on the publication as outlined in the emails. In addition, this section also sought to understand *Brainstorm's* position within the niche and mainstream publishing industry. Questions focused on:

- ITWeb's origin and history
- How the company positions itself in an industry dominated by four media conglomerates
- *Brainstorm*'s role within the industry
- Its positioning as a niche magazine within the industry
- Whether the magazine is viewed as a credible independent alternative to its competitors and which publications compete with *Brainstorm*
- ITWeb's general editorial policy and attitude towards advertising
- The supplement's role within the publishing house in terms of revenue
- Its positioning within the industry and its reputation in terms of credibility
- The process through which supplements are usually compiled, and how individual supplements are usually conceived and sold to advertisers.
- The events that unfolded during the course of compiling the supplement and the pressures that ITWeb faced from GijimaAst in the process.
- The nature of the demands placed on ITWeb by GijimaAst and the publication's reaction to these demands.
- How the organisation usually responds to requests from advertisers to amend copy.
- Whether the editorial policy was compromised during compilation of the supplement and whether the editorial policy has previously been compromised at any of the company's publications and why this may have arisen.

Based on the established events that took place during the publication process, which were gleaned from the emails and the interviews as described above, the research then sought to elicit responses from the journalists commissioned to write copy for the supplement. This section is based on a questionnaire emailed to ITWeb's journalists as well as freelance journalists commissioned to write for the publication. As several years passed between the initial interviews and the questionnaires, the research can determine whether the interference by the advertiser was of such a nature as to remain important to the journalists involved in the supplement.

These questions focussed on:

- What changes the advertiser requested to the copy supplied by the commissioned journalists.
- Whether these changes were seen as serious breaches of editorial independence and why.

- The journalists' reaction to the changes that were requested.

Finally, interviews sought to determine what level of professionalism exists among journalists who work for niche ICT publications, whether on a freelance or full-time basis. The interviews also sought to determine whether advertisers usually try to influence copy, and questioned full-time and freelance journalists. Specific questions about the level of professional training among both the freelance journalists and full-time staff were also asked. The emailed questionnaires examined whether there are different professional standards between full-time staff members and freelance journalists, who may not have a stable salary each month. These emailed questionnaires sought to determine whether journalists commissioned and employed by ITWeb have professional qualifications and to what extent they may have been exposed to mainstream newsrooms, which do not depend on one sector for advertising and therefore may be less susceptible to demands place on editorial by advertisers. I hoped to discover whether there were any fluctuations in values across different newsroom roles through this line of questioning. This area of questioning does not intend to be comprehensive but to suggest potential areas for analysis. It does, however, open a potential avenue for new research into whether there is a difference in professional behaviour between full-time and freelance journalists. Another area of research that may be contemplated as a consequence of this paper is whether niche publications have lower, the same, or higher standards in terms of editorial integrity than mainstream publications. Again, this is outside the scope of this research.

Questions focused on:

- Career history
- Newsroom experience
- ICT companies – and by default advertisers' – understanding of newsroom practices.
- Whether advertisers often, or usually, request changes be made to copy.
- What the journalists' reaction to requested changes is and how they react.

4.4   Publishing in the ICT sector

In order to provide a context to this research, I examined how publishing within the ICT sector functions, as this has previously not been the subject of a research paper. The ICT media industry has notoriously been plagued by a lack of distance between advertisers and publications, which could spill over into published copy and affect independence. This is not subject matter that has been subject to previous research and, as a result, will form part of the findings.

The research examined how ITWeb positions itself within the sector through an examination of its history and position within the niche ICT industry, with specific reference to *Brainstorm.* The open-ended questions around this aspect examined perceptions as to the publication's credibility within the industry. This segment will be approached through the use of ITWeb's own marketing material to locate it within the niche sector in which it operates. Interviews with ITWeb's editorial director, acting editor of *Brainstorm,* a senior, veteran journalist as well as an advertiser were undertaken. This section sought to understand:

- Role players in the ICT publishing sector
- Challenges faced by these players in terms of their reliance on advertisements for revenue and the size of that revenue pool
- How credibly these publications are viewed when compared with mainstream offerings.
- What role niche publications serve in the ICT sector

The different methods came together in the case study and provided an insight into multiple aspects of journalism within the niche sector. They also provided insight into operating conditions of niche publications.

4.5   Limitations and problems

As this research is limited to a particular case that took place within one organisation within the ICT sector, it cannot be extrapolated to all the publications within the sector, nor to all niche publications in general. However, it could open the door for further such research, and add to current research as other case studies, such as Dlamini's 2008 study at the *Financial Mail* and Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tabe's 2008 study at the *Star*, may reveal similarities or differences.

In addition, of the eight journalists involved in compiling the supplement, responses to the questionnaires were only received from five, including myself. No explanation can be provided for the lack of response as journalists were sent several reminder emails. Of those who did respond, one requested anonymity. This lack of response from the journalists involved in the publication process made it difficult to draw a comprehensive picture of how these journalists view advertising interference and their standards of professionalism. The answers provided will have to be relied upon for this conclusion.

In this instance, the advertising company, GijimaAst, has not been made aware of the research and is not aware that email communications between it and ITWeb staff members will be included in the study. This is for fear that the company could scuttle the research, which is viewed as important in terms of the practical interplay between editorial integrity and

commercial imperatives. This has several possible consequences for ITWeb, such as the threat of withdrawal of advertising by GijimaAst should it become aware of the study, although its actions may be found to be endemic to the industry. These must be kept in mind and resolved as and when they materialise. Denzin and Lincoln state contemporary observational research has the potential to cause harm, but "it is difficult to anticipate what form that harm might take" and the researcher should avoid hurting or embarrassing people (2005, p. 736). However, one of the participants in the research subsequently moved from *Brainstorm* to GijimaAst's public relations company, and took part in the emailed questionnaire. This is an interesting development as, not only was the participant aware of the research, but his answers changed from his original response regarding some of the questions. However, ITWeb is aware of this study and sanctioned the use of the Gijima supplement as a basis for research. In addition, participants were open and responsive to questioning. Despite the ethical concerns of publishing a study without the company being made aware of it, I felt the value the research would add to the industry in terms of advertising influence and the consequences thereof outweighed the issues that could be caused by not involving the advertiser. In addition, the study is not meant to focus on the specific advertiser, but the case is used as a basis to highlight a broader issue, which has relevance in the practice of journalism within niche publications in South Africa.

5. ITWeb and the ICT sector

This chapter gives a brief history and description of ITWeb as well as describing the market position and history of GijimaAst. It also discusses the features of the ICT sector. The relevant information is drawn from publications on the sector, ITWeb and interviews with ITWeb's editorial director, Ranka Jovanovic, business development director Caryn Berman and *Brainstorm*'s then acting editor Graeme Scala.

5.1 ITWeb

ITWeb Limited is a niche, independent publisher that focuses on the ICT sector. By its very nature, the company covers news items that often relate to the same companies from which it earns revenue, as these companies are its advertisers. The group was founded in 1996 by founder and current CEO Jovan Regasek and it entered the publishing sector as a daily online publication (ITWeb, 2009). Regasek came to South Africa in 1994 from Belgrade after falling "in love with SA" (McLeod, 2000). He left behind his position as editor of Belgrade's leading IT magazine, *Racunari* and spent three months at the now defunct *PC Format* before launching ITWeb in 1996 (Lloyd, 2000, p. 36). It was, at its time, among the few online publications in the country as the Internet had only started becoming available around 1994. The *Mail & Guardian's* online site, for example, claims to be Africa's first online news source after launching in 1994[22]. ITWeb launched three magazines subsequent to its initial online publication – www.itweb.co.za – two of which are business-focussed publications. *Brainstorm* was the first of these and it was followed some time later by *iWeek* and then a consumer-orientated magazine, *Digital Life*, which has since been closed. The company competes head-to-head with several trade publications such as the Intelligence Publishing Group, *Computer Week*, *Computing SA*, *Financial Mail* and daily newspapers such as *Business Day* and *Business Report*[23].

ITWeb Limited is a small company when compared with the giants of the media world. It is privately owned by about 13 management and staff members and employs about 100 people in offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town. In March 2008, Ummango Investment Holdings, a women's broad-based BEE consortium, financed by Mvelapanda Holdings, acquired a 25.1% stake in the company (ITWeb, 2008). In marketing material provided by the company online in 2009[24], it stated that it had annual turnover of around R30 million and "offers various platforms to reach all the major players in the information and communications technology industry, non-consumer buyers of such technologies and tens of thousands of business decision makers".

---

[22] http://www.mg.co.za/page/about-us
[23] Ranka Jovanovic, editorial director, February 6, 2008.
[24] http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13913&Itemid=124

Its monthly *Brainstorm* magazine, the focus of this research, supplements ITWeb's daily coverage of breaking news. *Brainstorm* is described by the company as "the most influential monthly magazine in the technology space". It was launched to provide readers with longer articles such as features, which are not popular online. "*Brainstorm* presents a big-picture view of the world of business technology." It uses both ITWeb's team of journalists and freelance specialists and columnists to provide comprehensive coverage of a wide range of topics," the company's online statement says. Although readership overlaps with that of the online ITWeb, the magazine's readers are "more likely to be company executives or decision-makers". The magazine offers traditional advertising and inserts as well as providing "independent company reports under its own banner that allows for a trusted view of a particular company".

Jovanovic explains when the company started *Brainstorm*, ITWeb was an online only player, and had even "ridiculed" print media in their advertising as being outdated and old. However, several years later, the company realised that online advertising spend was not growing at the rate the company had expected. "There was growth, but it wasn't growing that fast and there were still a lot of IT companies whose primary target for advertising were print; they actually preferred print". As a result, explains Jovanovic, the company decided to launch *Brainstorm*, to take advantage of the fact that there were no publications that were innovating. "We would make it fresh and interesting, make it look good, a radical change [to how] you talk about technology." Previously, she says, magazines focused on covering products and specifications, but had no business focus and did not consider what technology could do for a business and how it could aid revenue growth. ITWeb felt that there was a gap for an IT magazine that catered for the business sector, and explained information technology in business terms.

> "We turned it upside down and said the industry wants to read about the people who are captains of industry; we want to portray them and talk about them as people; get the human factor, you know, what drives them; what makes them so successful and also talk about technology but what can technology do for your business, but a kind of a new breed of IT magazine which is not just IT but IT [in] business and that's how we positioned it." (Jovanovic, 2008)

During 2008, the magazine was circulated to 9 356 executives and decision-makers, of which 6 902 copies were sold, according to figures provided to ITWeb by the Audited Bureau of Circulations. However, when the magazine launched it faced a substantial amount of competition, says Jovanovic, as it had to compete for advertising with the likes of the Intelligence Publishing Group, *Computer Week*, *Computing SA*, *Financial Mail* and daily newspapers such as *Business Day* and *Business Report*. Graeme Scala[25], who was acting editor

---

[25] Graeme Scala, acting Brainstorm editor, February 5, 2008 & November 23, 2010

at *Brainstorm* at the time of this case study, views the magazine as a credible source of information for top-level executives within the industry. *Brainstorm*, he says, is "targeted at middle to upper management" which would include CEOs, CFOs and other executive-level management. He says the publication aims to maintain a high standard by using well-known freelancers in the sector.

"We have a fairly small team in-house, but we use in-house writers, and we also use a number of freelancers. Specifically freelancers who've worked in the industry for years, so they understand the trends, in the ICT sector, [and have] pretty good contacts within the industry." (Scala, 2008)

5.1.1 Supplements as an additional source of revenue

Brainstorm added the special focus supplements to its initial magazine-only offering in order to supplement revenue from advertising placements within the title. The special focus supplements are paid for by the company featured, but are intended to be independent reports. This is highlighted on the cover of each such feature through the statement "an independent report". However, they are an important source of revenue for the company, accounting for about a quarter of the magazine's income over the period of a year and the presence of a supplement each month means the difference between the magazine making a profit, or simply breaking even. Jovanovic explains the supplements were brought in with the specific aim of driving revenue growth for the magazine. She explains that this is a practice common to the industry and magazines that launch supplements do so with the aim of generating more turnover for the title. "They're all driven by revenue. *Brainstorm* is also driven by revenue." Jovanovic explains that the magazine is a niche publication and, as a result, has relatively low circulation when compared with the mainstream publications such as *Business Day*, *Finweek* and *Financial Mail*. As a result, it needs a "special vehicle" to attract advertising. She says the supplements account for about 25% of yearly revenue for the magazine and, at the time of this case study, a month without a supplement would mean no profit for *Brainstorm* for that month.

Jovanovic explains pure brand-building advertising is not the norm in the information communication technology sector. Most companies in the sector would rather place an advertisement with a publication that fits in with what they want to punt. *Brainstorm*, for example, does not cover product launches, so companies are not as willing to advertise their new product within the magazine, says Jovanovic. One way of working around this, while maintaining editorial independence in terms of what the magazine does and does not cover, is to cover such items in a supplement. The concept of a supplement also became an outlet for companies that wanted to be profiled, but did not have a newsworthy story that would justify

an article in *Brainstorm*, Jovanovic adds. "The first supplement that we did was driven by companies who wanted to profile themselves." She explains that companies were keen to be included in *Brainstorm* because of its fresh look, but had no news value to add. The concept of a paid-for-supplement solved this dilemma.

However, Jovanovic points out that the supplements are not a dumbed down version of *Brainstorm*. "It's a way to generate revenue; it's the way to please the companies that are begging for it but we will not let them 'dumb down' Brainstorm... and say stupid things that no one will believe." The supplement is intended to maintain its independence despite being sponsored by the featured company. In order to maintain editorial integrity, an editor was appointed to oversee content and the production process of the supplements. "That's how we came up with a structure where we said we will have an editor, who will make sure that most important things to do with that company are covered and that we have a say of how it's covered," says Jovanovic. The supplement is structured in such a way so that companies do not have the space in which to talk about aspects that are irrelevant to the profile as conceived by *Brainstorm*, such as new offices. Jovanovic explains the company being profiled in the supplement, and sponsoring its publication, is asked to talk about issues such as their financial results, go-to-market strategy, history of the company, its vision and key staff members. "All those things have to be covered" and the magazine stipulates as much, she says. If companies comply with these requirements and the copy is written independently, the supplement is referred to as independent. If, however, companies do not wish to comply with *Brainstorm's* requirements, then the right to use the 'independent' slug is taken away, explains Jovanovic.

Brainstorm publishes two types of supplements, or special focus publications. One is the type that is under review in this study and is focussed on a particular company and only that firm is covered through editorial in the supplement. The other type looks into industry-specific issues, such as cloud-computing, security or other sub-sectors of the information communication technology industry. Supplements that look at issues facing the industry will be driven by the hot topic of the time. Jovanovic says *Brainstorm* would look at topical issues and approach the major players in that sub-sector, such as those that play in the software piracy arena. These companies would be asked whether they would like to be the supplement's major sponsor. However, these supplements are driven by the editorial team, which would identify the topic that should be covered, and the issues around that topic that would be written up. ITWeb's sales team would then pitch the product based on the topic that is to be covered. "We believe that *Brainstorm* should have that supplement; we should give people a supplement on [for example] surviving the power crisis; how to run your business; do you need a generator; where do you buy it; how much power do you need [etc]."

Jovanovic explains that the company-focused supplements are driven by the sales department, and sales staff will suggest a topic for editorial copy to a company based on recent

developments at that company. "The sales people realise that the company is doing something major and suggests that they should be doing a special focus because they're rebranding or because they're growing," she says. These sales pitches usually hinge around a major milestone in a company's life. For example, when GijimaAst 's supplement was produced, the company had just completed its first full year as a merged entity. This differs from Dlamini's 2008 findings, based on research at the *Financial Mail*, that the advertising and editorial departments collectively generate topics, and it differs from the situation at the *Star*, where a separate division has been formed to generate supplements, sometimes based on current events that can be covered in a different light to what has appeared in the paper, according to Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tabe. (2008).

Caryn Berman[26], who was business development director at the time of the study, explains, from a sales point of view, how the company views supplements. She defines the difference between an independent report and a generic profile as the independent report's content being driven by the editorial team, while the profile is based on copy that is driven by the company. These issues are discussed upfront, with a senior journalist being present in the meetings with the company to explain the difference between the two, she says. Independent reports, Berman says, are a completely unbiased view of the company which again lends [it] more credibility in the market place". However, to accommodate companies that do not wish to hand over editorial control, the publication also offers company profiles that are not independent. Independent reports also stick to Brainstorm's unique style of photography and stylisic aspects, she says. Supplements that are not independent are not promoted as such on the supplement's front cover.

Company-specific supplements are paid for by the company that is being profiled. Jovanovic explains ITWeb offers a model whereby the company has the option to have the supplement subsidised by its partners or suppliers, who would be encouraged to buy advertising in the supplement and approached by ITWeb's sales team. Jovanovic explains this eliminated any financial risk to ITWeb around the cost of production, such as any freelance journalists who would need to be paid and any other costs. The supplements generally differ from each other in terms of content, but have the same look and feel. However, this is not the case with the GijimaAst supplement, which differs vastly in terms of the '*Brainstorm* look' in key areas such as the contents page.

5.2   The local ICT sector

South Africa's IT sector, like its global counterparts, is a fast growing part of the economy. In South Africa, government IT spend typically accounted for between 40% and 50% of all

---

26 Caryn Berman, business development manager, February 6, 2008

investment in the sector at the time of this research. The public sector is the single largest entity and a valuable source of income for companies operating in the local ICT sector (Mawson, 2010). In 2007, the South African information technology market was worth $8 billion, and was expected to grow faster than the country's economy, reaching about $11 billion in 2012, according to Business Monitor International. The research house's *The South African Information Technology Report 2008* also indicated that government IT projects would create opportunities for IT service providers to benefit from the "steadily growing market". South Africa was pushing ICT's role in the economy as the country aimed to benefit from a growing move towards business process outsourcing as well as bringing telecommunications costs down and connecting more citizens to the digital highway. The report noted that government tenders are an important source of income for local information and communication technology companies, as the public sector was one of the largest spenders in the sector. The Business Monitor International report points out that the SA government set up the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) as a procurement department. It overseas tenders for equipment and services that range from healthcare systems to financial systems. "The BEE protocol is continuing to have an important influence on the IT competitive landscape in South Africa as in other sectors," says Business Monitor International. Being a local empowered company with strong credentials is vital to secure business from the state.
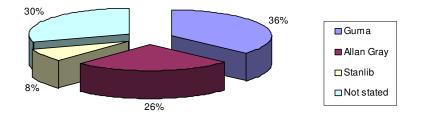
5.3 Inside Gijima

GijimaAst, which has subsequently been renamed Gijima, is an information communications technology company that serves both the public and private sector and is listed on the JSE. Between 40% and 45% of the company's revenue was earned through public-sector contracts in 2009, up from about a quarter in 2004 (Mawson. 2009). It offers services to government and private clients and has clients in sectors such as financial services, retail market, manufacturing, mining, telecommunications and government, including national and provincial departments and State-owned enterprises[27]. The group has 70 offices and what it calls "service centres" throughout southern Africa and over 3 000 staff members. Its major shareholders are empowerment partner Guma Investment Holdings with 36,6%, Allan Gray Asset Management with 25,5% and Stanlib Asset Management with 8,3%, which gives a total black ownership of 45% according to information provided on its web site[28].

---

[27] http://www.gijima.com/primary-links/about-us
[28] http://www.gijima.com

GijimaAST Shareholding

As a result, it says, it was ranked during the period relevant to this research, as the top black-economic empowerment information communication and technology company in SA, based on its Empowerdex AA rating. Half its board and executive committee comprise black executives, and about 40% of its staff complement is from historically disadvantaged groups. Being an empowered ICT company is key to gaining public-sector spend, which is a valuable part of local ICT spending as has been noted previously. GijimaAst serves almost 90% of the top 100 JSE-listed companies, including nine of South Africa's leading corporations, through its 3 200 staff – based on 2008 figures made available by the company on its Web site.

GijimaAst came into being after empowered IT firm Gijima merged some of its IT businesses with the AST Group in May 2005. Gijima was founded by GijimaAst chairman Robert Gumede, who had initially founded a company known as Guma, which was a business consultancy, offered security and guarding services and provided stationary for schools. The merger was completed without debt funding and resulted in empowerment company Guma obtaining a controlling stake in GijimaAst and three of GijimaAst 's four executive directors during the time of the case study were sourced from Guma. These include chairman Robert Gumede, chief operating officer (COO) Carel Potgieter, and group financial director Carlos Ferreira[29].

In its 2006 annual report the company highlighted the importance of being empowered in order to be awarded government contracts. It said it had a "strong presence" in the private sector with "most of the top South African companies as clients". GijimaAst, however, felt that it needed to increase its presence in the public sector.

> "Our proposition is ideally suited to government's requirements along with our leading BEE status within the industry. The challenge is to translate this vast potential into real cash flow. Substantial new public sector opportunities are in final adjudication, and GijimaAst is positioned to participate meaningfully." (GijimaAst, 2006)

---

[29] http://www.guma.co.za/Aboutus/History.html

The company had been targeting the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) as a client. In GijimaAst's annual report, the company mentions the close relationship between it and SITA, which is government's IT procurement arm.

> "We had the pleasure of hosting the SITA's CEO and his executive for strategy during one of our board meetings where they articulated their new engagement strategy. Our board was heartened by their presence and SITA's new vision for the future. We strongly believe that Government ICT strategy is being steered by capable leadership." (GijimaAst, 2006).

In a 2005 *Brainstorm* article that was published a few months after the merger, GijimaAst spoke of wanting to grow its stake of public-sector spending by leveraging Gijima's empowerment credentials. Then CEO John Miller explained that the merger created an entity with a 30% empowerment stake, and it wanted to use this to bump up revenue earned from government spending from 28% of all turnover to 50% (Vegter, 2005). For the year to June 2006 – the period that is covered in the *Brainstorm* Special Focus – GijimaAst reported revenue of R1.9 billlion, a 24% increase on the prior year. The company turned the prior year's loss of R49 million, into a profit of R38 million. In its commentary in its annual report, it attributed this to bedding down the merged enterprise. Outgoing chairman Hans Smith and incoming chairman Robert Gumede said the results showed that the company had made "excellent progress towards restoring the group's prospects and reversing the negative revenue and profit trend of recent years. Since the merger, revenues have grown and the group has returned to profitability whilst generating solid cash flows". The results were the first full year results since the merger of the two companies in the prior year. The group said its ability to "attract and retain new clients in the past year" showed that it had made progress in restoring market confidence in its prospects and ability.

However, GijimaAst believed that its results were not fully reflective of its potential and its "strategic achievements" of the past year. The company's results were viewed as a victory as GijimaAst had returned to profitability. *Business Day* reported that the company had "defied analysts' expectations" by reporting a profit for the first time in four years. Lesley Stones wrote in *Business Day* that AST was once SA's fourth-largest IT company but had collapsed before the merger with Gijima (2006). Without the merger, revenue would only have grown 6.5%, (Mawson, 2006a). The company had halted revenue and margin declines, but revenue growth was hampered by customer resistance to higher costs. CEO John Miller, who has since stepped down, addressed these concerns on the day the results were released, pledging to improve margins and grow revenue. He said, while the company had more staff and capacity than it required, there would be no retrenchments and it would grow revenue to fill the additional capacity (Mawson, 2006b). However, despite Miller's assurances, GijimaAst's share price was in a dip and the company's performance was not pleasing to all. Despite the return

to profitability and the reduction of a "mountain of debt" that the company had in 2004, the company's margins came under scrutiny in the media. Larry Claasen, writing in *Financial Mail* in October 2006, quoted Barnard Jacobs Mellet analyst Craig Hackney as being disappointed with the margins due to profit falling in a business unit that had shown good revenue growth.

As has been detailed through the above interviews, ITWeb is a small company that competes against larger entities such as the mainstream business press for revenue, in addition to competing with several titles focussed on the ICT sector. As a result of this competition and the need to drive revenue, the company added a supplement to *Brainstorm*'s offerings to attract more advertising spend. These special focus publications are held up as independent overviews of a particular company or sector and are sold on the basis of being credible. However, the supplements are vital in order for *Brainstorm* to make a profit, which could place content under pressure if an advertiser threatens to withdraw its sponsorship. The reliance that ITWeb places on these supplements for profit and how this impacts credibility will be detailed in further research findings. The above research also detailed how GijimaAst was trying to cement itself as a profitable company a year after the merged entity was created. The company clearly was working hard to be seen as a credible company that was worthy of large contracts, especially within the government sector, and not a failure. How this need impacted on the supplement and drove GijimaAst's attempts to influence editorial copy will also be elaborated.

6. The contestation

In this chapter, I detail the events that unfolded around the special focus supplement covering GijimaAst and published by ITWeb's *Brainstorm* in November 2006. The case under review in this paper unfolded over a period of several months in 2006. It involved GijimaAst endeavouring to change editorial content in a *Brainstorm* special focus supplement intended to be an independent review of the company. The company wanted changes made that were not in keeping with ITWeb's editorial policy and also threatened to remove its support from the supplement, which would have resulted in the publishing house being responsible for several aspects of the costs of the publication. Moreover, the requested changes in some instances deviated from information that had been published by GijimaAst on the JSE's Stock Exchange News Service relating to their financial figures. This chapter will describe how the survey moved from being just another supplement to one that was fraught with complications and arguments. It will also track the ramifications of the requested changes throughout the newsroom, how journalists responded to those challenges and the end result of what appeared in print. It also seeks to investigate how the incident shaped thinking within the newsroom, and at executive level within ITWeb. The content is drawn from interviews with those involved in the publications process, freelance journalists commissioned to write for it and a series of emails between the company and the supplement editor.

6.1 Pitch to GijimaAst

The proposal to GijimaAst, which was signed off and agreed to by the company's marketing department in October 2006, according to then supplements editor Mia Andric[30], followed a typical pitch and sales process. The proposal is a standard document including standard terms and conditions. It is a typical agreement concluded with companies that want to be featured in *Brainstorm's* special focus supplements[31]. The paper indicates that the independent report would cover issues such as business models, corporate strategies, technology offerings and future growth drivers. The proposal says these are focus areas of "each report" that are driven by the nature of the supplement. "Based on the success of the independent projects in the past, ITWeb *Brainstorm* compiles every report using the industry's top journalists and award-winning photographers," the proposal states. The proposal suggested that *Brainstorm* feature GijimaAst in a 'Special Focus' supplement that would "take a hard look at GijimaAst's technology offerings and business focus areas, including outsourcing services, training, customised IT solutions as well as ICT solutions integration and convergence". The supplement, however, would also go beyond pure technology and look at innovation within the company and GijimaAst's contribution to the South African economy. "The independent report

---

[30] Mia Andric, former supplements editor, August 10, 2007, October 28, 2010 & January 5, 2011
[31] See appendix

will include case studies, thought leadership and insightful trends articles with a distinct GijimaAst flavour," states the proposal. We see from the proposal that it was written in sales language meant to highlight the positive aspects of the supplement.

The supplement, according to the proposal, was intended to focus on "a number of GijimaAst's key business drivers, including its growth strategy based on business goals, priorities and customer demand". In addition, the company's focus areas, such as empowerment, corporate areas and technological drivers such as hardware and software, were to be included, the proposal suggested. GijimaAst's partners and customers were to be asked to participate to "further add credibility to the report, while adding an 'issues-driven' feel to the final report". Included at the end of the proposal was a separate section entitled 'editorial policy'. This policy clearly outlined that credibility and, therefore, readership were to be maintained. To ensure this, stated the policy, "the principle of editorial independence is strictly adhered to".

> "Journalists and editors do not take account of who advertises, and do their research and writing with objectivity and independence. Likewise, advertising does not guarantee an interview opportunity. While we aim not to waste anyone's time or money – least of all our own – when an interview or photography is arranged, it is at the journalist and editor's discretion whether or not they proved suitable for use. Advertising buys an advertisement along with access to an interested and influential readership. Editorial coverage and positioning remains independent of any such advertising, and any coincidence will remain just that. The use of any press release submissions is at the discretion of the journalists and editor involved. Consideration of any submissions received after the submission deadline cannot be guaranteed."

A similar letter was sent to key GijimaAst partners after the IT company agreed to the sales pitch, informing them that the supplement would be published in November 2006, and that it would be an independent report that would focus on a number of GijimaAst 's "key business drivers, including the company's vision and plans for the future, its technology offerings and solutions, and its view on trends in its sectors". The supplement, states the letter, would also examine the company's accomplishments "and explore the role partners have played in the successful implementation of the company's strategy". "As a valued GijimaAst partner, we would like to encourage you to participate in this independent project by supporting the supplement with advertising," the letter states. Partners were chosen with GijimaAst's input, says Andric.

6.2   Publishing process

Andric, who edited the supplement under review, explains that she was informed the supplement would be published about six to four weeks before publication. She says the supplement was the typical result of a successful sale to the GijimaAst's marketing department. Andric explains that the process of negotiating the supplement and agreeing on editorial content "started off the usual way". Andric and Caryn Berman, business development director, met with GijimaAst after the company had agreed to the supplement and explained publishing aspects such as deadlines, which focus areas would be covered in the supplement, and what type of content the company would be required to provide. As is usual, Andric compiled a project outline that detailed which stories were to be covered, which GijimaAst then approved. The company then indicated which people would be appropriate interview subjects for the various topics that would be covered in the special focus. However, unlike most other supplements, the GijimaAst special focus needed to be printed in time for a SITA convention. Andric explains the supplement was sold on the basis that it would be cover various aspects of the company, put together independently by ITWeb and inserted in *Brainstorm* magazine. It was supposed to cover topics chosen by ITWeb's editorial team, written by journalists chosen by ITWeb's editors, and put together by ITWeb's creative team. Stories were assigned by Andric based on the availability of journalists and their expertise.

Andric says the production of the supplement proceeded in the usual way, until the cover photograph had to be decided on. Initially, the company's board was meant to appear *en mass* on the cover. However, when ITWeb's photographer arrived to take the photograph, which coincided with one of the company's board meetings, " half the board members weren't there". Andric says the decision around who or what to put on the cover dragged on for some time, and a week after the final deadline "we were still trying to figure out what exactly we were going to put on the cover". This was then followed by complaints by the company's CFO, Carlos Ferreira, that he was not being "adequately represented". Andric says this resulted in the entire company considering whether all of its key people were being represented to their satisfaction "apart from the fact that that may or may not have featured in the chapter outline that they approved". This resulted in several last-minute changes, she says.

Andric was initially dealing with Sunil Bodasing, marketing and communications manager. However, Bodasing was removed from the project and replaced by his boss, Thoko Mnyango, the company's group market development and strategy executive. Andric says Mnyango tried to override the initially agreed outline and showed a lack of understanding about editorial integrity. The entire debacle degenerated to the point where Andric and chairman Robert Gumede's personal assistant "had a few screaming matches". Andric explains that once the articles had been completed, they were sent to the company for a typical factual accuracy check. However, the changes GijimaAst were requesting were not simply factual matters, but included rewriting of entire paragraphs. She says, in many instances, the company was changing the meaning of the articles, as well as changing the wording to better reflect the

company as they were "trying to say the same thing, just in their PR kind of way". Andric, while being understanding around things the company's spokespeople may have said that were too sensitive to publish yet, pointed out that the checks were for the purpose of making sure that the facts were correct.

For example, a paragraph that read:

> "The return to profitability was enabled by our disciplined approach to running our business. We successfully halted the revenue and margin declines reported in previous periods," says CEO John Miller.

Was changed to:

> "The return to profitability was enabled by the disciplined approach to running our business. We successfully halted the revenue and margin deterioration reported in previous periods," says Ferreira. (Email from Mnyango to Andric, October 20, 2006).

The changes were made despite the fact that Miller had been speaking at a presentation of the company's results to the investor and analyst community the day the year-end results were published on the Stock Exchange News Service (SENS). His quotes were attributed to Ferreira, which was not an accurate reflection of the factual situation. Moreover, according to the SENS statements "headline earnings declined by R21.2 million". But an email from Bodasing to Andric on 20 October 2006 stated: "Headline earnings, down R21.2 million, came in at R28.3 million. Should be R21.1m". The R21.2 million figure is the currently available published SENS number[32], and is quoted in the published financial as "headline earnings declined by R21.2 million". As the writer of the article cited above, which covered the company's results for the year to June 2006, I requested that my name be removed from the article as a byline as several changes had been requested by the company with which I was not comfortable. Among these were changes to figures that had already been published by the JSE's news service – the Stock Exchange News Service – and were in the public domain and had already been presented to the bourse and been reported upon. SENS is the compulsory medium through which listed companies publicly publish information that is material to aspects such as revenue, and earnings. It is the source the analyst community and financial journalists rely on for factual information from listed companies. If errors are published, companies must issue a correction and no information can be made available in the public domain before being issued to shareholders through SENS. In addition, the company wanted quotes, which had been made by then CEO John Miller during the results presentation attributed to CFO Carlos Ferreira, which was not the case as statements made by Miller were said during a presentation to analysts and investors. As the company wanted material facts changed to be inaccurate

---

[32] http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page296897?oid=2058&sn=2009+Detail&pid=296897

representations of the situation, I requested that my name be removed as the author of the article, a request that was complied with by ITWeb.

Another change that was requested was contained within an article that looked into trends within the industry. Changes that were made included an amendment to a title used in an article entitled 'Creating real value for customers'. The company inserted the title of 'Dr' when attributing a quote to one of its staff members. Brainstorm does not make use of honorific titles when referring to people, as that is not its in-house style[33]. In the same article, the word 'solutions' was substituted for 'practices' by the company, 'clients' was changed to 'customers' and entire paragraphs were rewritten and quotations removed. In addition, GijimaAst had initially agreed to both Miller and Mnyango being interviewed for an article looking at the company's vision and strategy. Subsequently, an email from Bodasing to Andric on October 17, 2006, requested that these articles be separated, and informed Andric that both articles were not to exceed two pages, including pictures. Yet another change that was requested involved changing a headline from "Government to citizen centric" to "From government centric to citizen-centric".

GijimaAst escalated the changes they wanted made to Jovanovic and threatened to pull all advertising from all of ITWeb's publications, not just the supplement. This resulted in several concessions being made. Among the complaints raised by the company, in an email dated October, 17 2006 sent by Bodasing to ITWeb's sales director, Robert Mace, were issues such as the fact that GijimaAst felt that the "level of service provided by ITWeb *Brainstorm's* Special Feature has not been satisfactory considering we have made a commitment to not only take up the November special feature but also have signed long term agreements for many other products offered by Brainstorm". Bodasing complained that photography did not take place as had been promised, and that the article encapsulating the company's financial results mostly quoted Miller, while a picture had been taken of Ferreira. According to Bodasing, the journalist – myself – did not "show up for the scheduled interview". As the journalist responsible for writing that article, I was neither informed nor consulted about an interview, instead having being assured such was not necessary by Andric as I had attended the results presentation. Bodasing continues to complain that the company "received no response or any apology from the journalist". The fact that most of the article quoted Miller "did not paint a positive picture for Ferreira and he was highly upset as he also makes the necessary budget available to be able to commit this supplement".

Bodasing also argues that "some articles sent for approval were reviewed and requests to rectify certain content were not met. On the agreement it was *clearly stipulated that we GijimaAst would be entitled to rectify any comments or text we were not happy with"* [own

---

[33] Email from Bodasing to Andric 10 October 2006

emphasis]. In addition, says Bodasing, requests for "slight changes arose in the final weeks but many were not met". As a result, he says, "our overall experience with *Brainstorm* on this publication has been very disappointing. Our excitement over the publication has turned into frustration and disappointment."

This email was escalated to Jovanovic, who endeavoured to assure the company that she was reviewing the supplement and was working closely with Andric to address GijimaAst's concerns. Jovanovic says the company had never previously had "a client that difficult and that ignorant about the way it works before". She explains that, at the time the supplement was being produced, GijimaAst was in the process, internally, of changing CEOs and Miller was "on his way out". However, the company did not want the industry to be aware of that fact, which could have been the motive behind many of the changes. She says "logically the CEO should be the star and the face of it but they couldn't put the guy on the cover or make him the face of it because he was on his way out" but GijimaAst was not ready to tell the market this news. "So I think they weren't honest with us or with themselves," Jovanovic states. "I think it would have been so much easier for all of us if they told us, off the record, 'our CEO is on his way out; we have to sidetrack him somehow," yet the company never explained this aspect to ITWeb, and Jovanovic says everything else flowed from GijimaAst's reluctance to share that key bit of information. Jovanovic says, instead of coming clean, GijimaAst turned the blame on *Brainstorm*'s staff. "They were making it sound like our journalists didn't report properly; didn't report correctly; the editor stuffed it up completely." As a result, she says, this made it very difficult to resolve the issue and ITWeb found itself on the back foot and had to deal with the complaints from a customer-service point of view, instead of being able to attack them on an editorial integrity basis because of the allegations that GijimaAst was making. As a result, Andric ended up having to literally "stop the presses" and go to the printers to make last minute changes, changes that ITWeb viewed as minor but GijimaAst said were vital. Jovanovic says by the time the issue was escalated to her desk, the company had already asked for several changes to be made, which went beyond simple factual corrections. She explains that GijimaAst wanted copy toned down by having parts of sentences removed, such as if the copy read the company had 'missed its target by a large margin', GijimaAst wanted it to read 'missed its target'. However, the changes that were requested went beyond just toning down things and included "completely replacing quotes; full quotes; replacing completely; changing the names of the people who said those things and actually changing figures," says Jovanovic.

Berman explains that ITWeb had a "major problem" with GijimaAst because the company wanted several changes made that went beyond simple factual corrections. Berman, who is involved in sales at ITWeb, explains that some of the changes, such as grammar and photography, went against ITWeb's internal style. GijimaAst, says Berman, was "not happy with what we wrote about, and they wanted to make a lot of changes, far more than factual corrections, you know change actually some of the grammar of the articles… some of the

articles completely even from a design perspective; from a photography perspective; from every angle…". However, Berman points out that because the supplement was intended as an independent report, the stylistic and layout effects had to conform with the in-house style that is used within *Brainstorm*. "When we go with an independent report you cannot change photography; you cannot change grammatical [aspects], spelling that *Brainstorm* uses, or the journalist would use."

These sorts of changes would usually result in the supplement being branded as a profile, and the use of "independent report" on the cover would be revoked. However, the GijimaAst publication went out with the November 2006 issue of Brainstorm as an "independent publication", despite the arguments that ensued around the requested changes, and the concessions that ITWeb made. **"**They wanted to change absolutely everything… that's when we, from an editorial perspective, say, 'no, this is not something we'll do'. We will change it but we will then change the branding of the profile," says Berman. She adds that journalists will also remove bylines from articles that they no longer feel comfortable about having authored because editorial independence has been taken away by the company. However, the GijimaAst supplement, as has been noted, does not look like a *Brainstorm* special focus. The magazine has a distinctive look, which can be seen in another supplement, published around the same time. While the covers and editors pages follow similar layout principles, the GijimaAst content page is vastly different and has been printed in the IT company's corporate colours, making it look more like an advertisement than a page in an independent editorial. The content's page is the only area where the usual look differs drastically.

6.3   Tricky situation

Jovanovic says the supplement turned into a "very unpleasant experience" and Andric had to turn into a customer-service agent, which is not a natural position for an editor.

> "You have to become a customer service oriented person who has to assume this kind of 'the customer is always right' approach, because they were threatening to pull advertising; to pull the supplement and then you're at a stage where you've already done all the production and you're already in print. If they threaten they won't pay costs, you've incurred all the costs already. The printer's about to send you the bill and that's the stage where they were threatening to pull [out]".

This left ITWeb in a difficult situation, says Jovanovic. The company had to firstly state what was possible, and which aspects could not be accommodated. However, because the arguments dragged on for so long, ITWeb was forced to compromise on issues that it otherwise may not have done. In addition, the supplement was set to be delivered to the State

IT Agency's annual GovTech conference, says Jovanovic, which would be good exposure for the magazine.

Berman explains that sometimes it is necessary to make concessions, and concurs that she sometimes ends up massaging egos to get the product finalised, especially when the print deadline is under pressure. "I think that's what sales is all about." She says the sales department often ends up acting as the middleman, dealing with editorial staff who complain that her clients do not understand the process, while the client argues that the editorial team does not understand its business. "You need to be diplomatic, but diplomatic to a point where your clients understand as well as your editor understands that sometimes there are reasonable requests for changes. I will never ever take an unreasonable request to an editor." Sometimes, however, editorial sees sales as being unreasonable, she adds. In the case study under review, many changes were made, says Berman. At the time of the interview, about a year-and-a-half after publication, the company was still not happy with the printed special focus. However, despite this, another supplement was on the cards for mid-2008, says Berman.

6.4   Journalists fight back

The issues that plagued the GijimaAst supplement rippled throughout ITWeb, says Jovanovic. She says it became common knowledge at every level, including at production level. "It was just very negative across the company." Andric says there was "absolutely" resistance from within ITWeb's editorial staff to acceding totally to GijimaAst's demands. She says the general feedback from within the company's journalists and editorial staff was "no way in hell". However, because of the timing, concessions had to be made as ITWeb's choices were to "carry on fighting with them, risk it going to court to get our money out of them and not actually produce anything or carry on fighting with them hoping that we can resolve this thing within the space of a couple of days or just kind of go, fine, we're five days over deadline you guys want this, we have to go to print in three days if we don't go to print in three days it's not going to be published let's just do it".

However, despite Andric's assertions that there was resistance to the requested changes, among which was the resistance I demonstrated to attempts to change my stories in a way I did not feel was factually accurate, four years on, this particular supplement and any issues surrounding it, do not seem to have made a lasting impression on the journalists who compiled copy for it, at least not among those who responded to the emailed survey. Interestingly, changes to a supplement are seen in a less important light than if companies had requested changes to normal editorial copy, which suggests that despite ITWeb's best efforts, the special focus features are not seen as being any more editorially credible than advertorials. This is

interesting in light of the journalists' comments during interviews that editorial integrity is vital, and changes can only be made when factual in nature. However, this position does not seem to be carried through to supplements. Only those who contributed to the supplement, four years down the line, remember any ruction, if at all, and only those in the newsroom found changes to be problematic, unlike the freelancers who did not have an issue with the changes requested by GijimaAst. As can be seen, journalists had different reactions to the changes requested by GijimaAst.

For example, Scala recalls that GijimaAst wanted to change the vast majority of content and expand on the suggested topics and, in some instances, were not happy with some of the writers and ended up contributing their own copy. However, as GijimaAst was "paying for the supplement", and in his opinion, "could effect any changes it wanted to". He argues that ITWeb's policy of producing 'independent surveys' in the guise of a "special focus supplement" did not make sense and resulted in several conflicting opinions on the matter. "My major concern is, and always will be, ITWeb's editorial policy of producing "independent surveys" in the guise of a 'special focus supplement'. Clients pay for the right to publish these company profiles and should therefore, in my opinion, be permitted to make any and all changes, including complete re-writes as required," says the former journalist.

The anonymous freelancer responded in request to my emailed questions that he "couldn't recall any changes to my copy that I found problematic, even when I looked it up"[34]. He recalls the supplement under review, but "nothing that makes it any more memorable to the countless others I worked on at the time". Donovan Jackson[35], who wrote for the supplement on a freelance basis, argues that since it was a "special focus, rather than an independent report" on GijimaAst, any changes requested were "no big deal". He remembers the supplement "very well" but is not sure that any changes were requested to his copy, and argues "what happens pre- and even post-publication is of no consequence to me". "My job is to get my copy in on time and to the appropriate level of quality. What happens to it from there, I neither know nor care. I rarely see my work in its final form." However, Andric recalls the supplement being problematic, and the changes that were requested by the company being an issue from an editorial point of view.

> "If we take the stance of editorial objectivity and integrity as correct, 99% of the corrections were not valid because their only purpose was to change the tone and message of the articles to provide a better reflection of the company." (Andric, 2010.)

Andric says most journalists were annoyed, and frustrated with the requested changes. "Many refused to make the changes, so I had to. Some even asked me to remove their names from

---

[34] Anonymous, freelance journalist, November 8, 2010
[35] Donovan Jackson, freelance journalist, October 26, 2010

the articles". As a result of repeated changes and the issues surrounding the publication, even though GijimaAst had signed a contract, the fear was that ITWeb would have had to go to court to prove that GijimaAst was in breach of contract, which would ave been an expensive and onerous task. "It was just quicker and cheaper just to go fine, fine, whatever you want. Fine."

Berman explains that it is difficult to deal with situations when there is a conflict between advertisers and editorial because ITWeb is contractually bound to run advertisements that have been sold and delivered. She says sometimes these situations cannot be "massaged" and companies have pulled advertising that had been running for ten months, which caused ITWeb a "major loss of revenue" as these firms had been "big contributors from the financial point of view". However, she says, "at the end of the day, if we do not have our editorial independence, yes I would be driving around in a Ferrari and I would be selling our cover page with whoever is on the front cover for hundreds of thousands of rands but we wouldn't have a magazine". She explains that the company would lose its readers because the magazine would not be viewed as credible.

> "I think my customers understand how credible *Brainstorm* is and appreciate that in the long-run. Short-term they might not see it, they ruffle their feathers and they get very upset about it, … but at the end of the day they appreciate the fact that we have that credibility."

6.5   Lesson learnt

During the course of compiling the publication that is the subject of the case study that is under review in this paper, GijimaAst requested several changes to copy, including changes that were not factual in nature and were direct contradictions of what had occurred. The company fought for changes to such an extent that publication of the supplement was delayed. The situation spiralled throughout the newsroom and some of the journalists involved fought back against the changes. Because the disagreements were holding up publication, ITWeb needed to compromise and many changes were made. The publishing company has, however, learnt from the debacle. Interestingly, several years later, any changes requested are hardly remembered by many of the freelance journalists involved in the publication. The reason for this is not clear.

Subsequent to the GijimaAst special focus supplement, the contract that ITWeb enters into with clients for such publications has been changed, says Andric, although whether this is still the case at the time of writing is not known. She says the updated contract reflected items that companies are not allowed to do in terms of changing copy. Berman says the GijimaAst supplement also resulted in editors learning how to better handle some customers. "It's pretty

difficult because you also need to make the customer feel happy, even from an editor's perspective but it's how you do it, because again you are paying for the product but there needs to be a line between the two – from an advertorial to editorial perspective." However, Berman and editors also take more care, when in initial meetings with potential supplement clients, in explaining the difference between a company profile, and an independent report, she says.

> "The editor will go in [and] stress the difference between the independent report and company profile/brochure; I'll go in there and stress the difference between the independent report and company brochure and every single time we have a tricky client we come up with a new schedule and a new point on our document that we give to customers so that they must sign it off and be happy with the way we work."

Jovanovic adds that several aspects of the way supplements are compiled changed after the GijimaAst special focus was put to bed. She explains that the editor is more involved. "The moment the sale happens the editor is involved and goes and sits with the client and actually makes sure that they understand perfectly what they're getting, and I think that's made a huge difference." At the time of the interview with Jovanovic in 2008, some eighteen months later, ITWeb had not experienced another incident in which a company did not understand what they were buying, and how the process works. "They understand that this is the way it works and that once you've said something you can't now say 'I didn't say that, someone else said that', it was basic things; basic things, but they do understand that much better." Adds Andric: "These supplements were envisioned as independent profiles of companies in the sector, sponsored by the company. The idea was that the objectivity of the editorial staff would give the profile an added credibility. Unfortunately, advertisers cannot see the value in this and every single client has been difficult to a greater or lesser extent."

6.6   Conclusion

As can be seen from the events that unfolded during publication of the special focus supplement, which are detailed above, ITWeb's senior management were forced into a situation in which they had to make concessions, or bear the cost of publishing the supplement themselves. Jovanovic has explained that supplements are a large contributor to whether Brainstorm makes a profit, or not. The supplements also account for a quarter of revenue for the magazine, and are driven by a model that reduces risk for ITWeb as the publishers offers companies that sign up for a supplement the option of either covering the costs themselves, or allowing ITWeb to sell advertising to their selected partners to cover as much of the cost as possible. This eliminates financial risk to ITWeb around the cost of production, the cost of freelance journalists who would need to be paid and any other costs. However, when GijimaAst threatened to pull its support from the supplement, ITWeb would have been responsible for

any remaining cost of the publication as it would have been too late to stop the print cycle, as Andric explains. As a result, the publishing house was forced to make concessions that it ordinarily would have not in order to appease GijiamAst so that the supplement would be published and the company would not incur additional costs that could eat away at profit margins.

The changes that were requested were, for the most part, petty and indicate that the company was more concerned about public perception of its brand than being strictly factually correct. None of the changes in the study detailed above were factual, such as a journalist spelling a spokesperson's name incorrectly, or getting a subsidiary's name wrong. Instead, the company wanted changes made that would reflect the corporate image that it wanted to show. For example, inserting titles to indicate degrees earned into the copy when this is not a *Brainstorm* practice, perhaps in a bid to show that GijimaAst's staff are well educated? Other changes, such as removing entire paragraphs and changing simple wording to reflect a branding position are further examples of this. The only serious change requested by GijimaAst related to a financial figure that had already been published on the Stock Exchange News Service and was, therefore, in the public domain. That change could not be done without alerting shareholders, if it was incorrect. The fact that the company requested the change in the supplement but did not publish a SENS correction indicates that it wanted to make its financial position appear better than it actually was.

The fact that GijimaAst requested such petty changes to the copy, showing the company's prioritisation of its brand and image rather than a desire to represent the facts as they occurred, also indicates its lack of understanding of how the media process works. GijimaAst is clearly not familiar with the concept that only factual changes to editorial copy should be made, and the company does not have free reign to make any amendments that they please to independently-produced editorial. GijimaAst also showed a disregard for the publishing process by committing to deadlines and then ignoring these, eventually pushing publication out by weeks. The entire process also became heated and emotional, as can be seen from the tone of the emails. Perhaps an explanation for this behaviour is that GijimaAst felt they 'owned' the publication, as can be seen in the emails sent to several directors at ITWeb in which GijimaAst staff expressed the dissatisfaction with the way in which they were being treated, and were not being valued enough. GijimaAst clearly felt that, as the company was paying for the supplement, its staff should have final say over all its content, as well as the look and feel. Whether companies should have this level of say in supplements is a topic that will be further explored through interviews with individual journalists in the next chapter, which will also examine whether the industry views supplements as credible sources of information.

Of interest is the difference in reaction to the changes by freelance journalists and editorial staff based in the newsroom. The freelance journalists that were commissioned did not react

as strongly to the requested changes and few can even recall whether changes were asked for. However, staff in the newsroom who worked on the supplement – myself, Andric and Jovanovic – found the entire situation to be extremely stressful. All three clearly recall journalists vehemently disagreeing with the requested changes and, in some instances, refusing to make those changes. One explanation could be the three-year time difference between the initial interviews with key editorial staff and those with the freelance journalists, as the passage of time and many more projects to work on could have dulled their recollection. However, when Andric was contacted after a similar time lapse, she clearly recalled the situation, and the fracas that erupted in the newsroom, as do I.

7. Themes

During the course of researching this paper, I did not proceed interview by interview, but rather sought to gain a holistic view of the publication and the sector as well as an understanding of the ructions that ensued during the course of publishing the special focus supplement on GijimaAst. While undertaking the interviews, I also came to the realisation that there are more issues around publishing within the niche ICT sector, that go beyond the scope of the supplement and talk to aspects such as: dwindling revenue from advertisers, advertising influence, general journalistic autonomy and levels of professionalism within the sector, a lacked of shared understanding of supplements within the industry as well as how supplements are viewed by those who read them, and those who write them. The issue of how credibly *Brainstorm's* supplements are viewed came up as an important finding in the research. This chapter is drawn from interviews with a range of journalists and other role players within the ICT sector and the media industry. In this chapter, I will detail each of these findings and explore the implications of this research in greater detail by drawing on the interviews as a collective body.

As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter by Campbell (2008), niche publications face a constant battle to glean a percentage of a shrinking revenue pie, especially when they have a limited pool of advertisers from which to sell advertising. This situation is no different in South Africa, where niche publications compete head on with larger, mainstream titles for a share of advertising revenue. Locally, it is very expensive to put together a smaller publication if a company does not have the scale to persuade a printer to give it a discount. This situation has led to companies seeking alternative forms of revenue to ensure that the publication is profitable, hence *Brainstorm's* decision to launch special focus supplements. However, the dwindling advertising pool has also led to journalists coming under pressure from advertisers to change copy, pressure that is sometimes escalated all the way to the editor and beyond. While journalists within niche ICT publications seem to have little professional journalistic training, they nonetheless resist changes from advertisers and will not change copy without a good reason. However, when it comes to supplements, these are viewed in a different light and editorial copy is taken less seriously than it would be for the main magazine. Each of these issues will be detailed separately.

7.1   Dwindling revenues

Publications covering the information communication technology sector in South Africa can be split into two types of media houses – those that are niche focussed publications and broader publications with more mainstream readers that cover ICT in addition to the rest of South Africa's economy. This places niche publications at a disadvantage when it comes to trying to gain a bite of the revenue pool, because mainstream publications have a broader audience and

reach more people. Veteran ICT journalist Brian Bakker[36] views the industry as split between business publications such as *Financial Mail* and *Business Day* that carry news items on technology in addition to news on other sectors. And there are trade publications such as *ITWeb*, *iWeek*, *Brainstorm* and the now defunct *Computer Week*. Bakker has been involved in the publishing industry for the last 15 years, and has previous experience in the sector as a technical support provider. However, niche publications are often very constrained in terms of budgets, explains Bakker. This, he says, is "the fundamental difference between the two sectors in the industry".

Larger media houses, says Bakker, have the capacity to support a failing publication through downturns in a cycle – especially if they view it as having the ability to recover – because of the variety of publications that they house. In addition, larger organisations can offer advertisers a spread of titles across various sectors that would allow them to target different markets. For example, an ICT company that sells products into the construction sector may wish to take a package that offers it advertisements in both an ICT-focussed magazine, and one targeted at the construction sector. Advertising in independent publications in each of these sectors would cost more than a packaged deal at one media house, without the additional benefit of a distribution network to ensure that the magazine is well distributed. This bears out arguments by McChesney and others that consolidation can lead to anti-competitive behaviour within the industry.

In South Africa, as is the case in other countries across the globe, publications rely on advertising to cover their costs and to turn a profit (Herman & Chomsky, 1998; Schudson, 1993). Bakker explains that gaining advertisers is important because this is where the profit lies in publishing. "The cover price is peanuts, you know, it doesn't even cover the printing costs most times,'" he says. Referring to a 2008 trade publication he undertook on behalf of the State IT Agency, Bakker explains that the cost – of the entire magazine including printing production, freelance journalists and production but excluding distribution – came to R250 000 for a 64-page magazine. He anticipates that this could retail for R25 a copy, which would require sales of 10 000 copies to cover the costs, before the magazine made any profits. However, only 6 000 copies of this magazine were printed. In niche publications, such as *Brainstorm* and others, this situation is exacerbated because trade publications targeting the ICT sector typically only print about 5 000 to 6 000 copies, says Bakker. A publication printing several titles would be able to negotiate better rates based on larger scale, however the saving would not be sufficient to make a profit on the cover price alone, says Bakker. It is not easy to persuade advertisers to choose one publication over another as advertisers have a large product base from which to choose when placing advertisements, explains Bakker.

---

[36] Brian Bakker, freelance IT publisher and veteran IT journalist, February 10, 2008

"The pool of advertising revenue is controlled by the advertisers themselves and if they decide this month or this quarter they're not advertising at all, um, they're putting their money into direct sales initiatives or direct promotions to customers or whatever they're putting their money into that they think has better value, the publishers can go and stand on their heads and whistle Dixie through their ring-piece, it's not going to happen. It doesn't matter what publishers do, they're not going to attract advertising money, the advertiser has already decided they're not going to advertise this quarter." (Bakker, 2008)

7.2   Advertising influence

Every journalist interviewed during the course of this research indicated that companies try and change copy, and that these changes extend to more than just amending incorrect facts, but also to changing the way the copy has been written and wanting to remove entire parts of stories. Because the ICT publishing industry reports on events that happen at companies that are both readers and advertisers of the publications, there are inherent conflicts of interest, which advertisers try and use to their advantage. Local experiences of advertisers trying to influence editorial copy reported by journalists and industry players interviewed for the purposes of this research mirrors the experiences of other publishing houses in the US. As Campbell (2008) pointed out, publishing houses with a smaller circulation are more prone to advertising influence, especially if their revenue is small, as is the case with niche ICT publications, which are not only fighting each other for revenue, but are also losing out to mainstream publications. Wadim Schreiner, MD of Media Tenor SA[37], a company that studies the media sector, sees the niche ICT publishing sector as being as much at risk as other niche sectors, such as motoring and travel, of being influenced by advertisers.

Attempts to change copy are a regular occurrence within the sector, and are more acutely felt by niche journalists than those working for mainstream publications that gather advertising from a variety of sources instead of a small pool, says Bakker. "Editorial people…they do their work to the best of their ability and advertisers have zero chance of influencing them," says Bakker of the mainstream publications. However, in niche publications, "it's a far smaller pond so what happens is…if a journalist writes an article for example which is unfavourable to a particular vendor, that vendor can retaliate by threatening to, or actually withdrawing advertising". Bakker refers to a specific incident in about 1993 or 1994 that characterises the sector when he wrote an article for *Computer Week* that covered an IBM upgrade of a storage device that has the effect of bringing down First National Bank's ATM network for eight hours. The article was sent to IBM as a courtesy for fact-checking and IBM threatened to withdraw half of its advertising if the article appeared on the front cover, which was where it was

---

[37] Wadim Schreiner, MD of Media Tenor SA, February 4, 2008

intended to appear. The editor of the publication backed Bakker "to the hilt" and wouldn't acced to the advertisers' demands.

However, says Bakker, that sort of attitude from editors is not always the norm in the sector. He explains that the publisher also stood up for Bakker and his story, but "it doesn't always happen that way". He has heard anecdotal cases where advertisers have squashed stories "simply by being big money bags customers". Bakker explains that large international corporations can easily withdraw advertising from a publication and spend money at a publication that they see as being more favourable.

> "They [larger corporations] can withdraw [advertising spend] and hand it to favourites as much as they want, you know, if you've got a marketing person at one of these companies who decides sorry we don't like that story you just did … they can decide to withdraw all the advertising revenue from you and … you can do nothing about it." (Bakker, 2008)

As a result, says Bakker, advertisers do try and change editorial copy to reflect the views that they would like to have placed in the public domain. He explains that IT publications have a very small pond from which to source revenues, although monthly publications are better placed than those who publish more frequently because they have a longer shelf-life and, as a result, provide better value-for-money for advertisers. Current *Brainstorm* editor Samantha Perry says companies have tried to change copy "more times than I care to count"[38]. She says this happens either when an article has been sent for fact-checking and the company decided they want to change non-factual data or when a company hears "we're planning a story and attempts to stop publication", or influence the content. The anonymous respondent indicated he has also had experiences with companies disputing the interpretation of facts and requests to change quotes. He has also experienced unhappy reactions to the information he has disclosed. Scala, who has since moved on to become a public relations practitioner, experienced companies wanting to change copy throughout his career as a journalist. "In some instances, companies wanted to change the style of writing when they were simply provided with copy to 'check facts'". Jackson concurs that this sort of request is made "all the time".

Companies will go overboard when given an opportunity to check facts; often viewing this permission as *carte blanche* to amend anything they wish within the copy. Former ITWeb online telecoms editor Candice Jones explains to what extent companies try and change copy in order to reflect themselves in a better light or improve their media coverage: "One company asked to view copy for 'fact checking' once – and deleted the quotes of another company that had been interviewed for the same article"[39]. She adds that another firm tried to "include links

---

[38] Samantha Perry, current Brainstorm editor and former Brainstorm features editor, November 11, 2010
[39] Candice Jones, former online telecoms editor, November 30, 2010

to their website and products - which under some circumstances can and would have been done – but in context was not appropriate".

ITWeb online editor Martin Czernowalow[40] adds it is not uncommon for companies to sometimes threaten to withdraw advertising, should editorial not be changed to their liking. He says copy-change requests are "quite a common occurrence", especially in the hard news environment. Companies often try to influence the content or even tone of an article, if they consider that it paints them in an unfavourable light, he says. Czernowalow cites an example of a story that appeared online on www.itweb.co.za early in 2010[41]:

> "ICT company Sybase was determined to have an article pulled or at least heavily amended, in early 2010, as the piece dealt with an alleged case of rape on the company's premises. The company, and its PR agency, initially claimed the story was factually inaccurate, did not present their side of the story in full, and then challenged the newsworthiness of the article, followed by threats to pull advertising. The company even hinted at legal action, on the basis that the story was defamatory and damaging to its reputation." (Czernowalow, 2011).

Scala concurs that advertisers try and "push their luck" and assume that because they are paying for a product, they have final say over what is published. "They always throw the 'but I'm paying for it' flag in our face. Obviously our retort is, but you need to understand that it's our product, we are creating it, it's our name behind this and we have final say in terms of what gets published and what doesn't". However, not every journalist sees advertisers as trying to influence copy when they request changes. Freelance journalist Carel Alberts argues that most of the changes he has been requested to make were usually to correct mistakes, which he has allowed and has also been "generous in allowing companies to see copy"[42].

Journalists are not alone in expecting attempts to change copy to be a daily occurrence, even advertisers within the industry view copy changes as expected, and not the exception. Grant Hodgkinson, former MD of IT company Mint and an advertiser through ITWeb's various platfrms, has a cynical view of South African trade publications, such as those covering motoring and tourism[43]. Hodgkinson's viewpoints are included in this paper to understand how ITWeb's advertisers, who are also readers and contributors, view the stable's publications. His views are not meant to be an exhaustive survey of the publication's audience, but to shed some insight on how the close-knit industry views media within the sector, as this is something that has previously not been researched in depth on an academic basis.

---

[40] Martin Czernowalow, online editor, January 5, 2011
[41] http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29074:sybase-staff-accused-of-rape&catid=69:business&Itemid=58
[42] Carel Alberts, freelance journalist and former ITWeb staff member, October 26, 2010.
[43] Grant Hodgkinson, former MD of IT company Mint and an advertiser with ITWeb, February 12, 2008

Commenting on whether advertisers try and influence editorial content, Hodgkinson says: "I think that it happens. Okay, we know that this happens from time to time and unless you are Anton Rupert who can afford to pull advertising out of different publications … it's how the industry works; it's an unfortunate reality of life". Hodgkinson says publications need to resist this sort of behaviour "as far as possible" and advertisers need to be mature enough to expect bad publicity from time-to-time.

> "Now that's all very nice and well in theory but we know that it doesn't work that way. I think that's why it's important to keep your ears to the ground and no matter what you read, you need to be speaking to people in the industry, you need to be building a network of people in the industry and that sort of thing because should something have been changed, and let's say for example the sentence or the paragraph that was removed, had substantial impact on my understanding on one of my competitors, it would come out in the networks that I've built in the industry and that is also what I rely on to gain an understanding of the market, so I think it's always important to have that balance. You can't ignore the fact that, especially your strong advertisers, are going to twist people's arms – there's nothing much that you can do about it. It's a sad reality of life." (Hodgkinson, 2008)

In addition, says Hodgkinson, it is preferable for an article to be censored by an advertiser, than for a publication to have to close its doors because an advertiser withdrew its placements.

> "You know I would much rather have an article that might have been censored by an advertiser, okay, on one occasion or two occasions during a year that that publication having its advertising withdrawn and thereby folding and then people don't get any news. People need to weigh up the implications of certain things. If press or the media says to every single advertiser, especially the large ones, 'no we're not going to bend to your every whim' it's very easy for that advertiser to move elsewhere and you know, as I've said there are harsh economic realities of life that people need to think about." (Hodgkinson, 2008)

As can be seen, the bulk of the journalists interviewed are against any changes being made to their copy unless those changes are factual. Exceptions do exist, but that is generally only when the topic is of a very technical and confusing nature. However, despite this, advertising interference is accepted as a norm within the industry, and is an issue that journalists deal with on a daily basis. This is even accepted as a given by advertisers, who would rather have content that may have been tampered with than none at all.

7.3   Journalistic autonomy

All eight respondents reported interview subjects, who are by default in many cases also advertisers, trying to change copy. Several of the respondents also provided examples of changes that had been requested. This implies that such issues are top of mind for the journalists who provided examples – perhaps an indication of the value they place on maintaining editorial independence and integrity? Apart from changes remaining fresh in he minds of the journalists who were interviewed, there is a general resistance to requested changes that do not deal just with factual inaccuracies. Journalists and editors within ITWeb's stable are generally loath to concede to companies', or advertisers', requests to change copy in order to paint them in a better light. However, two of the journalists interviewed added allowing changes results in an accurate and balanced article. It must be noted, however, this is not the general reaction to requested changes from companies that have been quoted in an article, at least one respondent was so vehemently opposed to changes, he used profanity in his response to my emailed question on whether non-factual changes were allowed.

Czernowalow explains, with the Sybase example referred to above, "the end result was that we stuck to our guns and refused to bow to pressure, as we satisfied ourselves that the story was factually correct and did not need to be amended in any way". Czernowalow explains this decision came about after ITWeb was "happy that the company's objections had no merit". As a result, the publishing house "stuck to editorial policy and made it clear that our integrity and independence was non-negotiable". He adds the company also made it very clear that editorial and advertising are two separate issues that have no bearing on one another and threats to pull advertising spend would not influence its decision, under any circumstances. The reasoning behind this decision is because it is "imperative to protect a publication's editorial integrity and independence at all time, if it is to be trusted and taken seriously by its readers, advertisers and industry players," says Czernowalow.

> "There must never be any doubt that editorial direction cannot be swayed through threat, coercion or incentive, in any form. An independent publication must be trusted to deliver facts accurately, fairly and consistently, and its readership must be confident that the information conveyed is reliable at all times, no matter how favourable or unfavourable it may be to any party. Changes will only be made if it is established that a story contains factual inaccuracies, or misrepresents an issue, etc. Accuracy and fairness must be maintained at all times." (Czernowalow, 2011)

This policy, he says, applies to every company covered by ITWeb, regardless of whether he company is an advertiser or not. Czernowalow explains that no system, policy or human being is infallible, and mistakes can occur. As a result, being open to correcting factual mistakes is fair to all parties. "Editorial changes are not bad *per se*, if they are justified, in which case,

they are actually fundamentally good and necessary." Perry adds she makes a point of being clear with companies as to what role *Brainstorm* plays and why, as an independent media company, ITWeb is not beholden to companies, nor obliged to do "what they say". She explains this standpoint is important because *Brainstorm* is an independent publication that targets a certain readership and has a mandate to provide information that is accurate, useful, relevant and entertaining to its readers. "Without readers we have no advertisers, so the reader is king." Perry explains factual changes will generally only be made if they are valid and accurate. "We will consider more sensitive changes such as not publishing information when asked not to depending on the nature of the information and the nature of the story." Perry says the magazine may consider "sitting on" a story if it may compromise a deal or damage the industry. "We will often comply if there is no overwhelming public interest reason not to. The public interest, and our readers' interest, is what we judge by." This policy, says Perry, applies to everyone regardless of whether they advertise or not.

Perry explains *Brainstorm* publishes the original article with factual changes, only if they are deemed to be accurate, valid and relevant. From my own experience, writing for both *Brainstorm* and *ITWeb Online*, fact-checking is at the discretion of the journalist. However, this is limited to making sure a particular point is understood if, for example, it is especially technical. Entire articles are never sent out to be checked, and quotes may be sent back for verification if they are not contentious and the subject is particularly pushy about seeing what they have said is accurately reflected. If mistakes are made, a right of reply is given. Online, this will be published as a sidebar to the original story. In *Brainstorm*, these will appear on the letters page because the page is close to the front of the magazine, and corrections do not usually warrant an entire story. Smaller corrections will appear on the contents page. Page layout in *Brainstorm* – and other magazines – is different to those of newspapers as stories will run over several pages, rather than several stories appearing on a single page. This makes it difficult to put a correction on the same page as the story appeared a month or two before, but having corrections towards the front of the magazine do give them prominence.

Jones has previously pulled stories when companies tried to remove quotes from a competitor, as described above. She explains "it would not have been a news story without the first company, so I could not use it. The company refused to let me run the story without the changes." However, in an instance she recalls in which a company wanted a link to their site, the editor indicated that the company had been a good advertiser, and eventually allowed her to include a link to the site. Jones explains that the first example was a stronger news story than the second, in which a start-up company was being written about. Stories, says Jones, should only be allowed to be seen by the companies to check facts, or if they are very technical in nature. This, she adds, allows her to become a better journalist and opens up an opportunity to learn more about the sector she is covering. Jackson reacts strongly to suggestions that his copy should be changed. "Usually it results in someone getting pissed off,

often me." Changes, he says, should only be allowed in editorial copy if inaccuracies are present.

Alberts, however, says he is open to companies reviewing his copy because of his reliance on experts to verify information and assertions of a technical nature. He says changes should be allowed if reasonable and of a factual nature. The anonymous respondent says allowing changes "balances the need for unbiased copy in the reader's interest with fairness to the interviewee". If facts are incorrect, he will concede to making changes to copy, and will allow interview subjects to clarify a direct, attributed quote. However, if an interviewee is trying to take control of editorial for their own agenda or trying to disguise something that puts him or his company in a bad light, this is not allowed. A right of response is given in these circumstances.

Scala adds he always explained the nuance of editorial integrity and that if a company was granted permission to review copy, it was for factual changes; nothing more. This, he says, is because "as a journalist, you are trained to seek the facts, research your work and present the facts in a logical way". Scala's comment is interesting because of the general lack of journalistic training seen among those interviewed for this research. The emailed survey sent to journalists who were employed by ITWeb at the time of the case study, most of whom were involved in writing for the supplement being reviewed, indicated that many had spent much of their careers covering the sector, but very few had professional qualifications specifically related to journalism. Of the eight respondents, two have no professional qualifications at all, one had qualified as a lawyer with an LLB, two other respondents had diplomas in journalism, of which one respondent also had a BA. Another had an honours degree that included a year of journalism at first-year level, while another respondent holds a general bachelor of arts. Myself and a further respondent were the only two people that had studied a degree with a specific journalism major.

The lack of professional training is at odds with the journalists' strong position against copy being changed by interview subjects, who are often also advertisers, unless there are clear factual inaccuracies. It indicates that there is a process of socialisation that happens within the newsroom, and that journalists that work at niche publications seem to pick up the 'rules' by a process of learning, listening, and perhaps even osmosis. This ties in with Nolan's explanation of a culture of journalism, discussed in the theoretical framework (2009), in which he described a cultural framework within which journalists are schooled through word of mouth about acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour. What is even more interesting is that the freelance journalists have also been socialised to newsroom norms, even though they are not part of the production process and rarely go to ITWeb's offices. A plausible explanation for this could be that they had previously worked in newsrooms, even if that experience was many years ago, and have retained the cultural learnings from that time. This is certainly an area

that deserves further research as is opens up the question of how journalists without a professional qualification have become attached to one of the key values of journalistic culture – autonomy.

7.4　Lack of shared understanding

From the above, it is clear that it is a common practice for advertisers to try and change copy to better reflect themselves; or to threaten to withdraw advertising if they don't like the way the company has been portrayed in the media. This attitude indicates a general lack of understanding among companies within the ICT sector, and perhaps even across South Africa's economy. Schreiner says that many companies do not have a clear understanding of how the media work, which goes some way towards explaining why advertisers place pressure on companies to cover them in a more positive light. However, it also becomes apparent that there are several types of different understandings of how media works and what protocols are in place among journalists, public relations practitioners and advertisers.

> "Firms in this country don't devote enough funds and attention to the media, they kind of see them when they create damage, but they don't see them as an overall reputation [tool].... I think communication is not something that has been seen as something that needs to be go and managed at a board level, it's something that needs to be managed on a lower level, and then it becomes an operating tool and no longer a business tool, there is a always a dislocation between the communications and business strategy... and the moment you've got a dislocation, you've got a problem. I mean, you can go to some people, companies, and ask them what is their company's business strategy, I mean they will tell you they don't know. So how can you go and execute a communications strategy if you don't know the business strategy of your company?" (Schreiner, 2008)

Journalists who contribute to ITWeb's publications and cover the ICT sector agree that the companies they cover do not have enough of an understanding of how the media operates. Perry says although some companies have outstanding media relations people or departments who understand how the media, and ICT media in particular, works, and what the media's purpose is, other companies do not.

> "Others consider trade media like ourselves to be an industry mouthpiece that exists purely to serve as a vehicle for the marketing hype and hogwash that these companies spew out. The latter resent any attempts at editorial independence, honest reporting, or valid criticism and analysis by journalists and publications, and attempt to control what is said about them, when, and where." (Perry, 2008)

Perry's view, enunciated through an email in response to questions for the purpose of this paper, is echoed by Andric. She says ICT companies' understanding of how the press cover the industry is "very vague, if at all". "Most companies seem to think that newsrooms work like a different version of their marketing departments, and have no idea of the principles of journalism," says Andric. Scala adds "very few companies covered by journalists in the sector have any insight into the intricacies of an ICT newsroom". Freelance journalist Jackson, who was involved in the supplement, argues "perhaps, the 'good' companies know how to influence indirectly without meddling". Another freelance journalist, Alberts, calls the industry's understanding of the sector "tolerable". "Independence is not always fully appreciated, but a blatant disregard or crude misunderstanding has been the exception. The most common problem in my experience has been an expectation to see copy, sometimes even to vet it," says Alberts in response to an emailed survey in 2010. Alberts works within the IT industry and was previously employed by ITWeb but left prior to the case study under review by this paper.

Jones, who worked in ITWeb's newsroom at the time the supplement was published, points out that companies also do not understand what qualities an article should have in order to justify its newsworthiness:

> "Most IT companies don't have an idea of how newsrooms work. In many instances, IT companies expect coverage of issues that have no relation to news, and in others, IT companies believe they deserve to be the top story. The ICT industry in general, seems to believe that awards and new products are news worthy stories – and are flabbergasted when we, as journalists, tell them its not." (Jones, 2010)

The anonymous respondent conceded that some companies understand the media, however, these groups seem to be limited larger listed groups with professional PR departments or agencies. Czernowalow adds it is not usual to cover a company that understands how the media works.

> "It largely depends on the experience and professionalism of their spokespeople, or agency hired to represent them. Large corporates tend to hire better PR agencies, as they have more resources and – often – a stricter adherence to corporate governance. However, few, if any, seem to have a complete and realistic view of how newsrooms are run on the whole." (Czernowalow, 2011).

The suggestion that companies should hire public relations teams, or build in-house capacity, as a liaison between the media and themselves is interesting. It certainly indicates that there is a need for a better understanding of the media, its processes and internal unwritten rules.

However, appointing an external practitioner to handle this task could have the effect of removing companies from being in contact with the media, and keeping them at arms' length, which would negatively affect the content and independence of articles. Journalists who are not able to speak to the CEO directly run the risk of simply publishing a press release – often a watered down or flowery explanation of what is often actually happening. Instead, companies need to rather be educated as to how the media works, through frank and open engagement with key role players. It is not clear from this research whether this is an issue that is limited to the ICT sector, to the economy as a whole, or to other sub-sectors of the economy. This is perhaps an area that requires further study. The research does suggest, however, that there is a lack of skilled capacity among corporate communicators, which could be an area for future study.

As has been seen, there are very different views of how the media is perceived, with the bulk of advertisers viewing the press as an extension of their marketing department. This is seen on a regular basis by journalists within the field, who receive requests to change copy that go beyond simple factual changes. However, this area could be mediated by corporate communications practitioners, assuming that they have an understanding of the role media play within society.

7.5   Credibility

Advertisers changing copy will invariably lead to editorial content that has clearly not been independently produced, especially if this situation spirals out of control. As a result, publications will lose credibility, which will have a knock on effect on advertising revenue as advertisers will not want to be associated with a publication that lacks credibility, and has a dwindling reader base because no one believes its content. This is an ironic consequence of the reliance that publications place on advertising revenue to remain afloat, which in turn leaves publications open to interference by those advertisers, as the critical political economists explained earlier in this research paper (Herman & Chomsky, 1998; Schudson, 1993). Bakker says the reliance on advertising can cause publishers to give in and pander to advertisers' requirements, which will impact on editorial integrity.

Jovanovic says issues of credibility and integrity do come up in the sector, and companies often expect ITWeb and its publications to simply publish press releases verbatim. The company has sometimes been forced into making concessions, she concedes. However, as advertising influence is seen as normal within the industry, advertisers do not necessarily see this as harming content, perhaps because interference with editorial copy is expected within the sector. Hodgkinson expects advertisers try and tweak a publication's content to suit their own agenda, and does not view that sort of behaviour as reducing the credibility of a publication (2008). However, says Hodgkinson, credibility is vital when deciding whether to

advertise or not, especially as a smaller company that cannot always afford to place advertisements in some of the mainstream publications such as *Financial Mail* and *Business Day*. "If the publication cannot be seen to be credible then we're wasting our ad spend and I would rather reserve that spend and supplement it with something else and pay more and put it into a credible publication, so it is an important thing."

Hodgkinson does not view articles as being "gospel" and will temper what is printed with what industry is saying:

> "I know that there are some viewpoints that are being represented there and it's up to me to make up my mind about what I feel about that viewpoint and in that regard I will engage other publications to gain other viewpoints and I will see what my network looks like on the ground. For me to say that it lowers my view of the credibility would do that publication an injustice – it doesn't all. It's how life happens! We like to think it doesn't happen but from time to time it's going to happen." (Hodgkinson, 2008)

Hodgkinson, who advertises with *Brainstorm* and also expects his public relations company to regularly submit opinion pieces to *ITWeb* for publication, views *Brainstorm* as a credible publication. When measured against its peers, ITWeb as a group is "more credible," he says.

However, Hodgkinson is one voice speaking in isolation and – as far as I am aware – there has never been a comprehensive study looking into whether niche ICT publications are credible or not. One mooted study was scrapped before it even got off the ground because of resistance from within the public relations sector, which flies in the face of statements by journalists that the companies that employ such firms have a better understanding of the sector than those who go it alone. Schreiner says Media Tenor SA tried to undertake a study that would examine the credibility of publications focussing on the ICT sector in 2003, but the research never got off the ground because of resistance from public relations firms. Interestingly, large IT companies in the sector such as Siemens, Business Connexion, and T-Systems were keen on the concept of researching whether there is a blur between advertisements and editorial within the sector because advertising spend was going towards publications in the arena, says Schreiner. However, he says, the concept met with resistance from public relations companies, which often act as marketing firms within the sector as many are small entities. The companies would not take part in the study, and Schreiner attributes this to a fear from the public relations companies that the ICT sector would discover that some public relations or advertising companies are receiving kickbacks for their advertisement spend. Resistance from the public relations sector surprised Schreiner, as he had expected such research to be to the benefit of reputable organisations, which could then benefit from the outcome and charge more. The research also experienced resistance from within the publishing industry, but

Schreiner says this only came from publications that were already not viewed as being above board in terms of making a clear distinction between advertising and editorial.

> "I expected that the publications would not be willing [to support the research], that made sense, but there were publications that actually would have supported it. And I would basically say in any case that these were the publications that have written objective and unbiased coverage. And I got objections from publications, that in the first place, were not above board, that's pretty much of a no-brainer." (Schreiner, 2008)

However, whether a story in a niche publication is viewed as credible or not could be a moot point because the coverage companies receive through these publications is read by their peers, all of whom would have in-depth knowledge of the company, unlike the broader industry, which may not usually read niche publications, says Schreiner.

> "The decisions about which companies get contracts is done at a board level, those people don't read IT magazines, they read *Business Day*, they read *Sunday Times* and others, so if the coverage in those publications is favourable towards Gijima then the board is more likely to go and say, ya, you know, let us go and consider Gijima." (Schreiner, 2008).

Schreiner points out it is more difficult to get coverage of a product or company in a mainstream publication than one specifically focussed on the ICT sector.

7.5.1 Credibility of supplements

Although journalists fight hard to achieve editorial independence and will not allow non factual changes to copy, as has been illustrated earlier, the same rules do not apply when it comes to supplements. Supplements are viewed in the same light as advertorial and are considered to have been bought by the advertiser sponsoring the publication. As a result, say several journalists interviewed during the course of this research, it is acceptable for advertisers to change copy, and to have the final say over what gets published, and what doesn't. This viewpoint also applies to *Brainstorm's* special focus supplements, even through these are sold and marketed as independent reports and should be free of any advertising influence. Jackson says different rules apply to supplements, advertorials or sponsored pieces.

Scala conceded in 2008 that the magazine does not always succeed in maintaining its independence when putting together special focus independent supplements. However, the concept is that the client covers the cost of the supplement and *Brainstorm* will then "come in and write independent editorial, and by independent I mean we will come in, all guns blazing;

we will write about the good and the bad but effectively at the end of the day the client has a say in what we write". Scala says there are a few grey areas, such as the client receiving the copy back to check for factual accuracy. "The moment the client tries to change more than that, he tries to maybe change the writing style, or change the angle, we'll then say to them, that's fine, you can do that, we will then change it from being an independent report to a sponsored profile." Scala says, however, that this is rarely the case as companies recognises the importance of the profile being independent, and that if something is labelled as a sponsored profile, it is less likely to be read.

> "Generally I think clients understand what we're selling upfront and understand that we at the end of the day have final say in terms of what is printed and what isn't, and it's a great reading, it's something that we run virtually every month and clients absolutely love it. We have clients who keep coming back for more. You know, we've had a few instances where clients have been unhappy, and I say unhappy in inverted commas, because there was maybe a perception that they were going to receive something like a sponsored profile where they would have complete autonomy over the product and we've then explained to them why we write it independently and …. So they've understood that and gone with us. But they come back for more, you know they'll come back in six months later and they'll do another supplement with us but of course this time understanding the process." (Scala, 2008)

However, two years later after moving into a corporate communications position, Scala has a different view on the sacrosanct nature of supplements. In response to the emailed questionnaire, Scala says he would make an exception to advertisers wanting to change copy when it comes to editorial for the special focus supplements. He views this copy as being paid for: "Then it's an advertorial and I couldn't care less what the 'client' changes or does with the content since they are paying for it. With standard editorial, companies have little if any say in what gets published." Moreover, editorial and advertising have little to do with one another. The two are separate entities and should therefore be managed very differently". Scala's change of viewpoint can be attributed to the fact that he now works in corporate communications and is perhaps more reflective of how corporations view supplements than how he felt as an editor two years ago.

Andric says companies assume that, because they are the client, they can dictate to some extent, a situation that is more pronounced when it comes to special focuses, or supplements:

> "The special focus was a different story – every company that was paying for the profile demanded changes, and most of the changes were allowed by the publisher, regardless of the factual accuracy. For example, Microsoft wanted to change my editor's note when

I wrote that it was one of the largest software companies in the world and they felt they were the biggest. In fact, at the time, SAP was bigger worldwide." (Andric, 2010)

Andric points out that although the hard questions are asked by journalists when compiling the special focus supplements, there are sometimes tacit understandings that some things are not to be discussed. In these instances, she says, the controversial issue is left out rather than glossed over in the publication. In addition, clients often run over deadlines in terms of returning copy, and the sales staff are under pressure to ensure that the supplement meets budget in terms of advertising sales, adds Andric. The client around which the supplement is focussed may also have a tendency to assume that, because it is a supplement, they have more sway over editorial content than would be the case with other titles within ITWeb, she notes. Andric says although requests for changes are frustrating, and should be limited to factual changes only, she has experienced times when changes were made for the sake of satisfying a client who had bought into a special focus, or supplement.

"Editorial and journalistic integrity is vital, not only in terms of ideology, but to the commercial success of a publication. If every client feels that they can make all of the changes they want because they are paying for it, that calls into question whether everything else the publication, *Brainstorm*, or the publishing house, ITWeb, publishes, and that could easily lead to a ripple effect where other advertisers look elsewhere for honest publications." (Andric, 2010)

However, while independent special focus publications linked to *Brainstorm* are marketed as editorially independent, advertisers do not necessarily view them as something that can be trusted verbatim. Hodgkinson rates supplements higher than advertorials when it comes to credibility. However, he says:

"I'm not sure whether I'm going to trust it verbatim, um, because at the end of the day it's about that publication interviewing key people inside that organisation and it's very easy to represent whatever they want to, but certainly there is the publication's view or aspect that they are including into that special focus, so that's something that does influence me in reading a company profile and perhaps this for you would be the indicator. I would read a company profile before I read the rest of the magazine." (Hodgkinson, 2008)

However, despite being viewed in a less than favourable light, supplements do have value. Hodgkinson explains that he is interested in supplements because it is a "body of work dedicated to the entire company". The actual magazine he would just page through looking for articles of interest. "The company profile, because understanding the landscape is important to me, that's something that I would read in a more amount of detail. I would want to gain a lot

more clarity on a company itself." Hodgkinson explains that supplements provide key points that he may not have known about that company before. "Things that I could potentially engage them on from a partnership perspective... A business lead to some extent, or a business warning, you know – those people are something to think about."

As has been seen, supplements are not viewed as credible, independent copy. Rather, they are seen as paid-for vehicles for advertisers to use to get their message across. While they work as an additional source of revenue for companies, the fact that neither the freelance journalists nor advertisers take the content seriously is a cause for concern. It is interesting to note previous statements by Scala, Jovanovic and Berman as to the independence of the supplements, and how that makes them credible, contrasts with the journalists, and Scala's current views, that supplements are a free-for-all area and that advertisers can do as they wish. This raises the question of whether people in top positions within ITWeb seriously believe the supplements are credible, or whether this is the company line.

8. Conclusion

Press in South Africa are not immune to pressure from advertisers as, like other publications in similar political environments around the world, the local media rely on advertising for revenue. Withdrawal of advertising spend and a dwindling revenue pool places local publications under pressure, which Motloung attested to in 2007 when she wrote of the large array of publications in SA, and the fact that many publications were shutting their doors because they could not generate advertising spend. ITWeb is battles against a plethora of niche publications as well as mainstream titles, for a slice of the advertising pie, a fact that came out through interviews with Jovanovic and Berman in 2008. There are two consequences to this battle for advertising spend:

1. Advertisers have a greater influence over what is published than they should,
2. Publications seek ways of adding to their advertising revenue.

ITWeb chose to bolster *Brainstorm's* revenue stream by adding a special focus product to its offering, thus ensuring that the entire magazine was sustainable and made a profit. Ironically, in ITWeb's case, by adding supplements to its range of publications, the company placed even more reliance on advertising and was, as a result, more susceptible to demands from advertisers to exert influence over editorial copy. Advertising interference is seen as the norm within the ICT industry, as all the interview subjects said that they had received requests for changes to copy. Within the main publications at ITWeb, such changes are not allowed and the company will defend its editorial integrity. However, while the special focus supplements are punted as independent reviews of a company, neither the company being profiled nor the freelance journalists believe this to be the case. In this case, GijimaAst clearly felt that it owned the publication, because it was paying for it, and could request whatever changes it wanted. Those changes were minor and indicated that the company has no understanding of how publishing at niche magazines works, as it placed its corporate image above the desire to news values and factual accuracy.

That GijimaAst does not understand the industry is no surprise; the respondents indicated that dealing with companies that understand how the media works is the exception, rather than the norm. Interviewees indicated that companies with a public relations or corporate communications department generally have a better idea of how the media works. However, what is surprising is that GijimaAst has a public relations company to which it outsources media-related issues. That company was not involved in the supplement, as the emails were sent to Andric directly from within GjimaAst, but should have been able to advise GijimaAst on how to deal with the publication process. Whether the public relations company should have been guiding the process is not known, as it did not form part of the scope of this research. However, Schreiner's comments about public relations companies trying to quash research into

credibility in the sector are interesting, and this is perhaps an area for further research, as it could indicate that such companies are not doing their jobs.

Some of the journalists involved in producing the special focus under review in this research noted that different rules apply to supplements. Andric said there is a tacit understanding that some items will not be covered if they are harmful. Scala initially indicated that the supplements do not shy away from the difficult questions, but then later – after leaving ITWeb – changed his tune and said that supplements were paid for copy, and advertisers could do as they pleased with the copy. Jackson conceded that different rules apply to supplements than the rules that usually apply to requests for changes to editorial copy. This indicates that journalists do not see the supplements in the same light as either Berman or Jovanovic, who both said that supplements are not sugarcoated publications . Berman specifically stated that supplements that are no more than paid for advertorial and that are not independent do not deserve to be cited as such on the front cover of the special focus.

Yet, because of the pressure GijimaAst placed on ITWeb, and the financial risk the company ran, it was forced to make concessions that it may not otherwise have done. Jovanovic points out that the dispute dragged publication past the deadline date, and had GijimaAst withdrawn its sponsorship, ITWeb would have been left with the responsibility of paying expenses and coverings costs it will have incurred. Andric points out how difficult it would have been for ITWeb to go to court to get GijimaAst to honour is contract. As a result, the company made concessions instead of taking the moral high ground, which would have been excessively expensive.

Interestingly, the journalists interviewed during this research had little or no professional journalism training. Yet despite this, most of them had clear views on when changes were allowed, and when not. Generally, with two exceptions, the journalists were emphatically against changes being made by the subject, and expressed a strong desire to be autonomous and independent from the subject. Editors interviewed during the course of this research were very anti changes, or copy being vetted. As a result, this ethos will flow throughout the newsroom. However, professionalism at freelance level must have come about as a result of learning passed along through interactions with editors and other journalists, perhaps while on assignment or through social events, as the freelance journalists are rarely, if ever, in the office long enough to be close to the production process, unless they have prior experience in a newsroom with strong editorial integrity, that is passed down from the top. This is an area that could be further examined through additional research.

Perhaps the most telling finding was that supplements, or other paid-for copy, are not held up to the same level of journalistic professionalism as other articles. This indicates that they are nothing more than an additional source of revenue for the publication, something that is

accepted by companies and journalists. This begs the question as to how the reading public is protected from copy that that been influenced by an advertiser, and is therefore less credible. One cannot assume that all readers are as astute as Hodgkinson and, as such, the entire subject of credibility within supplements at business publications needs to be examined in much further depth. Cowling, Hadland and Tabi Tabe's research into the *Star's* production of supplement revealed, very worrying, a lack of understanding among readers that the copy was, in fact, paid for (2008).

As can be seen, publications' need to find new ways to gain advertising spend as they compete against each other for a share of a shrinking revenue pool bears out critical political economy theories that this makes publications beholden to advertisers in the sense that demands will be placed on them to change copy. This is particularly prevalent when it comes to the new vehicles such as supplements. Advertisers and journalists alike view these products as something that belongs to he advertiser, and this makes it acceptable for changes of any nature to be made. While journalists generally adhere to values of autonomy and editorial independence, this does not necessarily extend to copy contained within supplements. As a result, the credibility of these vehicles is drawn into question. However, it is understandable that publications such as ITWeb would defend their credibility, as the supplements would not have any value for the advertiser otherwise. Consequently, this grey area of the publishing sector, while key to the sustainability of publications, is questionable as an editorial product. Yet, publications need to find ways of sustaining themselves within a free-market context, or face closing their doors. For as long as this is the case, the developmental issues facing South Africa and the need to broaden media access and coverage of the poor will continue to be marginalised in the quest for profit.

9. Appendix A

GijimaAST proposal

ITWeb Brainstorm publishes a 'Special Focus' independent report every month, which takes an in-depth look at the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry in South Africa. By its very nature, each report focuses on the dominant players within the competitive ICT market place and delves into business models, corporate strategies, technology offerings and drivers for the future.

Based on the success of the independent projects in the past, ITWeb Brainstorm compiles every report using the industry's top journalists and award-winning photographers.

ITWeb Brainstorm would like to propose featuring GijimaAST in a future 'Special Focus' supplement that will take a hard look at GijimaAST's technology offerings and business focus areas, including outsourcing services, training, customised IT solutions as well as ICT solutions integration and convergence.

However, we don't want to concentrate all our efforts on technology alone, and would prefer to look at innovation at GijimaAST, the company's contribution within the context of the South African economy, and how technology will impact the way we work and play every day.

The independent report will include case studies, thought leadership and insightful trends articles with a distinct GijimaAST flavour.

Where is GijimaAST taking the world of software, hardware, communications, development and innovation? What does the future hold for each and every one of us? What technologies does GijimaAST envisage will enhance and further change the way we communicate in the next five years?

Furthermore, the independent report will focus on a number of GijimaAST's key business drivers, including its future growth strategy based on business goals, priorities and customer demand. The report will also look at the various focus areas at GijimaAST, including corporate governance, BEE policy and a commitment to transformation, as well as technology-centric areas including software, hardware, business applications and services.

The independent supplement will also encourage participation from GijimaAST's partners and customers to further add credibility to the report, while adding an 'issues driven' feel to the final report.

Editorial policy

In an effort to ensure the credibility, and hence the readership, of the 'Special Focus' reports, the principle of editorial independence is strictly adhered to. Journalists and editors do not take account of who advertises, and do their research and writing with objectivity and independence. Likewise, advertising does not guarantee an interview opportunity. While we aim not to waste anyone's time or money - least of all our own - when an interview or photography is arranged, it is at the journalist and editor's discretion whether of not they proved suitable for use. Advertising buys an advertisement along with access to an interested and influential readership. Editorial coverage and positioning remains independent of any such advertising, and any coincidence will remain just that.

The use of any press release submissions is at the discretion of the journalists and editor involved. Consideration of any submissions received after the submission deadline cannot be guaranteed.

9.1 Appendix B

Proposal to prospective partners for the supplement:

ITWeb Brainstorm will publish a 'Special Focus' independent report in November 2006, to be distributed with that edition of Brainstorm magazine, which will take an in-depth look at GijumaAST's business model, corporate strategy and drivers for the future.

Based on the enormous success of the 'Special Focus' projects in the past, ITWeb Brainstorm will compile the GijimaAst report using the industry's top journalists and photographers.

The independent report will focus on a number of GijimaAST's key business drivers, including the company's vision and plans for the future, its technology offerings and solutions, and its view on trends in its sectors. The report will also examine the company's accomplishments in its sectors and explore the role partners have played in the successful implementation of the company's strategy.

As a valued GijimaAST partner, we would like to encourage you to participate in this independent project by supporting the supplement with advertising.

9.3 Appendix C

Emailed questionnaire to journalists

Career history:

1.   What is your current occupation, and with which publication?
2.   What was your career progression to date, i.e. where have you worked, for how long, and in what capacity?
3.   Do you have any professional qualifications?
4.   Please outline your qualifications if yes to 3.

Newsroom experience

5.   Do ICT companies have an understanding of how newsrooms that cover the sector are run?
6.   Please explain your answer to 5.
7.   Have you ever had a company try and change copy?
8.   Under what circumstances and what was the end result?
9.   What was your reaction?
10.   Why did you react the way you did in 9?
11.   What is your newsroom's editorial policy in terms of dealing with changes that have been requested?
12.   Under what circumstances may changes be allowed?
13.   Do you think this is the correct response?
14   Why?
15.   What is your view on companies who are advertisers requesting changes to editorial copy?

Were you at ITWeb during 2006?

If yes, please continue:

16.   Did you take part in writing copy for the GijimaAst Special Focus that was published in November 2006?
17.   If yes – what was your response to the requested changes from GijimaAst?
18.   Please explain 17 above explaining what changes were requested.
19.   If no to 17 – do you remember the supplement and what happened pre-publication?
20.   If yes to 17 – can you please detail what happened, and your reaction thereto?
21.   What were your thoughts on the matter?
22.   Do advertisers try and influence copy at niche publications more than at mainstream publications?
23.   Why would you say that?
24.   Any further comments?

10. Bibliography

African National Congress. (2010). *Media Transformation, Ownership And Diversity*. Retrieved January 5, 2011 from the World Wide Web: http://www.anc.org.za/docs/discus/2010/mediad.pdf.

Ad Review & OMD South Africa. (2010). South Africa & SADC Media Facts 2010. Retrieved December 17, 2010 from the World Wide Web: http://www.omdmedia.co.za/samediafacts.asp.

Barker, G. (1998) In *Mass Media: Towards the Millennium*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp. 267 – 288.

Benjamin, C. (2010). *Advertising Suffers As Companies Cut Back During Recession*. Retrieved January 17, 2011 from the World Wide Web: http://allafrica.com/stories/201004060097.html.

Berger, G. (1999). Publishing for the People: the Alternative Press 1980-1999. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 533 – 556.

Bleske, G. L. In Berkowitz, D. (Ed). (1997). *Social Meanings of News*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 223 – 231.

Breed, W. In Berkowitz, D. (Ed.). (1997). *Social Meanings of News*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 296 – 311.

Bullard, B. (2004). *Engine Trouble*. Retrieved October 10, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.themedia.co.za/article.aspx?articleid=133101&area=/media_columnistsoffline/.

Business Monitor International. (200) *The South African Information Technology Report 2008.* Retrieved October 1, 2008 from the World Wide Web: http://www.businessmonitor.com/it/southafrica.html.

Campbell, K. (2008). *Advertiser Influence on News Media: A Literature Review*. Retrieved December 18, 2010 from the World Wide Web: http://members.cox.net/kellyecampbell/portfolio/litrev.pdf.

Claasen, L. (2006). *Shedding the Past: GijimaAst*. Retrieved October 28, 2008 from the World Wide Web: http://secure .financialmail.co.za/06/1-6/moneyinvest.gmoney.html.

Cowling, L. (2004, September). The rising sense of unease. *Rhodes Journalism Review 24*, pp. 34 - 35.

Cowling, L., Hadland, A. and Tabi Tabe, F. (2008). The 'Third Arm': New Forms of Paid-for Content in the South African Print Media. *Equid Novi African Journalism Studies*. Vol 29 (1), pp 100 – 117

Curran, J. In Curran, J & Gurevitch, M. (Eds.). (2000) *Mass media and society*. Arnold: London. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 1 – 33.

DeBeer, A (Ed.). (1998). *Mass Media: Towards the Millennium*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Denzin, N & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage: Thousand Oaks.

Diederichs, P & DeBeer, A. (1998) In *Mass Media: Towards the Millennium*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp. 85 – 116.

Dlamini, N. (2008). *Doing Business at the Financial Mail: The operating relationship between specialised print media and advertisers*. Retrieved December 10, 2010 from the World Wide Web: http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/7289

Dramat, N. (2007, September). Professionalism and Resistance. *Rhodes Journalism Review 27*, pp. 63 – 64.

Duncan, J. (2003). *Another journalism is possible: Critical challenges for the media in South Africa*. Harold Wolpe Lecture Series, 30 October 2003. Retrieved 14 July 2006 from the World Wide Web: www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs.default.asp?11,22,5,341

Hadland, A., Cowling, L. & Tabi Tate, B.F. (2007). *Advertising in the News: Paid for Content and the South African Print Media*. HSRC Press: Cape Town.

Haffajee, F. (2007, September). Enough now. *The Media*, p. 52.

Harber, A. (2004). *State warns of bottom-line threat.* Retrieved October, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.businessday.co.za/Articles/TarkArticle.aspx?ID=1163895.

Harber, A. (2006) *The Media Industry's Naughty Little Secret*. Retrieved November 6, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.big.co.za/wordpress/2006/11/25/the-media-industrys-naughty-little-secrets/.

Harber, A. (2007a) *ANC media policy - the sting in the tale*, Retrieved October 14, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.theharbinger.co.za/wordpress/2007/10/11/anc-media-policy-the-sting-in-the-tale/.

Harber, A. (2007b) *Not in a month of Sundays is this right*. Retrieved October 24, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/topstories.aspx?ID=BD4A594366.

Herman, E.S. & Chomsky, N. (1998). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Pantheon Books: New York. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 131 – 165.

Irex. (2008). Media Sustainability Index. Retrieved December 17, 2010 from the World Wide Web: http://www.irex.org/system/files/Africa%20MSI%202008%20Full%20Version.pdf

ITWeb. (2008). *Mvelapanda invests in ITWeb*. Retrieved January 17, 2011 from the World Wide Web: http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39150:mvelapanda-invests-in-itweb

ITWeb. (2009). *About ITWeb*. Retrieved January 23, 2010 from the World Wide Web: http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13913&Itemid=124.

Jackson, G.S. (1993). *Breaking the Story: The South African Press*. Westview Press Inc: Boulder. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 557 – 580.

Jamieson, K.H. & Campbell, K.K. (2001). *The Interplay of Influence: News Advertising, Politics and the Mass Media*. Wadsworth Thomson Learning: USA. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 232 – 274.

Kew, J. (2007) *Johncom advertising growth may fall to single digits*. Retrieved October 14, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.moneyweb.co.za/mw/view/mw/en/page39?oid=162222&sn=Detail.

Lloyd, T. (2000, October 27). Moving from Fringe to Mainstream. *Future Company*, pp. 36 – 37.

Mawson, N. (2006a). *GijimaAst reports profit turnaround*. Retrieved November 5, 2008 from the World Wide Web:http://196.30.227.9/sections/financial/2006/0609271032.asp.

Mawson, N. (2006b). *GijimaAst gears for growth*. Retrieved November 5, 2008 from the World Wide Web: http://196.30.227.9/sections/financial/2006/0609281032.asp.

Mawson, N. (2009). *Going public*. Retrieved January 6, 2011 from the World Wide Web: http://www.brainstormmag.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3693:going-public&catid=85:case-study&Itemid=124.

Mawson, N. (2010). *Datacentrix seeks to fill gap*. Retrieved January 25, 2011 from the World Wide Web: http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37496:datacentrix-seeks-to-fill-gap&Itemid=38

McBurney, D.H. (2001). *Research Methods*. Wadsworth: California.

McChesney, R. (2000). *Rich media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times.* New York: The New Press.

McChesney, R. (2001a). *Policing the Thinkable*. From the World Wide Web: http://www.opendemocracy.com/debates/article-8-24-56.jsp. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 85 – 88.

McChesney, R. (2001b). *Global media, neoliberalism & imperialism in International Socialist Review.* Aug/Sep 2001. Retrieved May 22, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/McChesney/GlobalMedia_Neoliberalism.html.

McCleod, D. (2000). Expanding Online a Long Way from Belgrade. Retrieved May 18, 2000 from the World Wide Web: http://www.fm.co.z/0/0317/covopin/cover7.html.

McQuail, D. (1987). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. Sage: London. Reprinted from Reading the Media GRAD 502, 2007, pp 37 – 50.

Motloung, M. (2007) *South Africa's Magazine Minefield*. Retrieved October 18, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=318502&area=/insight/insight__national/.

Murdock, G. In Marris, P. & Thornham, S. (Eds) 2000. *Media Studies: A Reader, 2nd Edition*. New York University Press: New York. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 71 – 84.

Nolan, D. (2009). *Rethinking Journalism Culture and Authority: Beyond 'Professionalism'*. Retrieved 18 December 2010 from the World Wide Web: http://www.cpe.qut.edu.au/conferences/2009/anzca/proceedings/Nolan_ANZCA09.pdf.

O'Reilly, A. (2006). *Keep believing in the new South Africa: Are we about to witness an ideological shift in the ANC? I don't think so*. Retrieved 8 May 2011 from the World Wide Web: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/sir-anthony-oreilly-keep-believing-in-the-new-south-africa-421399.html

Pahad, E. (2001) *Remarks: State of the media in South Africa*. Retrieved November 5, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.gcis.gov.za/media/minister/010601media.htm.

Ramaphosa, C (1999, May 14). The Media, the Editors and the Owners. *The Financial Mail*, p. 30. Reprinted from Reading the Media GRAD 502, 2007, pp 37 – 50.

Schudson, M. (1993). *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion*. London: Routeledge. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 166 – 186.

Schudson, M. (2000). *The Sociology of News Production Revisited (Again)* in Curran, J and Gurevitch, M. 2000 Media *and Society*. London: Sage

Shoemaker, P.J. In Berkowitz, D. (Ed.) (1997). *Social Meaning of News*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 208 – 213.

Shoemaker, P, and Reese, S (1996). 'Influences on Content from Outside of Media Organisations' in *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content,* by Reese and Shoemaker, New York: Longman.

Shoemaker, P. and Reese, S.D. (1996). Mediating the Message. Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content. New York: Longman.

Soloski, J. In Berkowitz, D. (Ed.) (1997). *Social Meanings of News*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 312 – 320.

South African Human Rights Commission. (2000) *Faultlines: Inquiry into Racism in the Media*. Retrieved October 10, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.polity.org.za/polity/govdocs/reports/hrc/racism-media-00.pdf.

Sparks, C. (2009). South African media in transition. Journal of African Media Studies, Volume 1 Number 2, pp 195 – 220.

Stansfield, R. (1982). *The Dartnell Advertising Manager's Handbook*. The Dartnell Corporation: Chicago.

Stones, L. (2006). *GijimaAst bounces back into profit*. Retrieved October 28, 2008 from the World Wide Web: http://www.businessday.co.z/PrintFriendly.aspx?ID=BD4A279291.

Tomaselli, K.G. (1997). *Ownership and control in the South African print media: Black empowerment after apartheid 1990-1997*, Equid Novi, 18(1).

Ueckermann, H. (2006) *Serving two masters: Journalists struggling with commercial pressures*. Retrieved October 10, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://www.journalism.co.za/wits-journalism/sercing-two-masters-journalists-struggling-with-commercial-pres-2.html

Vise, D. (2005). *The Google Story: Inside the hottest business, media and technology success of our time*. Macmillan: London.

Vegter, I. (2005). *Black knight Gijima comes to rescue*. Retrieved December, 12 2010 from the World Wide Web:
http://www.brainstormmag.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1114&catid=85:case-study&Itemid=124

White, D. M. In Berkowitz, D. (Ed.) (1997). *Social Meanings of News*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. Reprinted from Journalism Studies A GRAD 432, 2004, pp 214 – 222.

Interviewees:

Alberts, C. Freelance journalist. Electronic interview conducted on October 26, 2010.

Anonymous. Freelance journalist. Electronic interview conducted on November 8, 2010.

Andric, M. Special focus editor for *Brainstorm* supplements. Personal interview conducted on August 10, 2007.

Andric, M. Special focus editor for *Brainstorm* supplements. Electronic interview conducted on October 28, 2010.

Andric, M. Special focus editor for *Brainstorm* supplements. Personal interview conducted on January 5, 2011.

Bakker, B. Freelance publisher and veteran IT journalist. Personal interview conducted on February 10, 2008.

Berman, C. *Brainstorm* business development manager. Personal interview conducted on February 6, 2008.

Czernowalow, M. ITWeb online editor. Electronic interview conducted on January 5, 2011.

Hodgkinson, G. Mint MD and ITWeb advertiser. Personal interview conducted on February 12, 2008.

Jackson, D. Freelance journalist. Electronic interview conducted on October 26, 2010.

Jones, C. Online telecoms editor: ITWeb. Electronic interview conducted on November 30, 2010.

Jovanovic, R. ITWeb editorial director. Personal interview conducted on February 6, 2008.

Perry, S. Brainstorm editor. Electronic interview conducted on November 11, 2010.

Scala, G. Acting editor: *Brainstorm*. Personal interview conducted on February 5, 2008.

Scala, G. Acting editor: *Brainstorm*. Personal interview conducted on November 23, 2010.

Schreiner, W. MD: Media Tenor SA. Personal interview conducted on February 4, 2008.

Email sources:

Bodasing, S. GijimaAst. Marketing and communications manager: GijimaAst. Electronic communication sent to Mia Andric on October 10, 2006.

Bodasing, S. GijimaAst. Marketing and communications manager: GijimaAst. Electronic communication sent to Mia Andric on October 17, 2006.

Bodasing, S. GijimaAst. Marketing and communications manager: GijimaAst. Electronic communication sent to ITWeb sales director Robert Mace on October 17, 2006.

Bodasing, S. GijimaAst, Marketing and communications manager: GijimaAst. Electronic communication sent to Mia Andric on October 20, 2006.

Mnyango, T. Group market development and strategy executive: GijmaAst. Electronic communication sent to Mia Andric on October 20, 2006.

Other World Wide Web sources:

http://www.brianstormmag.co.za

http://www.gijima.com

http://www.guma.co.za

http://www.itweb.co.za

http://www.moneyweb.co.za

http://www.sarad.co.za

http://www.statssa.gov.za