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The Rise and Fall of ThisDay Newspaper : The Significance of Advertising to Its Demise

Bassey, Eno Abasiubong

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the rise and fall of *ThisDay* newspaper by examining its strategies to break into the South African media market. The study places *ThisDay* in the context of certain factors of the political economy of the South African media and examines how the dynamics of advertising contributed to the collapse of the newspaper. By analysing perspectives from Bagdikian (1983) among others, that the success and failure of the media depends on its success or failure to attract advertising revenue. The study examines the specific strategies used by *ThisDay's* management to attract advertising as a key source of revenue to determine how the failure or lack of such strategies could have played a contributory role in the collapse of the newspaper. Among the factors examined is the further consolidation of ownership in the competing media companies. The intricacies and complex relationships that existed between the South African media its owners and advertisers are examined, to determine whether the actions of the competition contributed to *ThisDay*'s failure.

The findings of this study show that *ThisDay's* entry met what was arguably a major need for quality news in South Africa's daily newspaper market; this however, did not prevent its closure. It had to grapple with too many challenges, most of them internal. The underlying reason for most of the problems management encountered was the unavailability of financial resources to run a paper of *ThisDay's* magnitude. However the strategies that its management adopted as well as the business plan were way off the mark. The demise of *ThisDay* newspaper is a loss to South African journalism in two aspects; the industry lost a quality newspaper which greatly improved the level of South African journalism (the quality of which many now say is in a decline). Secondly, its failure will serve as a deterrent to any aspiring entrepreneur who would like to put together a quality product, the perception being that quality newspapers are not profitable. With the demise of *ThisDay* newspaper and recently the *Nova*, it seems that the South African print media environment has closed its doors to new entrants.