

**WHOSE REALITY? CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS POSED BY DEMBARE DOTCOMS TO
THE TRADITIONAL PRACTISE OF FOOTBALL REPORTING IN ZIMBABWE.**

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**WHOSE REALITY? CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS POSED BY DEMBARE
DOTCOMS TO THE TRADITIONAL PRACTISE OF FOOTBALL REPORTING IN
ZIMBABWE**

BY

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**WHOSE REALITY? CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS POSED BY DEMBARE DOTCOMS TO
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Declaration

I, Marcia Kaserera sincerely declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been previously submitted to any other university. Proper citations and acknowledgements in line with the copyright law and ethical requirements have been strictly adhered to in writing the text.

Signed by

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Date

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Certificate of supervision

I hereby certify that I personally supervised this dissertation in accordance with departmental and University's general regulations. On that basis, I confirm this dissertation examinable.

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Date.....

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family, the ‘Kassy’ family who have been my pillar of strength and support system from birth to present day. And to all football fans this is for you.

Acknowledgements

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For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future. Jeremiah 29 vs 11

Abstract

**WHOSE REALITY? CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS POSED BY DEMBARE DOTCOMS TO
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Before the advent of the internet, the mainstream media in Zimbabwe and across the globe, enjoyed the privilege of mediating and interpreting football ‘reality’ to the audiences. This ‘privilege’ to mediate reality and the traditional practice of sports reporting in general, is undeniably under threat in this internet age. Academic studies focusing on the influence of internet sites such as Facebook, have overlooked how internet has affected the sport reporting landscape. This study located in the interpretive prism of qualitative paradigm of research, makes a ‘thick description’ (see Geertz 1973) of Zimbabwe sports journalists’ experiences and perceptions of DeMbare DotComs, a vibrant Facebook page for Dynamos fans. The intention was to find out how DeMbare DotComs, has affected the way sports journalists mediate and interpret football ‘reality’ to the audiences in Zimbabwe. Findings show that social (new) media network sites such as DeMbare DotComs has threatened and affected the traditional practice of football reporting in Zimbabwe. In actual fact sports journalists compete with DeMbare DotComs to break news and ‘scoops’ to the audiences. However, on a positive note DeMbare DotComs has also become a key site for sports diaries to some sports journalists.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

WHOSE REALITY? CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS POSED BY DEMBARE DOTCOMS TO THE TRADITIONAL PRACTISE OF FOOTBALL REPORTING IN ZIMBABWE.

The last decade has seen the explosion in the volume and range of Sports journalism the world over and Zimbabwe is no exception (Price et al 2012). Newspapers and magazines which include *The Herald, Standard, Chronicle, Gemazo, Parade, Daily News, Newsday* and broadcast media such as Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation have given prime recognition to this form of journalism. Crucially, newspapers in the country give up to a third of their editorial space to coverage of sports with newspapers like *Gemazzo* being a complete sports magazine.

The advent of social media in 1994 brought about the expansion of platforms for information access and sharing. Huberman (2009) argues that social media have burst out as category of online communication where individuals can create content, share it and network at an extraordinary rate. Examples of social media are Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and Whatsapp. The advent of the digital age and social media has brought about certain characteristics that have affected the journalism terrain as a whole and more specifically sports journalism.

Football in Zimbabwe is mostly centred on Dynamos Football Club because it is one of the leading teams in the Castle Lager Premier League scoreboard which has won the most league and cup titles. The team also has one of the largest fan base in the country. Be it about matches, players or coaches this team is followed by the country as a whole and this has led to the formation of Facebook pages for the team, DeMbare DotComs, by the team's fans. All the PSL football teams have similar Facebook pages created for their fans. However, DeMbare DotComs is the most followed with the largest number of fans. This page has led to the up to date posting of match fixtures, match updates, scores and updates on the latest news regarding the team as well as fan comments and feedback.

Given that Zimbabwean newspapers such as *The Herald, The Sunday Mail* have been privileged to mediate and interpret football reality to the audiences over the years, it was imperative for this study to establish how alternative platforms such as DeMbare DotComs are affecting or influencing the newspapers' privilege and dominance over mediation of football reality. Of importance also is how the traditional practice of sports reporting has been affected.

The major research question answered by this study is how DeMbare DotComs has affected traditional practices of football reporting in Zimbabwe.

1.2 Background to the Study

Realism has become a contested issue in the postmodern age. Reality has been defined as incorporating the notion of having an objective independent existence or occurring in fact (Shapiro and Lang 1991). However, reality has no clear definition but exists in the consciousness of an individual. The media have taken over the role of representing and dictating reality to the public. Prominent postmodernists such as Hall (1990) and Foucault (1980) agree that realism is a game of power as those who have knowledge and language have the power to dictate what is real or not and what is truth or not.

The media have the power to dictate 'reality' to the public for they are 'all knowing'. They have the knowledge and hence the power. Over the years the media have presided and had the privilege to obscure and interpret reality to the ordinary men. The media have been the link between the outside world and the public. This has led to the public depending on the media for up to date knowledge on aspects of life. In the beginning the mainstream media was the press and broadcast media (radio and television) which had the privilege of disseminating information to the public.

This dependence also occurred in the sports terrain. The public depended on the press and broadcast media for sports news which included fixtures, results and even live broadcast of sports games like football or tennis etc. This meant that newspapers, radio and television defined reality for and to the public all around the world and Zimbabwe is no exception. Newspapers such as *The Herald*, *The Sunday Mail* and magazines like *Gemazo* and *Parade* as well as radio and television stations such as *Radio 2* and *ZBC TV* had the privilege of reporting on sports news pre- and post-independence and the Zimbabwean public depended on them for they were their source of information.

The advent of social media has provided alternative platforms for information for the public. These platforms include Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and Whatsapp. They give the audience access to information and a chance to express their thoughts and feedback which the mainstream media to a larger extent, has failed to do so.

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They have taken over the role of the mainstream media and these platforms are now a global trend and the most used media in the world. The sports journalism terrain is no exception. Audiences are now accessing social media for live match updates, match fixtures, player profiling and latest sport related news. In Zimbabwe such social media platforms that are currently doing this include DeMbare DotComs created in 2011, which provides information to the audiences about Dynamos Football Club. DeMbare DotComs as of June 2013 had 119 376 followers and the statistics increase daily.

This has arguably, brought up challenges and prospects to traditional practices of coverage of football 'reality' as the social media also have the power to shape 'reality'. This research aimed to find out what are the challenges and prospects that have been brought up by DeMbare DotComs to mainstream newspaper coverage of football 'reality' in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Justification of the Study

Boyle (2006) argues that sports journalism has been an area that has been largely absent from research. According to Boyle (2006:1) "it has been largely absent from journalism education and practice and similarly invisible among the growing critical literature from within media and communication studies which examines issues in and around journalism". However, this type of journalism has grown in popularity over the years and greatly matters to newspapers. The explosion of sports journalism that is seen across the media is a clear indication of how important the terrain has become.

As it is under journalism, sports journalism has been practiced using traditional journalism methods and maintains the ethical standards of accuracy and truth. However, some critics have viewed sports journalism as an entertainment terrain and not a 'serious' form of journalism. Sports journalism's reputation has improved over the years and is of grave importance to any society and the Zimbabwean society.

Newspapers such as *The Herald*, *Chronicle*, *The Sunday Mail* and *Daily News* have given prominent coverage to sports journalism and the occupation of 'sports journalist' has become

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separate from any other journalists as it focuses on sports only and some level of expertise in the area is required. Today sports magazines (*Gemazzo*) have been designed to cater for sports journalism only and broadcast sports journalism has also emerged with sports coverage on *ZBC TV* and radio and also allocations of section on the daily news, this showing its importance.

However, the emergence of social media has proved to be a force to be reckoned with in the journalism terrain. Social media has led to a great influence in sports journalism and this influence has been researched on by many scholars in the UK and USA such as Raymond Boyle, Chantay Jordan, Brad Schultz and Mary Lou Schaffer. These scholars have focused on the effects of digitization on sports journalism and some of them have focused on the effects of twitter on sports journalism.

Traditional methods of journalism are being affected by social media. From the introduction of the printing press, to the telegraph to the arrival of the internet, changes in technology have always shaped the nature and delivery of journalism (Conboy 2004).

Expanding on previous researches, this research studied effects of DeMbare DotComs on sports journalism in Zimbabwe specifically on the coverage of football ‘reality’ by newspapers. Zimbabwean soccer has grown in popularity over the years with Dynamos becoming one of the most successful and popular football club in the country. The Castle Lager Premiership league in the last couple of years, has received massive media coverage and this has led to the formation of Facebook pages for the PSL teams that publish all information about the players, coaches, match fixtures and results as well as commentary and feedback from the fans and audience. This counters the traditional way things used to be done, audiences had no access to such media platforms that led to them being eager and anxious to get match fixtures and results from the mainstream press but now DeMbare DotComs has taken over this role and has the power to also shape ‘reality’.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

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Change is an essential factor in journalism. Boyle (2006) argues that technological advancements are at the forefront of major change. However, maintenance of pace is a must regardless of the rapid change that results in difficulties for both journalists and consumers to keep up. The primary purpose of this research was to critically explore how DeMbare DotComs has positively or negatively affected traditional practices of football reporting in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Research Objectives

By the end of this study the researcher must be able to

- Critically explain the challenges and prospects posed by DeMbare DotComs to mainstream football coverage in newspapers.
- Understand how traditional methods of journalism have been affected by DeMbare DotComs.
- Explain how sports journalists perceive DeMbare DotComs and how they employ it in their day to day working practices.

1.6.0 Research Questions

- How has DeMbare DotComs affected mainstream newspapers' mediation of football realism in Zimbabwe?

1.6.1 Sub Research Questions

- How has DeMbare DotComs affected traditional methods of sports journalism in Zimbabwe?

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- How is DeMbare DotComs employed by sports journalists in their day to day sport news reporting?

1.7 Assumptions of the Study

- Traditional methods of journalism and the role of journalist have been permanently changed and sports journalism has to adjust and perform.
- Some Sports journalists embrace DeMbare DotComs, it is an important feature of their working day, some do not like it at all and some just tolerate it.

1.8 Delimitations

In a bid to found out the challenges and prospects posed by DeMbare DotComs to traditional practices of football ‘reality’ reporting in Zimbabwe the researcher will use face to face and telephone interviews on sports journalists from mainstream newspapers.

1.9 Limitations

This study is only limited to challenges and prospects posed to newspapers. Although the broadcasting sector is also affected by the presence of those social platforms this study is only limited to mainstream newspaper reporting.

1.10 Structure of the study

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the research. This chapter lays the foundation to the whole research and is crucial in understanding what the whole research is about. This chapter includes statement of research problem, research sub questions, scope of research, limitations, objectives, significance and background.

Chapter 2 reviews related literature to the study. The theoretical framework is included in this chapter with full details of theories that are linked to the research and how they are linked to the research.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methods (research design) as well as explaining the various techniques used in data gathering. This includes methods of sampling, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 4 focuses on data presentation and analysis of findings. Data collected using qualitative methods was presented thematically.

Chapter 5 gives a short summary of the research, evaluation, recommendation and conclusion of the study.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research therefore it has highlighted what the research is going to be about. If the research goes according to plan the research will yield satisfactory results. The next chapter is of great significance as it expands the research through related literature by various scholars as well as theories that are linked to the study.

2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This section thematically reviews literature related to the study as well as theories that informed the research.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Traditional Sports Journalism in the Era of Digitisation

The impact of social media on traditional sports journalism is a recently tapped on topic that caught the interest of various scholars but is still to be expanded which this research intends to do. Boyle (2006:3) cites, “digitization has led to the emergence of an increasingly sophisticated battle for control of sports and how they are delivered, reported and made sense of for readers, listeners and viewers.”

Media organizations are attempting to utilize the new media platforms of the internet and mobile telephones to deliver exclusive content and journalism to audiences (Boyle and Haynes 2004). This is seen by Zimpapers creating online newspapers such as Herald Online. However, in doing so, they detour from the traditional journalistic communication structures and speak directly to their audience (Boyle 2006: 4). Access to information and delivering it to the audience will be of a competitive nature and maintenance of pace and journalistic standards have to be done. DeMbare DotComs is argued to publish stories on its homepage before any mainstream media has a hold of it. However, the question of how credible the stories are and how accurate is yet to be cleared by this research.

In light of this, Jordan (2009) argues that technological advancements are at the forefront of change and that rapid change makes it difficult for professionals and consumers to keep up. Journalists could either adapt to new technology and use it to improve their work or be left behind and stick to traditional ways of operation, however, the competition will be stiffer. Schultz and Sheffer (2010) comply with Jordan by noting that digitisation which brought about new media (social networks) has changed the nature in which ‘breaking news’ is reported. People no longer have to wait for the news hour or the morning newspaper to access breaking news but have the ability to easily get it from social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. Jordan (2009) argues that this has led to the ‘death’ of newspapers as they are being replaced in importance and many media organizations are also producing their content online. Taking this into consideration Jordan (2009) fails to recognize the fact that even if social networks have the ability to break news headlines, the stories most of the time, are not in full detail, that’s where

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newspapers come in, yes, they will publish a day after the breaking news on the internet but their version of the same story will have depth and be properly researched thereby the death of newspapers is a utopian notion.

Some scholars fail to recognize the validity of newspapers and traditional journalism and concur with Jordan (2009). Such a scholar is Bell (2001) who cites:

Not so long-ago sports fans would have had to wait until the next day's newspaper or the evening's news broadcast, to find out the score of a sports match. Now, via a huge array of platforms, they can access the score, a match report, post-match comments, video highlights and every imaginable statistic almost as soon as the final whistle is blown. It's telling of the age we are living in and the impact digital technology and, in particular, the internet, is having on traditional sports media. (Bell 2011:1)

This quotation is however, arguing on the effect the internet has on traditional sports media and it does not imply on the 'death' of newspapers as Jordan (2009) believes.

The notion of breaking news is one in which print newspapers have had the privilege to do and excelled in the past but it is also one that is changing due to the digital age. Breaking news for print media products is of less importance especially for sports news. Welch (1998) notes that sports institutions are progressively breaking their own news broadcast online, the social media world permits rumors to burgeon and numerous news sites are putting news online practically minutes after it takes place. Hence, breaking news that consists of match scores and fixtures is no longer important because social media and other internet sites are now doing that as it happens, minute by minute updates. Many print publications are becoming less concerned with breaking results-based updates or player transfer information and are more worried about breaking investigative news and detailed stories. This means football reality reporting by newspapers in Zimbabwe may have been shifted to more sport in-depth stories as an effect of DeMbare DotComs.

The digital era is without doubt presenting sports newsrooms with numerous and constant challenges. In addition to financial implications posed on traditional media specifically print media, sports journalists are now required to use numerous skills and not just the traditionally

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required qualifications. Sports news audiences are no longer satisfied with consuming their sports information on just one medium, they are looking everywhere for it. The option of where, when and how consumers access sports news and information has never been greater (Bell 2011). Having various sources of information to choose from gives rise to the question of whose reality do audiences prefer traditional mainstream newspapers or DeMbare DotComs?

A challenge for sports media is that there is supposed to be current up to date information and news for consumers on whatever platform they use without compromising the high journalistic standards (Edmonds 2010). Traditional journalism be it sports journalism, has held highly ethical standards from the start and these include accuracy, truth and credibility. However, digitization has increased the pace at which news is delivered and consumed and this can lead to breach of ethical standards just to publish a story on time. Yeshua (2000) argues that;

The newest news dispenser, the runaway internet, makes a journalist out of anybody who has a modem. It values speed and sensationalism above accuracy. New media will not accept our standards. We are foolish to treat them as if they have. This has become a very grim time for newspapers which is becoming of great concern. Yeshua (2000:3)

The coming in of digitization has led to division in the audience market. People visit the internet, interested in a specific score or issue and concentrate specifically on that, however, that does not make them traditional newspaper consumers (Boyle 2008). The depth of journalism required on each platform varies. On mobile phones people are most likely searching for a score or news item and not in-depth detailed investigative stories, but there is a market of audiences who stay loyal to consuming their newspapers because they consider them a trusted and reliable source. Thereby, newspapers and social networks can co-exist.

Scholars like Brown-Smith and Grove (2010) argue that at the moment, compared to other news sections, newsrooms are adapting and getting used to social media and the internet. Sports departments usually deal with immediacy in news that other sectors do not face regularly, not only with full match reports but with blog posts, live game updates and tweeting (Brown-Smith and Grove: 2010) They are used to disseminating news as it happens, minute by minute, because

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the demand for that news, particularly scores and results, is extremely high. DeMbare DotComs publishes story after story every minute on Facebook with constant updates and feedback for its followers.

While other scholars view digitization as the end of traditional sports newspaper reporting other view it as a complementary. Ramos (2010) argues that news practices are changing, consumers are changing, sports institutions are changing and therefore, inevitably, sports journalism is changing. We are in a historical epoch, where digitization is forcing changes and developments in sports reporting, however, traditional systems of sports journalism are being maintained and improved to keep up with rivalry of digital reporting. Due to the extremely fierce competition online, the need for traditional journalism to maintain its high standards is quite apparent (Bell 2011).

In agreement with this, Fry (2010) notes that there is an insatiable demand for sports news. Sports consumers have gone further than the sports section in print publications for news on the teams they support or issues within sport. Nowadays they can access as much information on many platforms, whenever they desire.

The digital world has brought on many changes and its apparent the future will be digital, however, the need for the printed word will never die. Sports journalism is increasing in importance and becoming complementary to various platforms hence, its relevance in journalism. Sports fans now want access to a combination of updates, tweets, blogs and the long detailed in-depth stories.

The digital era has led to a substantial increase of sports information and news available and not only from news institutions (Bell 2011). User generated information, fan-based sites and blog sites are becoming stiff competition for print media. However, competition is, in many ways, necessary in improving the quality of print sports news.

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This research therefore seeks to find out if DeMbare DotComs poses challenges and prospects to traditional practice of football reporting in Zimbabwe. The research will go further in finding out if present, exactly what those challenges and prospects are and if they concur or divert from those proposed by the scholars whom I have cited above. Scholars such as Bell (2011), Boyle (2006), Jordan (2009), Edmonds (2010) amongst others have clearly argued about the current situation of traditional journalism in the era of digitization specifically the internet and social media as well as the future trends. The position of traditional sports journalism in Zimbabwe in the midst of social media and whether digitization is a great threat or a blessing will be uncovered.

2.2.2 Sports Journalists and Social Media

Studying the effects of social media on traditional sports journalism specifically print is incomplete without looking at how it has affected the sports journalists themselves in their day to day working practices and reporting. Social media is defined by Huberman (2009) as the means of interaction among people in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. The advent of social media has arguably given rise to challenges to the journalism terrain specifically print journalism. The effect of social media on the operations of print sports journalists has been a contested topic with various scholars trying to reveal what outweighs the other challenges or opportunities.

Social media has the power to enable journalists to brand their work as well as use them to directly connect and communicate with their audiences on news topics and stories (Schultz and Sheffer 2010). Social media have a direct link to audiences compared to newspapers, they have a wider extensive reach of audience as well as excellently accommodate instantaneous feedback which is a positive for journalists. In agreement, Solis (2009: 36), notes that “social media represent a new, powerful platform to broadcast news, crowd source leads and stories, and expand the media's role and earned relevance in the new age of media.” These two scholars have however, overlooked that not everyone has access to social media.

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With the high rate of consumption of sports news by audiences, journalists have to stay on top of the rapidity of rising trends in sports coverage and social media are the appropriate platforms to ensure this. Schultz and Sheffer (2010) argue that not only can sports journalists connect and communicate with their audiences directly they can also use social media as a promotional tool for their work as well as get information to those people who do not read newspapers. This is on the basis that those who do not read newspapers have frequent access to social media platforms, for example those that cannot access newspapers such as *The Herald, Newsday or Chronicle* can however, access DeMbare DotComs on Facebook or any other social network to get their sports news.

The question of how traditional sports journalists have responded to social media affecting their work was tackled by Shultz and Sheffer (2010) in their research when they concluded that older journalists view social media such as Twitter and Facebook as an unwelcome adaptation. This was based on the assumption that implementing new technologies was more difficult for older journalists who would have been arguably used to traditional methods of journalism compared to younger journalists who are used to the constantly evolving nature of modern journalism. However, adaptation to a new technology or rejection of it should also be credited to more factors such as social, economic and educational factors other than only the age factor, which Schultz and Sheffer (2010) failed to take note of. Hence, this could mean the way print journalists in Zimbabwe reject or have adapted to DeMbare DotComs should be a result of various factors.

In contrary Osborn (2001) provides a less optimistic view compared to that of Schultz and Sheffer (2010) on how social media has affected the work of sports journalists. Osborn (2001) cites;

When print was the only medium available to the journalist, there was ample time available for proper research, editing, and publication. Indeed only a few early publishers had access to a printing press with which to make a product. As mass media progressed, new forms of print and broadcast appeared, the time allowed for journalistic reflection shrank. (Osborn 2001:2)

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In addition, Osborn (2001: 2) also argues that “...the immediacy brought by the online environment, a medium where everyone is a potential publisher, allows for even less deliberation by the journalists and editor”. This is because journalists can access information on the internet or social media platforms easily and can also publish news just as fast and easily. He argued that this ease in operations as well as the rapidity in news deliverance has led to an intensive breach of ethics such as accuracy, truth and credibility. Therefore, the faster a story is published may not necessarily mean it is of high ethical standard. Are all the stories published by DeMbare DotComs in line with ethical standards of journalism?

‘Lazy journalism’ is a term brought up by Osborn (2001) which he uses to refer to the way journalists have completely put aside the way in which they traditionally operate since the advent of the internet and social media. He argued that a journalist rarely goes in the field to research on a story and in turn the quality of print stories has been diminishing. Stories published on social media platforms have been labelled by scholars as lacking depth and credibility. Do traditional sports journalists print stories they would have gotten from social networks such as Facebook in this case DeMbare DotComs? Could this result in stories that lack depth and accuracy because of lack of thorough and proper research and sourcing which leads to ethical breach?

Social media has threatened the existence of the professionalism of sports journalists, Jordan (2009:3) cites, “Journalists are no longer the only designated messengers and middle men and women of news, as bloggers and those that hold access have fully got involved with the delivery of news as well. Consequently, this leaves the role of the sports journalist in question if not altogether alleviated”. To support this notion retrenchment of more journalists has been recorded in the USA and UK since the advent of Twitter and how it has replaced the need for traditional journalists in turn professionals such as online editors have been hired. From 2007 to 2009 approximately 13,500 jobs for print journalists in America have disappeared, reducing newsrooms by 25 percent in just three years (Edmonds & Pew 2010). Have similar cases been recorded in Zimbabwe? However, the need for traditional sports journalists is still apparent, newspaper coverage is still seen as relevant because it has more depth, professional analysis and is very detailed.

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Access to information is what makes or breaks a journalist, being the first to publish a story is vital for any journalist in this case sports journalists. Jordan (2009:10) argues that, “competition is definitely high with the advent of social media, as journalists are seeing stories being broken by athletes and teams themselves through team blogs or player blogs. Trades, firings, disputes and other issues are being announced via personal or team blogs and this ultimately hurts journalists from doing their job”.

In contrast to Osborn (2001) and Jordan (2009), Newman (2009:2) argued that, “... journalists are beginning to embrace social media tools like Twitter, Blogs and Facebook, but very much on their own terms. ‘Same values, new tools’ sums up the approach in most mainstream organizations as they marry the culture of the web with their own organizational norms”. Guidelines are being rewritten. Price et al (2012) noted that journalists have adapted differently to social media with some welcoming it, others tolerating and others completely rejecting it.

The background information cited above can be the foundation to understanding the relationship between sports journalists and social media as well how it has affected their work and how well they have adapted to it. Interviews with prominent sports journalists in Zimbabwe from different prominent newspapers are extremely vital to this research in seeking answers and to add on to works of the various scholars such as Schultz and Sheffer (2010), Jordan (2009) and Osborn (2001).

2.2.3 Reality a Contested Phenomenon

Realism has become a contested phenomenon in the postmodern age. Its definition has been under scrutiny by many scholars who tried to explain what it really is. Reality has been defined as incorporating the notion of having an objective independent existence or occurring in fact (Shapiro and Lang 1991). However, reality has been argued to exist in the consciousness of an individual and it is an individual who can decide what is real or not to themselves. However, an individual decides after exposure to the media and the media have taken over the role of

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representing and dictating reality to the public. Hall (1990) and Foucault (1980) agree that realism is a game of power as those who have knowledge and language have the power to dictate what is real or not and what is truth or not. And the media are deemed 'All Knowing' hence, very powerful.

The basic principle for how and why people view the world in a certain manner and what role the media play in influencing that view is fully explained by social construction of reality. While reality incorporates the notion of having an objective independent existence or occurring in fact, the social construction of reality accepts at its very nature a subjective experience with reality either via media coverage or via media dictation.

The dependency on information of audiences on the media implies that the latter have something the public want and need, this gives the media the power to dictate the reality of individuals because they are given the platform to do so. McQuail and Windahl (1993) use the phrase 'information society' to describe the increase in trends of supply and consumption of information in the world. This notion of the 'information society' joined together with social construction of reality leads to the assumption that if one does not obtain media information, he or she does not know reality. Individuals are dependent on the media to define reality. Traditionally, the public were dependent on mainstream media both print and broadcast, but the advent of the internet has led to the birth of various media platforms which are now termed alternative media. Alternative media and mainstream media provide different perspectives of reality to the audience. DeMbare DotComs is an alternative media platform for sports news. Could it be it offers a different angle of football reality from that of mainstream media thereby posing challenges and prospects to the latter?

Media, arguably, are the main 'middlemen' between society and information (McQuail 2005). In modern society the media can be said to assume the earlier roles of schools, religion and the state to help people make sense of reality. "The media to a large extent serve to constitute our perceptions and definitions of social reality and normality for the purposes of a public, shared social life and are a key source of standards, models and norms" (McQuail, 2005:81). The media, therefore use this dependency to their advantage and use it to manipulate and construct reality for

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audiences. Hall (1997) argued that the media appear to reflect reality but in fact they construct it. For Hall, the mass media are inclined to reproduce interpretations which serve the interests of the dominant class, but they are also a platform of ideological contestations. The football reality disseminated by traditional journalists of the mainstream print media could be ‘constructed’ to fit the interests of the dominant class as they might filter and gate keep stories.

“The way in which the media’s versions of everyday events are communicated or the way in which the media facilitates our contact with social reality can take various forms, depending on the situation” (McQuail, 2005:83). According to McQuail (2005), the media’s mediation role can take place in the form of six metaphors:

a *window* on events, allowing society “to see without interference”; or in the form of a *filter* or gatekeeper, where only certain aspects of an experience is selected and others are discarded. The media can also act as a *platform*, whereby ideas are presented to society, a *disseminator* which merely passes on information or an *interlocutor* – an ‘informed partner that responds to questions (McQuail, 2005:83).

This brings up the thought that the media form a ‘bridge’ between society and reality, translating versions of events which audiences cannot perceive for themselves. This hypothetical ‘bridge’ “...has very strong foundations in society, however, as media institutions form ‘part of the structure of society and its technological infrastructure is part of the economic and power base, while the ideas, images and information disseminated by the media (as reality) are evidently an important aspect of our culture” (McQuail, 2005:78).

Journalists will often argue that mediation merely takes place in a form that resembles a *mirror*, “implying a faithful reflection” (McQuail, 2005:83). This notion implies that the mass media truthfully disseminate information to the public and construct reality faithfully. However, the media act as filters and the notion of ‘faithful reflection’ becomes obscure. The media gate keep some information and release what they want and what will fulfil their goals as media houses, which the audience will perceive as reality.

The way in which news is selected shows how only a fraction of reality is conveyed to society. News becomes ‘news’ once it goes under numerous levels of selection and gatekeeping following a selection formula using typical news values such as proximity, prominence and

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human interest all of which are not neutral. These news values determine society's perception of the world by also deciding what is important enough to be regarded as news and what is not (Braun 2009).

Thus, reality goes through 'panel beating' before it is published for the public to view. Be it mainstream media or DeMbare DotComs, the alternative media, it is argued both these platforms provide different realities to the audience with alternative media reality being the antithesis of that of traditional mainstream media which is seen to be biased towards the dominant ruling class. Could this be the main reason of the supposed oppositional relationship between these media?

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Alternative Media and the politics of 'reality'

The media do not function in a vacuum but are surrounded within various political, economic and cultural settings. That is how Atton (2002) brings up the term alternative media. Alternative media are media (newspapers, radio, television, magazines, movies, Internet, etc.) which act as alternative platforms that provide alternative information to the mainstream media in a given context, whether the mainstream media are commercially, publicly supported, or government-owned (Atton 2002). Downing et al (2001) along the same lines, describe alternative or rather, radical media as to some extent small scale media that express alternative views and perceptions to hegemonic ideologies and priorities. Alternative media are different from dominant mainstream media along one or more of the following aspects which are: their content, modes of production, modes of distribution, and audience relations. Is DeMbare DotComs an alternative media platform to mainstream print media in Zimbabwe and does it provide an alternative version of football reality to that published by newspapers? These are some of the questions this study engages with.

The main aim and objective of alternative media is to challenge the existing ideologies and powers and to give coverage and represent the marginalized groups that have limited access to the mainstream media and to promote horizontal connections among communities of interest.

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Richard (2007) further argues that the mainstream media are biased in the selection and framing of news and information. Downing (2008) shares the similar opinion with Richard (2007) by arguing that although sources of alternative media are also biased the bias is definitely different from that of mainstream media because they have different set of values, objectives, and frameworks. Hence these alternative media provide an "alternative" viewpoint, different information and interpretations of the world that cannot be found in the mainstream media.

Alternative media at most provide contrasting 'reality' to that framed by the mainstream media. They give audiences the chance to create the 'reality' with them. Mainstream media represent and dictate reality according to how they want the audiences to view it and shape their opinions. However, with alternative media, Enzensberger (1976) proposed that they can be used as emancipatory media because they encourage interactivity between audiences and them and deal with everyday needs of the people and give special attention to aspects which are normally not regarded as news by the mainstream media. This diverts away from mainstream media and how they represent reality which stems from their political economy.

However, as much as Enzensberger (1976) views alternative media as an emancipator and allows creation of reality by audiences, he failed to also take into consideration that this could lead to abuse and false realities for everyone has a chance to publish whatever they want whenever they want especially on the internet and social media.

This gives birth to the opposing relationship of alternative media and mainstream dominant media with the former trying to replace the latter and are both embedded in the politics of representing 'reality'. McQuail (1987:88) agrees with this notion by arguing that "we are now speaking of a version of relationships yet another step further from the notion of dominant media, in which people using small-scale media prevail and large media institutions and undifferentiated content can no longer be". McQuail's view is similar to that of Jordan (2009) who suggested that the advent of the internet and social media has led to the 'death' of newspapers. This research seeks to understand the relationship between DeMbare DotComs and the mainstream print media and if the advent of Dembare Dotcoms is threatening the existence of traditional practices of football reporting in Zimbabwe.

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Alternative media allow the audiences to engage in creation of reality and feel somewhat in control rather than having mainstream media dictate what is reported and how. Berrigan (1979) cites;

Access by the community and the participation of the community should be considered key defining factors for alternative media, they are media to which members of the community have access to information, education and entertainment when they want access. They are media in which the community participates, as planners, producers, performers. They are the means of expression of the community, rather than for the community. (Berrigan 1979: 8)

Audiences turning to alternative media for information rather than their original source, the mainstream media could be viewed as a threat and this research will find out if this is the case between DeMbare DotComs and newspapers which in turn pose challenges and prospects to traditional journalism practices. Whose football reality do audiences prefer?

As much as participation is an ideal term for audiences and why they might opt for social media, the term participation could also be viewed from a different perspective. Patman (1970) puts it that the prevalent use of the term has meant that any precise, meaningful content has almost disappeared. Participation is used to refer to a large variety of different situations by different people. This means alternative media could mean the rise of meaningless 'reality' for it gives everyone the chance to be a participating journalist (citizen journalist), the value of journalism and its worth being diminished in the process.

As alternative media are defined and described as being in an opposing and negative relationship with mainstream media, the emergency of this notion should be emphasized (Atton 2002). What is considered as alternative media today, in the future, due to various factors could be termed mainstream media. The starting point for the definition of alternative media is the societal context in which the alternative media function and this gives them the name 'alternative'. This could mean that social media might be termed 'alternative media' today but as time progresses it will be incorporated into mainstream media, but how that could be achieved is yet to be revealed.

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Mainstream media are mostly thought to be large-scale and geared towards large uniform fragments of audiences, state owned institutions or commercial organizations, vertically or hierarchically structured associations which are filled with professionals who are sympathisers of the dominant ideologies, discourses and representations (Atton 2002).

Therefore, alternative media are the antithesis of mainstream media especially on such matters because they are considered to be small-scale and geared towards specific communities, possibly disadvantaged and marginalised groups, respecting their diversity, free from state and market interference, horizontally structured, encouraging audience participation and less limited access along the lines of democracy and multiplicity, as well as being carriers of oppositional discourses and perceptions to that of the dominant ideologies and representations (Lewis 1993).

The defining structures of alternative media and mainstream media mean the output of these media will be different 'different realities' hence there is reason to believe they will be a clash between these media and for their professionals (sports journalists and social media). However, Atton (2002) argues that these two media will have to marry at some point in time. How sports journalists adapt to DeMbare DotComs is of importance to this research. Atton's suggestion of the two media 'marrying' could mean sports journalist might incorporate social media to their traditional practice of football reporting.

The existence of alternative media is viewed by Williams (1963) as necessary. He argues that in order to achieve active reception and living response, the existence of genuinely multiple media where all the sources have access to the similar common channels and where those involved are able to communicate and participate becomes significant. For every action there is a reaction to maintain balance. Therefore, the alternative media theory is vital in understanding the existence of DeMbare DotComs and its effects on traditional practice of football reporting in Zimbabwe.

2.3.2 Social Construction of Technology

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Social construction of technology (SCOT) is a theory which argues that technology does not determine individual (human) action, but that rather, individual action shapes and influences technology (Hohausser 1997). Hohausser also argues that how technology is embedded in its social context can be used to understand the ways that technology is used and shaped. SCOT is a counter to technological determinism and it can also be termed technological constructivism. SCOT argues that to uncover the reasons and understand the rejection or acceptance of a technology, focus should be directed to the social world. SCOT provides a basis on how human action is so powerful in determining technology use as well as how they choose which media to use.

The concept or belief that technology materializes from a single social determinant or through the unfolding of a predetermined scientific logic is rejected by social shaping of technology perspectives (Williams and Edge 1996). These scholars also argue that technologies are and have always been social and the rejection or use of them by people is determined by social factors such as age, sex, social affiliations amongst others not only technical ones. Hence, the adaptation of sports journalists to DeMbare DotComs is affected by many factors.

SCOT believes technical and social factors are closely interconnected (Woolgar 1996). It is via the interaction of these essentials that technologies develop. Hughes (1986) describes this as an interactive viewpoint, one that gives equal status to the basics present in technological development. From an interactive perspective, technology is not a static and stable entity but can be described as a collection of enthusiastically related elements. Technology does not exist in isolation.

One of the most influential social ethnographies of Zuboff (1988) was the digitization and computerization of a large paper mill that described how work that was done the traditional way of direct contact with elements was then transformed to a systemised framework of operation.

Under the old regime of papermaking workers developed action-centered skills, which were based upon sentient information derived from physical cues. This type of knowledge, deeply embedded in the actions of the work itself and won slowly over years of experience, is produced and reproduced in action. With the advent of computerization, workers had to learn new ways of thinking and new skills. The data workers had to use were different than the sensations they employed previously. In the computerized system knowledge

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was articulated and divorced from direct action and became a manipulable abstraction, independent of any particular knower. This created a gap between conception and action, between knowledge and the ability to work with the process that workers struggled to bridge. (Zuboff 1988:67)

This same mechanism can be applied in journalism. Traditional journalists are used to certain ways of gathering and reporting news and stories such that the advent of internet and social media brought about changes to their work in which a struggle to adapt is expected. This adaptation to the new media and use or rejection of it according to SCOT is influenced by not only technical factors but also social factors for society and technologies are intertwined.

Fulk (1993) argues that technologies are shaped and grow within societal contexts and human action shapes the technology and how it develops. Rejection and use of a new technology is assumed to be affected by social factors. This research seeks to find out how sports journalists have adapted to DeMbare DotComs and SCOT is a theory that will provide an explanation and basis to understanding the results when discovered.

2.3.3 Rethinking News Values in the Digital Age

News is the report of a current event, something that was not known, information of recent events and happenings. Palczewski (2010) cites that;

News is a report of a current event. It is information about something that has just happened or will happen soon. News is a report about recent happenings in a newspaper, television, radio or internet. News is something that is not known earlier. From all these, we can safely define news as a development that has happened in the past 24 hours which was not known outside and which is of wide interest to the people and that which generates curiosity among listeners. (Palczewski 2010: 1)

Therefore, news is seen as a form of knowledge which is not systematic and the facts it exposes are not historical.

From Palczewski's definition news is information which is current but also of wide interest to people. This brings up the notion of newsworthiness. Two journalists from the 1960s Charles Santon and Charles Dana defined news as when 'a man bites a dog'. This was considered as

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‘news’ because it is sensational, it presents an event which is extraordinary and unusual and it reveals the astonishing character of human nature.

Journalists are considered to be the best judges on deciding what is news and what is not. For anything to be determined as news it should be newsworthy. For a story to be deemed newsworthy it should contain certain characteristics that are referred to as news values. The news values that determine newsworthiness of a story include prominence, proximity, timeliness, human interest, the bizarre, conflict, currency and impact. These factors will determine how the story will be received by the audience.

With both mainstream media and alternative media (social media) competing to bring the latest up to date news to the public, news values should be considered for maintenance of quality and pace. Social media has the advantage of being up to date with news providing audiences with fresh stories as they happen which is a disadvantage to mainstream newspapers for a story is published a day after, when the paper is distributed. DeMbare DotComs and the mainstream newspapers such as *The Herald*, the *Sunday Mail* and *Gemazo*, have to consider the factors of newsworthiness in their reporting on football ‘reality’.

Referring to the theory of news values it is usually assumed that journalists are more concerned with maximizing awareness for their news organization products (Fengler and Mohl 2008). Traditional print sports journalists as well as social media need to have stories that are up to par, that have these values in order to be of high quality and attract and please the audience.

The applicability of news values in the digital age has been an argued concept but for anything to be labelled as ‘news’ whether it is published on DeMbare DotComs or newspapers, the information should contain these news values which will in turn grab the attention of the public. Braun (2009: 1) argued that “audiences consider information as newsworthy if it is something they must know, need to know, should know, will want to know and will be interested to know”. All of this is determined by the news values.

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However, the advent of social media has arguably led to the publishing of news stories that are newsworthy but however not thoroughly tackled which in turn becomes the job of traditional print journalists whose time, quantity and quality of sources, expertise and newsroom budget is needed to achieve this. This brings up the argument that traditional print sports journalists are still very much important and the existence of social media does not threaten their existence but clearly defines it.

This theory can be used to evaluate the newsworthiness of news stories in the digital age (DeMbare DotComs) and to find out if they are still adhered to as is by the traditional mainstream newspapers.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted scholarly views and works relating to the concept of sports journalism and social media. Various theories that include alternative media and the politics of reality, social construction of technology and theory of news values were used to explain the assumptions on the effects of digitization, the internet and social media on traditional sports journalism and journalists. The next chapter will then focus on the methods of data collection, analysis and methods of data presentation that were used in the study.

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3.0 Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a clear description and discussion of the methodology of the study. Of particular importance in this section are the methods which were used to collect, analyze and present findings of the study

3.2 Research Design

Research design is the structure of research. Zikmund (2000) defines research design as a plan that clearly outlines the methods and techniques used in the data gathering and analyzing process. Research design refers to a structure of the study that is used to mobilize data which will

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answer the research questions. It is also used to structure the research in a way that will show how all of the aspects of the research were used in a bid to answer all the research questions. McBurney and White (2010) define a research design as a “plan of procedures for data collection and analysis that are undertaken to evaluate a particular theoretical perspective.” The study used qualitative methods of data collection.

Therefore, the research sought a ‘thick description’ approach (see Geertz 1973) on the experiences of sports journalists in this digital age where DeMbare DotComs also competes in mediating ‘football reality’ to the people. Rutman (1996) points out that qualitative research has the ability to persuade subjects of the study to give more informative responses to the questions presented to them by the researcher and thereby presenting more priceless insights that other research methods might miss. Besides providing valuable information to certain research questions, in its own right, it is also commonly used to complement quantitative research methods.

Interviews with purposively and snowballed selected sports journalists were a critical method of collecting data for this study.

3.3 Research Approach

This research adopted a purely qualitative approach in data gathering, analysis and presentation. In order to meet the objectives of the research and answer research questions the research had to be qualitative in methodology to achieve this.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis is the key unit that is analyzed in a research study for the most part units of analysis being groups, individuals, geographical units or social intentions and artefacts (Kenny 2010). The sampling elements are called unit of analysis. Unit of analysis in this research was made up of print sports journalists.

3.5 Sampling procedures

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Sampling is the selection of units of analysis such as people or institutions for the study (Denzin 2002). The idea is about choosing a few small samples from a larger group and use those samples to measure and predict a fact, situation or outcome regarding the bigger group. The outcomes from the samples are generalized back to the larger group. This is similar to the definition proposed by Fairfax County Department (2003) which defines sampling as the process of selecting units (such as people, organizations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample there may be generalizations of results back to the population from which they were chosen. It helps in achieving accurate results within a short time frame as different people's views are captured and represented by a smaller population within that short frame of time.

There are two approaches to sampling which are probability and non-probability sampling. This study utilised two non- probability sampling methods, these are purposive and snowball sampling. Ten sports journalists were selected for interviews. The selected journalists were from *The Sunday Mail*, *Daily News*, *The Herald*, *Newsday* and *Standard*. These journalists were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, based on the knowledge of the researcher as well as from referrals and recommendations made by the researcher's colleagues, they are the best in terms of being able to assist in the research.

3.5.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, is regarded as the use of judgement and deliberate effort by the researcher to obtain representative samples by including typical areas or groups in the sample (Patton 1990). The Fairfax Department County (2003:4) cites that in purposive sampling, "the researcher employs his or her own 'expert' judgment about who to include in the sample frame. Prior knowledge and research skills are used in selecting the respondents or elements to be sampled".

The purposive sampling method is based exclusively on the judgment of the researcher, in that a sample has elements which contain the most characteristic, representative or attributes of the larger population. Based on the researcher's knowledge about the population, a judgment is made about which of the subjects should be chosen to provide the best information to attend to

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the purpose of the research. Purposive sampling was one of the best sampling methods used in this research because of its simplistic and cheap characteristics which however, does not mean it produced results of less value. Five journalists were selected using purposive sampling.

The journalists come from both the publicly owned media and the privately-owned media which is vital because it indicated variations in responses. Research was done on these journalists and these led to the researcher believing they were the best to interview and generalise the results to the rest of the sports journalist population.

3.5.2 Snowball Sampling

The phrase snowball sampling has been practical to a procedure related to network sampling. “This involves a few identified members of a rare population being asked to identify other members of the population, those so identified are asked to identify others, and so, for the purpose of obtaining a non-probability sample or for constructing a frame from which to sample” (Thompson 2002: 183). Davis and Gallardo (2010:165) define snowball sampling as “the method of asking study participants to make referrals to other potential participants, who in turn make referrals to other participants, and so on”. This sampling method was used to complement purposive sampling. Snowball sampling was used to lead the researcher to other participants who were critical to the research.

3.6 Methods of Data gathering

Data gathering is defined as ways to collect information necessary and essential for the research Krippendorff (2004). Research instruments are used for the collection of information and data required to find answers to the problems under study.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviews are methods used to directly obtain information from respondents usually in a face to face situation (Welman 2005). An interview consists of a series of questions that a researcher addresses personally to respondents. Reinharz (1992:19) also defines the interview as “...an interaction between researchers and researched. Interviewing offers the researcher access to people’s ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words and rather than in the words of the

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researcher”. Boyd-Barret (2004) argue that interviews are focus discussions that result in the researcher obtaining information necessary for the research from questions presented to subjects under study. Interviews are also regarded to be question and answer meetings intended to draw certain conclusions from the respondents. This method of data collection entails the researcher asking respondents open-ended questions. Interviews can range in type, from structured, unstructured, and semi-structured

Interviews involve orally administering survey questions to interviewees who in turn will provide the researcher with the information to answer those questions. O’Sullivan et al (1998) further define an interview as “a research method which can be employed to investigate a wide variety of research problems and projects.” Interviews are used in studies where different scopes and faults of a problem are examined. Data from interviews is usually made up of direct quotes from people regarding their experiences, perceptions, feelings and knowledge. In this research face to face and telephone unstructured interviews were held with sports journalists to gather insightful information on the topic under study.

Interviews were conducted with ten sports journalists from *The Herald*, *Daily News*, *Standard*, *Sunday Mail* and *Newsday*. The sports journalists interviewed are Farai Machamire, Ishemunyoro Chingwere, Mike Moyo (pseudo name), John Mokwetsi, Feza Ndau (pseudo name), Bella Nyoka (pseudo name), Munya Gumbo (pseudo name), Farai Goko (pseudo name) Tinashe Kusema and Enock Muchinjo. I chose to interview these ten because their input is significant to understanding the way Dembare DotComs has affected traditional journalism practices

3.6.2 In depth Unstructured face to face Interviews

Face to face unstructured interviews with the sports journalists and sports editors were conducted during this study to obtain the data necessary for the study. The interviews were held in conversation style with open ended questions giving the researcher room to follow up on answers. This enabled the researcher to get the necessary information directly from the targeted subjects without wasting time.

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Interviews were conducted in Harare at the *Herald* House and at the *Daily News* offices. Before each interview the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the respondent and assured the respondent that all information collected would be treated in strict confidence and would be used for academic purposes only.

This technique also allowed a great deal of information to be obtained or collected as it allows flexibility and just in time responses. The researcher used face to face interviews because they allowed the ability to measure authenticity of responses by observing other non-verbal communication attributes like facial expressions.

3.6.3 Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews are a technique of obtaining data over the telephone. Telephone interviews involve an effective way of screening interviewees to a later date and take part in the structured interview. Before the interview, it is important to find out if the interviewee will provide fruitful information about the study. The researcher telephoned sports journalists during the study. The advantage of telephone interviews is the extensive access to participants, Mann and Stewart (2000) argue that people from all over the world can be interviewed as long as they have access to a telephone or the internet and sensitive issues which were most likely going to be difficult to tackle during a face to face interview would be easier to approach and answer for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Telephone unstructured interviews were used on six sports journalists who were not available for face to face interviews. This enabled the researcher to at least obtain some information about the research, however, aspects such as facial expressions and eye contact were by-passed which was a negative, for they help in analysing the responses given by the interviewees. The cost factor was also an issue for the airtime used was expensive.

3.7 Methods of data analysis

Data analysis is numerical or qualitative deliberation of data and information collected by a researcher (Krippendorff 2004). He goes on to point that data analysis is a process of data decrease, data display and the process of verification and drawing conclusions from findings. Smith (2003) defines data analysis as a practice whereby data gathered usually unprocessed is

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structured and organized in a manner which allows useful information to be extracted from it. The process of systematizing, categorizing and thinking about data is critical in understanding what the data does and does not contain. After the collection of data from interviews with sports journalists, it was analysed.

3.7.1 Critical discourse analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is a discourse analytical technique that is principally used to analyse text and talk in a social and political context and in the process, deduce how dominance and inequalities are resisted or reproduced. Van Dijk (1998) argues that the main aim for critical discourse analysts is to understand and expose the social inequalities by taking an explicit position and eventually resist these social inequalities.

The Frankfurt school and its critical theory before the Second World War is where some of the tenets of critical discourse analysis can be identified (Rasmussen, 1996). Discourse analysis is a technique that seeks to expose hidden meanings of a text and reveal the silent voices. Stubbs (1985:1) says “Discourse analysis is concerned with language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence or utterance it also looks at the relationship between language, society and the interactive dialogue of everyday society”. This was useful in analysing the responses given by sports journalists as it would provide explanations for their responses.

Critical discourse analysis, according to Fairclough (1993) seeks to systematically examine obscure relationships of determination and causality between texts and events within the larger social and cultural structures and processes, and to explore how texts are ideologically influenced by power struggles and how eventually the relationship between society and discourse are used in securing hegemony based power. This method was used in analyzing responses given by the interviewed parties in relation to how DeMbare DotComs has affected traditional sports journalism and football reporting.

To achieve a ‘thick description’ of the research and provide not only facts but commentary and interpretations of those facts, critical discourse analysis was applied. This analysis method was

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used on responses given by the sports journalists to the interview questions to not only identify the challenges and prospects posed by DeMbare DotComs but also to explain these responses. Because the research was purely qualitative and data gathered was from the interviews only, critical discourse analysis was essential in exhausting the responses of the sports journalists to meet all objectives of the study and obtain answers to the research questions.

3.8 Methods of Data Presentation

Purely qualitative approaches were used in presenting the information that was gathered using various research gathering techniques. Thematic approach together with narrative analysis and ‘thick descriptive’ ways were used as data presentation techniques. The thick descriptive method was used to present instant interpretations and analyse them thoroughly. The narrative form of presentation was used to give evidence of what where the views of the sports journalists who were interviewed and what they meant. Thematic presentation of data is a descriptive way of presenting textual data which was gathered and analysed from the interviews with the sports journalists. Narrative analysis involves using conversations and interviews as well as life experiences to understand the way people create meaning.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are the foundation to all researches as they revolve around concerns to be familiar with and balance objectivities, provide truthful and accurate research accounts, act within the law and develop necessary skills (O’Leary 2004). A high ethical standard was adopted in this research from beginning to end as it influenced the outcome of the research. Ethics such as accuracy, truthfulness, objectivity, protection of privacy as well as seeking consent before interviews were upheld by the researcher.

A research study must be guided by ethics for the results and findings to be truthful, objective and accurate. In light of this, ethical considerations were adhered to by the researcher especially at the interviewing stage where all the interviewed journalists were asked for their permission and consent to be interviewed first. In analysing the responses given by the sports journalists the researcher was not biased and provided accurate and objective interpretations and commentary

which led to a truthful approach in answering the research questions. The researcher adhered to all media laws in conducting the research.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the various research methods and techniques that were used in the research in gathering information. The next chapter focuses on the data presentation and analysis.

4.0 Chapter 4- Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data gathered during the research process. The research questions outlined earlier in the research are responded to in this chapter together with issues that were investigated. Data was obtained through critical discourse analysis of interviews with

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selected sports journalists. Findings from critical discourse analysis interviews with sports journalists are presented thematically using a thick description approach.

4.2 Dembare Dotcoms keeping sports journalists on their toes

Findings of this study suggest that traditional practise of football/ sport reporting in general is under threat from social network (new media) sites. DeMbare DotComs, undoubtedly the most vibrant Facebook page for football fans has kept journalists on their toes. The way in which DeMbare DotComs continuously gives up to date postings on many football issues before newspapers publish them is definitely a way to keep sports journalists awake. This was alluded to during interviews with key informants to this dissertation, for instance Munya Gumbo (not real name), Ishemunyoro Chingwere, Feza Ndau (not real name) and Farai Machamire who agreed that, “.... if we relax ‘on our laurels’ ‘Dotti’ (as we call it in journalistic circles) can easily push us out of the market”. This is clear that the journalists realize the potential of DeMbare DotComs and how the audiences are now opting for its football reality compared to print media. It is apt to argue that the privilege to relax and sit on top of a story has become history in the era where DeMbare DotComs is threatening to bury the traditional mainstream newspapers.

In the journalistic world, timeliness is one of the critical defining characteristic of what qualifies to be called news or not. Due to the agility of ‘Dotti’ in posting issues well ahead of traditional newspapers, this undoubtedly puts pressure on traditional media houses and the journalists. What is it that they will be publishing then when they always come after DeMbare DotComs? Do the audiences then still need to buy the hard copy newspaper yet DeMbare DotComs has already furnished them with requisite information in time? Such is the dilemma faced by journalists. DeMbare DotComs has undoubtedly challenged traditional practice of journalism. It calls for journalists who are flexible and who quickly think outside the box. It might be plausible to suggest that the journalists admit their fear and hatred of DeMbare Dotcoms considering the name they have ascribed the popular DeMbare fans facebook page. They call it ‘Dotti’ within the journalism fraternity.. The word is more or less similar to the Shona word for faeces. This could mean the sports journalists find similarities between the products of defecation and the

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operations of Dembare DotComs. No one would want to stay close to human waste. The moment human waste is deposited closer to where people are well settled, they are easily displaced from that position to find somewhere else to settle. One could argue that 'Dotti' has managed to displace or dislodge the journalists' privileged position in defining reality over the years and journalists have no option but to negotiate for another space since their hegemony has been exposed. Foucault warns that discourse can be an effect of power but it can also be an entry point for opposing strategies (Foucault 1980). From a Foucauldian view one might argue that in this case DeMbare DotComs has been an entry point of resistance by subaltern classes which have challenged the dominant definition of reality. Discourse has become a site of contestation over the definition of reality indeed.

With such threats posited by DeMbare DotComs, journalists have been forced to rethink their practise. In an interview, John Mkwetsi argued that sports journalists are 're-angling their stories' in order to maintain their market. Because DeMbare DotComs is the guru in publishing match scores and up to date match proceedings, journalists are no longer concerned with breaking that type of news which they term 'event reporting', they have refocused to analysing reporting where the stories they publish have more depth, more professional analysis and detail. DeMbare DotComs as of October 2013 now has 139 558 followers and this number increases daily and it is more than the readership/subscribers of *Newsday*, *The Herald* and *Daily News* put together. This shows the popularity this Facebook page has.

DeMbare DotComs is considered a fashionable way of accessing news because of its easy fast access on mobile phones. Followers can get up to date information as it happens rather than waiting for the next day to read the newspaper. Ishemunyoro Chingwere argued that it is now difficult to hold on to a scoop till the next morning without DeMbare DotComs getting wind of it. This finding is similar to that proposed by Jordan (2009) and Bell (2011) who predicted the death of newspapers because of the manner in which social media breaks news before the print media do.

The question now was how does that newspaper article published the next day remain relevant? When asked that question all ten interviewed sports journalists and editors surprisingly gave the researcher similar answers. Because they are aware of the continuous 'breaking news' state of

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DeMbare DotComs, the sports journalists have to re-angle their stories. They argued that DeMbare DotComs only gives minute by minute updates during a match and afterwards gives player ratings. The sports journalists on the other hand, “.....give a story professional analysis, focus on off the field stories like supporters’ comments, as well as post-match reactions by coaches and players and investigate if they are any acts of juju on the field”. They argued that their stories remain ‘news’ and relevant because they have more access to sources thereby providing more in-depth stories that readers will be interested in. Therefore, it means without this re-angling of stories their journalists jobs are on the line.

Another way DeMbare DotComs keeps sports journalists on their toes is the way they report on stories. Besides changing the angle to a story to maintain its relevance in print media, sports journalists have also shifted from event reporting to analyzing reporting. Tinashe Kusema argued that there has been a shift from the way they traditionally used to report on football issues. This means the stories that go to print not only state the events that occurred but analyze issues that happened there which means more depth, more sources to interview which increases the workload. Ishemunyoro Chingwere, Munya Gumbo (not real name), Mike Moyo (not real name) and Bella Nyoka (not real name) all brought up the point that they cannot afford to be lazy in their football reporting because DeMbare DotComs, “...will challenge our stories and expose us where we might be compromised or where we might have done a dis-service to our readers.”

It is argued that citizen journalism has become a threat to traditional journalism. Citizen journalism refers to public citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. Radsch (2013) defines citizen journalism as an alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a response to shortcomings in the professional journalistic field that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream media.

Respondents were concerned on the threat posed by citizen journalism to traditional journalism practices because they are “competing with the citizen journalists”. DeMbare DotComs’ administration is said to be ‘by the fans for the fans’ so this brings up the assumption that the

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fans are the ones posting articles on the Facebook page. Because the citizen journalist is unpredictable, the sports journalists have to continuously track the articles on 'Dotti' and re-angle them if a scoop is 'scooped'. However, two of the interviewed sports journalists argued that it is actually sports journalists who post on DeMbare DotComs because the credibility of the stories and the way they are written are too professional to be done by a layman citizen or even a diehard fan of football.

Keeping journalists on their toes was what Boyle (2006) meant when he said digitization has changed the pace of journalism and maintenance is a must.

4.3 DeMbare DotComs a threat

From the interviews with selected journalists, it was established that DeMbare DotComs is a sure threat to the traditional practice of journalism. The fact that DeMbare DotComs has a large number of followers (currently 139 558) which is more than the subscribers of *Newsday*, *The Herald* and *Daily News* combined, is alone evidence that the page is a threat to print media sports journalists. This is because it is clear they are competing for the same market and the numbers suggest that DeMbare DotComs has the upper hand. From the researcher's point of view the ways in which DeMbare DotComs was viewed as a threat cut deeper than the ways in which it was viewed as complementary.

Because they share the same market, the readership of *The Herald*, *Newday*, and *Standard* has gone down, however, whether it is because the readers prefer DeMbare DotComs to other print publications that is causing this drop in numbers is unclear because other factors may also determine the drop in numbers of subscriptions. However, as Enock Muchinjo puts it, "a soccer fanatic who ordinarily would have relied on say *The Sunday Mail* to find out how their team played might as well get the same information from 'Dotti' for a few cents of airtime and thus does not need to buy *The Sunday Mail* anymore". Therefore, the sports journalists viewed DeMbare DotComs as a threat in that it has the potential to push them out of the market because readers opt for its football reality due to its easy access and affordability. This proves Atton's (2002) notion that alternative media offer the audience alternative content to the mainstream media and in some cases are more accessible and more affordable.

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The 'breaking news' aspect is also viewed as a threat by the sports journalists. Since the inception of the printing press, it has had the privilege of breaking news to the audience and had little competition in that area but since the inception of the internet and social media there has been a drastic change. The fact that DeMbare DotComs can publish a breaking news headline instantly and give up to date minute by minute updates is a threat to print sports journalists in that they have to wait to publish the same headline the next day when most of the people have already read it on 'Dotti', hence the notion of news values is compromised for the story might not be news worthy the next day hence they have to re-angle their stories to maintain their relevance.

John Mkwetsi argued that DeMbare DotComs can be labelled as a threat if journalists do not want journalism to evolve. This means that for journalists to adapt to DeMbare DotComs they should acknowledge the fact that we are in the era of innovation and new technologies are developing everyday so journalists have to be up to date with these technologies and use them to their advantage rather than stick to their conservative traditional methods only, a fusion of old and new media becomes necessary.

The question of social media leading to the loss of jobs of traditional sports journalists was directed to the respondents. Their answers were quite similar in that the bottom line response was no. Even though social media sites publish sports stories the need for traditional print sports journalists is still huge. Social media sites and digitization has actually led to the recruitment of online journalists and editors. So, the notion by Edmonds and Pew (2010) that in USA from 2007-2009 there were cases of journalist retrenchment due to the advent of social media has therefore not been recorded in Zimbabwe. Yes, there has been retrenchment of journalists but not for the reason being the advent of social media.

DeMbare DotComs poses both challenges and prospects to sports journalists and the traditional practice of football reality in Zimbabwe in that it affects journalism operations demanding a new way of operating by the journalists that may divert from the traditional way things used to be done.

4.4 DeMbare DotComs a complement to traditional practise of journalism

The new media might not have necessarily come to displace the traditional media but to complement them. This study learnt that DeMbare DotComs, despite largely being perceived as a threat to the traditional practice of journalism, to some extent it can also be viewed as playing a pivotal role in complementing the already existing practices in sports reporting.

Journalists have actually turned the popular Facebook page to their advantage in this age. This discourse was confirmed through conversations with selected sports journalists across the Zimbabwean media landscape. The platform has helped journalists to improve some of their skills in their everyday execution of duties in the profession. Perhaps it goes with the cliché “If you can’t beat them, then join them”. The journalists have joined the platform in different ways. In an interview John Mkwetsi, underscored that almost all sports journalists now have no option but to treat DeMbare DotComs as a complement. “...It allows us to share from each other and gives us a chance to evolve as journalists and become more modern and keep up with the needs of the readers and continuously innovate ourselves to satisfy these readers”. Even though DeMbare DotComs has more followers than *The Herald*, *Newsday* and *Daily News* this is viewed as a ‘wakeup call’ to sports journalists to work more on their stories to maintain their relevance. From Mkwetsi’s statement it shows that sports journalists have realized the only way to keep up with digitization is to learn from it and continuously innovate themselves as does the technology to give the readers what they want because if they do not evolve they become unnecessary in the market.

This proves the relevance of the theory social construction of technology (SCOT) that argues that the way audiences adopt or reject a technology is based on social factors and it is the audience who shape the technology and it affects their lives. Fulk (1993) argues that technologies are shaped and grow within a society and human action shapes the technology and how it develops. Rejection and use of a new technology is assumed to be affected by social factors. Sports journalists have shaped DeMbare DotComs to make it work for them and improve on their journalistic practises.

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The notion of 'lazy journalism' which was brought up by Osborn (2011) came into play, however, it was both proven correct and criticized according to the findings of this research. Osborn (2011) argued that journalistic reflection shrank due to the advent of social media which has led to substandard publications. However, the journalists viewed DeMbare DotComs as a complementary and also argued that DeMbare DotComs has led to sports journalists improving on their research skills in order to come up with articles of high standard. This however, could mean they are improving their stories because of the fear of being exposed by DeMbare DotComs because, 'Dotti will challenge our stories and expose us where we might be compromised or where we might have done a dis-service to our readers...' as Ishemunyoro Chingwere put it.

The journalists also argued that DeMbare DotComs is a complementary in that the journalists take hints on lead stories from it and then develop those using different angles. Farai Machamire argued that this makes access to stories easier and there is no restriction on 'Dotti' when it comes to access to information. Jordan (2009), Schultz and Sheffer (2010) and Price et al (2012) also came to a similar conclusion that social media makes access to information easier for sports journalists and they use this to their advantage. However, though it makes their job easier when it comes to leads on stories, this notion to an extent also proves correct Osborn (2011)'s argument that journalists have become lazy in their operations due to social media. In this case the traditional practice of journalism of going in the field or going on 'beats' to hunt for stories has been compromised because now the journalists can just log on their computers or better yet their mobile phones and access information on DeMbare DotComs without any hassle.

Ishemunyoro Chingwere argued that the perception of DeMbare DotComs in newsrooms is that it is viewed as an authority and is a respected source of news both for readers and journalists who might be struggling with diary. The only sickening part for him is that some of the journalists are suspected to be administrators of the popular page, '...an allegation which is not only baseless, but unfounded and mischievous'. This accusation rose from the fact that posts on DeMbare DotComs are now more credible and are written in a journalistic professional way, a way that citizen journalists cannot emulate.

The ways in which ‘Dotti’ was viewed as complementary were linked to access to information and how the sports journalists have shaped DeMbare DotComs and have now begun to adopt it in their everyday working practises.

4.5 Competition over Scoop

Journalism is a field which thrives on scoops and sport is no exception. Findings of the study suggest that journalists’ privilege to scoop ‘scoops’ is really under threat from DeMbare DotComs. This Facebook site is also in the business of sniffing and breaking scoops. As argued by Ishemunyoro Chingwere in an interview, it is now difficult to hold on to a scoop till the next morning without DeMbare DotComs getting wind of it. This discourse is also highlighted by Jordan (2009) and Bell (2011) who predict the death of newspapers because of the manner in which social media breaks news before the print media do. The moment news is broken by Dembare DotComs then it means it no longer qualifies to be called news. News thrives on timeliness.

Holding on to a scoop has become more challenging for the sports journalists must continuously monitor DeMbare DotComs to watch out for a leak in their stories before they run them to print. Therefore, the aspect of news values and newsworthiness becomes key to the sports journalists in that they have to make sure their stories are newsworthy before going to print. However, a story is considered newsworthy if it is something the audiences need, would want to know and must know and the respondents argued that they have to make sure their articles fit this criteria.

The competition over scoop is mostly stiff when it comes to match results and player profiles or player transfer news since DeMbare DotComs continuously publishes such information daily. The sports journalists argued that it is now obvious they cannot beat ‘Dotti’ when it comes to ‘breaking news’ so they have resorted to other strategies. They are no longer concerned with breaking news about match results or fixtures or player transfers but have resorted to more in-depth detailed stories that the readers approach the newspapers to find.

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Journalists have changed the way they report and this concurs with Ramos (2010) who argued that, "News habits are changing, audiences are changing, sports organizations are changing and inevitably sports journalism is changing due to new media technologies". Though the 'scoop' is always won by DeMbare DotComs, sports journalists have found other ways to break news on in-depth stories. However, they still argue that even if they have refocused their attention on other stories besides match results and fixtures and player transfer, DeMbare DotComs can surprise them by publishing the same story they have before they go to print. Hence, they are always on the lookout.

4.6 The Future of Traditional Sports Journalism Brighter Than Ever

The thesis also learnt that despite the threat posed by DeMbare DotComs, the future of traditional journalism seems brighter. Some respondents to the study remain adamant that the traditional practice of journalism and their privilege to mediate 'reality' remain relevant.

In an interview John Mkwetsi argued, "Sports journalists are now getting used to the existence of the new media and the continuous technological innovations that somehow seem to affect us inevitably". He said there is a paradigm shift from being at first hostile towards these social media sites to being accustomed to them and adapting to them. The hostility according to John Mkwetsi was due to the fact that these social media sites are a platform for citizen journalism and this meant reduction in professionalism and they viewed 'Dotti' as an unworthy source that was tainting their professional standards. However, with time they started giving the page some credit and have begun to believe that DeMbare DotComs is a page administered by anonymous sports journalists.

Mkwetsi argued that good journalism will never die despite the challenges it might face in the era of digitization. It will continue to survive because of its relevance. What changes however, is the form and the way it is packaged. News values cannot be changed and as long as traditional sports journalism adheres to these news values then their relevance in the journalism terrain will never be extinct.

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The administration of the page is 'by the fans for the fans' but however, in journalistic circles there is suspicion that the administrator/s are amongst them...professional journalists and to an extent the accusation might be true because the journalists can write anything on the page and not be liable to media laws or flak. Chingwere however, predicts that traditional sports journalism will survive if it maintains its high content, in depth and ethical quality as well as adapting to new forms of media and finding a way to fuse them and use them to their advantage.

Farai Machamire and Enock Muchinjo from the *Daily News* both argued that the general perception of DeMbare DotComs in newsrooms is that journalists have mixed feelings towards the Facebook page but will soon have to adapt to it. They argued that the DeMbare DotComs followers religiously follow traditional media and traditional media will always remain relevant no matter what the digital age throws at it. Muchinjo argued that there are people who will always buy a newspaper to read a story although that story is on the internet. Machamire added on to say some people religiously buy the newspapers not because of the content but because it is out of habit.

Mike Moyo, Farai Goko and Munya Gumbo (not real names) argued in one way or the other that traditional journalism will survive because social media sites are not reliable at times and cannot be trusted and people from the beginning have always trusted traditional print media and journalism. This might be because the audiences know that if a journalist publishes misrepresented facts or a bogus story he/she will be sued or fired hence their consistent credibility whereas if one does the same on DeMbare DotComs one cannot be sued or punished. The journalists argued that therefore after reading a story on DeMbare DotComs people purchase a newspaper to confirm it, thus print media will always remain relevant. However, the 25 analysed posts on DeMbare DotComs can hardly be labelled not credible and be guilty of misrepresenting facts. This is because the articles are written in great detail and have sources that have the chance to refuse any association with the posts but do not do so because the stories are credible and always on point. There was no article posted by a fan or follower accusing the page of falsifying information because the posts are accurate.

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Tinashe Kusema, Feza Ndau (not real name) and Bella Nyoka (not real name) all argued that traditional journalism will not die, though it will be challenged a lot it, will however, come out stronger than ever. The sports journalists agreed on the fact that challenges have been brought up by social media and digitization to the traditional sports journalism terrain, however, through all that they have somehow managed to overcome these and found a way to fuse the two in order to maintain their ground as credible media. The weaknesses and strengths of social media sites and DeMbare DotComs are the ones traditional journalism in Zimbabwe use to maintain their relevance in the journalism world.

All this confirms the argument by Boyle (2006) that in the end traditional journalism and social media will co-exist as both will learn from each other and create respective solid position in journalism for them.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter brought to light the data gathered and interpretation as well as analysis of the data. The chapter answered all the research questions. The next chapter will conclude the research as well as give recommendations on certain issues.

5.0 Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summaries the findings of the study hinting on conclusions made by the study. Recommendations are also made emanating from observations made by the study.

5.2 Concluding Remarks

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Social media has had a huge impact on traditional journalism practises (Boyle 2006, Jordan 2009, Price et al 2012). This study aimed at finding out what are the challenges and prospects posed by DeMbare DotComs on the traditional practise of football reporting in Zimbabwe. The study was motivated by the desire to find how social media specifically DeMbare DotComs, a vibrant Facebook page, has impacted on the Zimbabwe print sports journalism terrain. The study also sought to establish how sports journalists perceive this Facebook page and how they employ it in their everyday working practises.

The study was purely qualitative in data gathering, analysis and presentation. The research made a rich descriptive approach of phenomenon from data gathered and it was also informed by a number of concepts and theories in the field of media and communication that include alternative media and the politics of reality, social construction of technology and news values in the digital age. The researcher largely relied on face to face and telephone interviews with purposively selected sports journalists from various mainstream newspapers in which the researcher wanted to get their perspective on the effects of DeMbare DotComs on their traditional practise of football reporting. The research depended on sampling in coming up with findings which were all but samples of the broader whole. Through critical discourse analysis of the interviews with the journalists the researcher discovered that DeMbare DotComs posed both challenges and prospects to the traditional practise of journalism and all interviewees viewed it as both a complementary and a threat.

This study further established that there has been a considerable paradigm shift in the perception of DeMbare DotComs in newsrooms. An analysis of the findings showed that there is controversy when it comes to the administration of DeMbare DotComs and that sports journalists are being accused of being the ones who post on the Facebook page. The issue of ethical credibility of DeMbare DotComs was also analysed during the research and it was proven that DeMbare DotComs was a credible source and journalists have grown to respect it with time.

The study discovered DeMbare DotComs kept sports journalists on their toes. This came to light when the interviewed sports journalists and editors agreed that the Facebook page posed as great competition and might be one of the reasons why newspaper readership has gone down. The operations of DeMbare DotComs and how it threatened the long-standing privilege of print

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media to 'break news' to the audiences as well as inform them on current football reality was a wakeup call for print sports journalists to come up with new strategies and tactics in order to remain relevant in the journalism terrain. This led to them re-angling stories, more research, more in depth stories and shifting from event reporting to analysis reporting. They believe this is how they have managed to continue satisfying their audiences.

The research revealed that the prospects posed by DeMbare DotComs on traditional sports journalism were mostly linked to access to information and that the sports journalists got leads to stories on the page. The fact was that the existence of DeMbare DotComs posed competition on traditional print journalism. The interviewed sports journalists viewed it as a good thing because it allowed them to improve on their work in order to gain and maintain a competitive advantage over it. The ways in which Dembare DotComs was viewed as a complementary by the sports editors and journalists were very few compared to the threats it posed. The threats involved DeMbare DotComs having the potential to push them out of the market since they compete for the same market. The accessibility and affordability of the Facebook page was also viewed as a threat because newspapers did not have this advantage.

The advent of social media precisely DeMbare DotComs, has also led to journalists changing their traditional everyday working practises. Instead of going on 'beats' they just log on to Facebook and access DeMbare DotComs to get leads on stories which was termed 'lazy journalism' by Osborn (2011). However, to an extent it has led to them improving on their journalistic skills because the sports journalists have argued that DeMbare DotComs will expose them and publish their misdemeanours to the audiences and that is something any journalist does not desire.

On a lighter side, DeMbare DotComs did not specifically cause any retrenchments of journalists like the way it was recorded in USA and the UK of social media leading to print journalists being fired. It has however, led to recruitment of journalists such as online journalists and online editors for their online versions of the newspapers.

The fusion of these two media became apparent and the sports journalism terrain is aware of this. For both the future of social media and traditional journalism to be promising, working side by side is required. The study also discovered that the sports journalists and editors viewed the

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future of traditional sports journalism as bright because they have loyal fans. They also have online versions of their newspapers to increase accessibility and they have learnt not to resent DeMbare DotComs but to learn from it and evolve personally as journalists and as a profession, to maintain their competitive advantage, for good journalism never dies.

The objectives set at the beginning of the study were to critically explain the challenges and prospects posed by DeMbare DotComs to the traditional mainstream coverage of football reality in newspapers, to understand how traditional methods of journalism have been affected by DeMbare DotComs and to explain how sports journalists perceive DeMbare DotComs and how they employ it to their everyday working practises. The study managed to meet all the objectives as it was clarified that they were more threatening challenges than prospects that are posed by DeMbare DotComs to the traditional practise of football reporting in Zimbabwe but however, the sports journalists and editors have managed to accept this and figured out strategies and tactics to maintain their relevance and fuse the two media and be as equally important.

5.3 Recommendations to Print Sports Journalists

I recommend that sports journalists embrace new media such as DeMbare DotComs to be able to work more professionally and not have their work affected. I applaud the way they have decided to change and refocus the way they operate and approach stories for they put in more effort and this leads to high quality articles. They however, should not only rely on DeMbare DotComs for leads on stories but I advise them to go on ‘beats’ and hunt for stories as this has always been the most exciting part of journalism which is not supposed to fade away. They should continue to come up with ways to maintain the high standards of traditional print journalism as this has been what has satisfied their audiences for centuries. Good journalism should not die because of social media but should evolve to become even greater.

5.4 Recommendations to DeMbare DotComs

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Even though the real administrators of DeMbare DotComs are unknown, I recommend that they should continue to publish football reality to audiences as it gives a fresh perspective on things. The existence of alternative media is necessary as it keeps mainstream media on their toes and competition is necessary to increase journalistic quality. However, I also recommend that posts on DeMbare DotComs be of high ethical standards such as accuracy, truthfulness, credibility and objectivity.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Since this research concentrated on DeMbare DotComs only and the challenges and prospects it poses on traditional practises of football reporting in Zimbabwe, it is also necessary to look at the same area but paying particular reference to other social media sites and maybe re-angling the thrust of the research in order to exhaust the sports journalism terrain and the impact of digitization. This will be necessary as the area of sports journalism is a recently tapped on area that requires further studying.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has summed up the whole research. It briefly out lined what the rest of the study was about, how it was conducted as well as concluding remarks on the research data and findings. Objectives of the study were successfully achieved and all the key research questions were answered. Recommendations were also highlighted to sports journalists and DeMbare DotComs. Lastly, avenues which can be worked on concerning this subject area in future researches were suggested.

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