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THE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES USED BY BUSTOP TV AND MAGAMBA TV IN ZIMBABWE'S UNCERTAIN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

BY

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Abstract

The study investigates survival strategies of Bustop TV and Magamba TV in Zimbabwe's uncertain media landscape. The study is situated in a conceptual framework that looks into revenue models such as the dual-product marketplace and advertising revenue model. It makes use of the qualitative paradigm with a focus on case study. In-depth interviews were used as methods of data collection. The online media organisations like the traditional media organisations depend on revenue models like dual product market place and advertising revnue model. However the research revealed that for online organisations to survive they need to make use of alternative sources of revenue.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Zimbabwe's media landscape is populated by emerging online TV channels which are thriving and continuing to produce content even though there isn't a definite industry to sustain these online businesses. This study seeks to investigate the survival tactics used by online media start-ups in order to sustain operations in an uncertain media environment.

Young entrepreneurs are taking their chances by venturing into establishing new (online) businesses otherwise known as "Start-ups". Companies in the first stage of operations are known as start-ups and usually they are funded by their founders as they attempt to develop a product or service they believe is in demand (Evers, 2003). Initially start-ups are funded by the founding entrepreneurs but due to high costs and limited revenue there is needed for further funding from interested investors. According to a research done by Sage: Survey report (2015:3), "Founders cited the top three challenges they face as struggling to grow revenue, add customers and secure capital."

It is because of these characteristics of start-ups that raise the question in this research which focus on understanding the survival skills of local media companies that are operating online. With focus on such online TV channels as Bustop TV and Magamba TV it allows the researcher to investigate how these firms manage to sustain operations in an economically hostile media environment. This phenomenon brings a unique perspective as the study endeavours to correlate this discrepancy between lack of adequate funding (and/or revenue) and continued operations. Thus according to Nyamwanza (2014:5), "Organisations and businesses therefore have to look inwards to survive, grow and prosper."

The media industry is a business like any other industry therefore in addition to its special roles of informing, educating and entertaining, the media are profit driven. Wasko (2005:32) explains, "Increasingly, media and communication resources have become commodities – products and services that are sold by profit-seeking companies to buyers or consumers." Analysing content produced by both Bustop TV and Magamba TV, the trend is such that they address topical issues surrounding politics of the day and other social commentary and in most instances in a comical way. Though these organisations meet the special role of the media of informing and entertaining and at times educating; there is still need to meet production costs which also includes remuneration packages for both cast and crew. Moreover entrepreneurs in Africa are faced with different challenges than those of the developed world. Herrington et al (2014) as cited by Barrett (2016:9) outlines, "These challenges include financial constraints, labour law, the level of education of the potential workforce, the ease of starting a company, government involvement, tax implications and the available infrastructure."

Film and television production is one of the most expensive media forms because of its heavy reliance on technological gadgets and required technical expertise to meet the demands for a quality production. Thus there is need for state of the art equipment and skilled labour to execute the job. All this translates to financial resources. Independent feature film production and distribution operate as a value system business where by a number of companies, freelancers and business add value to the product from start to end and as such when the product generates revenue, the stakeholders receive commission (Bloore, nd). Futher more Bloore (nd) mentions that technological convergence has tempered with the economies of film financing and distribution.

1.2 Background of the study

Many of the online TV start-ups in Zimbabwe die in their infancy but a handful manage to survive and operate within Zimbabwe's media landscape. The study seeks to identify the survival tactics employed by Bustop TV and Magamba TV in an uncertain media landscape in Zimbabwe. This research is situated in *theories of film* and film in Africa with specific focus on film in Zimbabwe since online TV channels in Zimbabwe are an offshoot of the local film industry. Defining a film industry in the context of Zimbabwe might be complex. However Zimbabwe has had various phases in the development of its film industry like in any other country in Africa including South Africa. Thus Mboti (2016:1) asserts, "…the Zimbabwean film industry, like most in Africa, is necessarily a work in progress." Post-independence the government through the *Ministry of Information* made efforts to engage Hollywood in the process of establishing a film industry. Hungwe (2001:87) in analysing the Zimbabwe film industry points to the fact, "During the first decade of independence the state, through the Ministry of Information, launched an aggressive initiative to promote Zimbabwe as a film-making centre for Hollywood studios." However the film industry suffered early in the 1980s and later in the 1990s after the government and NGOs withdrew funding respectively (Hungwe, 2001; Mboti, 2016; Mabweazara, nd)

Therefore the study in grounded in understanding the survival strategies used by online TV channels the likes of Bustop TV and Magamba TV in an uncertain media environment in Zimbabwe. Thus it interrogates how these start-ups sustain continued operations. YouTube the biggest platform for distribution of online video content hosts many online TV channels (including Bustop TV and Magamba TV) and uses the advertising revenue model amongst others. The only challenge is that this kind of advertising is not a big revenue stream for content producers (Schepp and Schepp, 2009).

In addition to the *Advertising revenue model,* the most used revenue model in media is the

Dual product market Place (Pennings, 2011). However despite the challenges presented by the media landscape in Zimbabwe rendering these models ineffective to the continued operations of online TV channels in Zimbabwe; Magamba TV and Bustop TV continue to operate successfully. It is from this point of departure that this research seeks to study the survival strategies of these two online TV channels.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Due to difficulties in sustaining operations of online media start-ups in the media environment in Zimbabwe this study seeks to find out the survival strategies used by Bustop and Magamba TV in Zimbabwe's uncertain media landscape.

1.4 Objectives

The research objectives are to: -

- investigate the survival tactics used by Bustop TV and Magamba TV.
- examine the extent to which online platforms are a direct source of revenue
- find out the challenges faced by Bustop TV and Magamba TV as start-up companies

1.5 Main research question:

What are the survival strategies used by Bustop TV and Magamba TV in a challenging economy?

1.6 Research sub-questions

- What are the survival tactics used by Bustop TV and Magamba TV?
- To what extent are the online platforms a direct source of income?

- How do Bustop TV and Magamba TV survive in a challenging economy?

1.7 Significance of the study

The existing literature on online TV channels in Zimbabwe mainly focuses on the economics of the media with a main emphasis on how online TV channels generate revenue. However the literature neglects that most of these ventures die in their infancy. Small scale businesses face extreme challenges in a changing business, political and economic environment and policy intervention cannot solve this alone (Nyamwanza, 2014). Thus businesses should come up with their own solutions as to how they can last in the industry. Therefore this research seeks to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the survival tactics employed by the online TV channels such as Bustop TV and Magamba TV that have managed to operate longer than most in an uncertain media landscape in Zimbabwe. As Nyamwanza (2014:1) posits "There is need for businesses to chart their own destiny in order to prosper and survive in this challenging environment."

1.8 Delimitations

The research focuses on online TV channels/start-ups that are in existence for a minimum of three years. In Zimbabwe according to SEDCO in Mudavanhu et al (2011) approximately 60 percent of start-ups fail in the first year and 25 percent fail within the first three years of establishment. By focusing on firms that have out lived the first three years allows the researcher to investigate organisations that have some sort of structure of operations and have managed to survive. The study examines a sample of the content produced from these online TV channels since March 2017 and how much traffic they generate. The attention will remain on online TV channels and not on other online media forms such as *blogs, webpages, online magazines, podcasts* and the likes.

1.8 Limitations

The interviews focus on only the founders of the organisations and the information obtained may not be a true reflection of the firms operations and/or achievements due to claims made by the owners. Also the outcome of the research may be limited to the two organisations under study and may not necessarily be subject to other online TV channels and/or other online media forms. Further research in this area may reveal other results. However these two online TV channels have been dominating hence may serve as a true reflection of the best survival tactics employed in an uncertain media landscape.

The theoretical frame work in which the study is situated does not fully explore the entire scope of how these online media businesses in Zimbabwe make revenue. With further analysis on models such as the dual product marketplace and advertising revenue model even though these models can justify to a certain extent how revenue is accumulated they cannot fully explain how the reset of the finances needed to run these start-ups are generated.

1. 10 Assumptions

- Bustop TV and Magamaba TV reflect characteristics of media (online) start-ups that are managing to sustain operations in an uncertain media landscape in Zimbabwe.
- Bustop TV and Magamaba TV generate revenue from online presence.

1.11 Proposed outline of research

Chapter one of the research focuses on the introduction to the topic of discussion. Chapter two reviews the literature that encompass studies done in this particular subject and related ones while chapter three focuses on methods and methodology in the research. Chapter four

presents an analysis of the organisations under study and in chapter five there will be data presentation and analysis and six focuses recommendations and conclusions to the research.

1.12 Conclusion

My research aims to find out the survival strategies used by Bustop TV and Magamba TV in an uncertain media landscape. That is to have an understanding of how these online media start-ups manage continued operations in an environment where there are economic constraints and how they generate revenue.

Chapter two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature review and conceptual framework of the research. There is substantial literature concerning the field of online TV channels in relation to the economics of how online channels generate revenue. This research will discuss some of it in relation to online media start-ups (in form of online TV channels) in Zimbabwe paying attention to *dual product marketplace* theory and *advertising revenue model*. Therefore this chapter will provide the basis for which the study can analyse the economics of online TV channels in Zimbabwe vis a vis the survival techniques of Bustop TV and Magamba TV. It further places the study in the background of film theories with emphasis on film in Zimbabwe to give an understanding of the film industry in Zimbabwe from where online TV channels are an offshoot. The conceptual framework in this chapter which will assist in analysis of media as business and also provide a foundation to the study in the other chapters.

2.2 Literature Review

In this section the researcher acknowledges the literature from other scholars and sources that have produced work that is applicable to the topic under study. The importance of literature from other sources is that it aids the researcher to have a clear outline for understanding the area of study. Literature comprises journals, books, dissertations and authoritative online sources among others. Studying literature from other scholars can lead to identification of gaps left by these scholars. Thus this study will investigate and analyse literature with a key focus on economics of online media start-ups in Zimbabwe.

2.3 Zimbabwe film industry

The Zimbabwe film industry has a long history dating back to the colonial era and has

evolved in phases which Hungwe (2001) describes as the history of the film industry in Zimbabwe over fifty years. However this section will discuss the relevant phases that help create the link between evolution of this industry and the emergency of online TV channels in the digital era.

There is not much of an industry to talk of in the past few decades when it comes to Zimbabwe due to fragmented attempts by various independent local filmmakers to produce decent content in form of feature length films. At least this notion holds water when the idea of a film industry is viewed from a perspective of the film industry in the western countries (Mboti, 2016; Hungwe, 2001).

Mboti (2016) argues that considering a film industry from the perspective of Hollywood where there are big studios and oligopolies funding the American film industry may defeat the purpose of defining an industry in the scope of Zimbabwean film.

On the other hand Mabweazara (nd) explains the initial attempts of the Zimbabwean government in the 1980s to establish a local industry by attracting Hollywood studios to film in Zimbabwe. This marriage was meant to give the Zimbabwean filmmaker an opportunity to be trained there by setting the base for a local film industry. The idea was that Hollywood would facilitate training of local filmmakers by injecting money into the economy and as a result a local industry would evolve (Hungwe, 2001).

However the failure for commercial success of a major co-production by the Zimbabwean government and Hollywood in the production *Cry Freedom* plunged the local industry into an abyss as the government withdrew from funding film in the late 1980s. As stated by Mboti (2016:9), "The lack of return of investment on *Cry Freedom* experiment marked a significant turning point in the government's relationship with the film industry. Since that time, government refrained from funding feature film productions." A number of

feature films where later produced with funding from NGOs in the early 1990s and currently the shift to cheaper means of production through the video/digital medium encouraged the rise of a generation of filmmakers manipulating the new digital platforms. The challenge still arises in that the filmmaker is operating in an uncertain media landscape due to withdrawal of funding by the government and later the NGO sector. The economic and political situation during the 2000s together with the hyperinflation, and land redistribution programme pushed NGOs out of Zimbabwe (Mboti, 2016; Hungwe, 2001; Mhiripiri, 2010; Mabweazara, nd)

The rise of online platforms and availability of affordable digital production equipment has opened a door to vast numbers of new age filmmakers in an industry that was a preserve for a few elite as seen during colonial times and the first twenty years of independence in Zimbabwe. Convergence of the media now allows for anyone to become a producer of content moving away from the traditional media which has structures responsible for gate-keeping and agenda setting to serve the interest of the elite at the expense of the ordinary person.

The greater challenge of the filmmaker in Zimbabwe is an issue of identity, self-expression and a pursuit of a story that is authentically Zimbabwean or African in a broader context. That is there is a need to develop an industry towards African cinema. Thus Hungwe (2001: 83) states, "The Zimbabwean film-making enterprise has struggled with an ideological tension between, on one hand, donor-sponsored 'message' films, and on the other, alternative narratives that reflect as well as define an emergent and collective African identity."

Interestingly enough the film industry in Zimbabwe is yet to take a commercial approach away from influences of the likes of donors. *Jit* is the only attempt at a commercial

feature film that had success but this type of approach to film is embraced by a few local filmmakers who hope to disassociate with donor influence which pushes social agenda and it is yet to mature (Mabweazara, nd).

However the online content producer has resorted to the skit which is an even 'shorter version' of a short film. Short films appeared mainly post 2000 due to lack of financing for feature projects during a period of political and economic crisis (Mhiripiri, 2010). Short films have served both as an economic way of producing films and also as an opportunity for young filmmakers to train and master the trade. Magamba TV and Bustop TV are social commentators producing current affairs and presenting topical issues in a satirical way using the skit format. Bustop TV in addition to the skits now produces *News* based content in their popular bulletin *Bustop News* and Magamba TV has a programme *The Week* that looks into the week's news in a satirical manner.

2.4 Understanding the nature of start-ups

This paper looks into the survival tactics of online media start-ups (in the form of online TV channels the likes of Bustop TV and Magamba TV) in an uncertain media landscape in Zimbabwe. In understanding this phenomenon it is important to understand the nature of the start-up otherwise referred to as *new venture* in most of the literature reviewed under this study.

A start-up is the birth of a new business organisation or venture aimed at achieving particular goals or outcomes. Dutta (2016) claims start-ups are juvenile organisations that have recently emerged and in a way they are a refinement of an entrepreneur. Thus a start-up can be anything from a new; business, entrepreneurial venture or partnership firm designed to be an established business. This process of starting up entails the events before the organisation

emerges into a well-established venture thus it involves all activities that influence how a business is started (Gartner, 1985). As such previous studies have alluded to the process of starting up a business as being similar to the biological process of "gestation" that is the cycle from conception to birth (Reynolds and Miller, 1992). It is not always clear to identify exactly when the idea to start an organisation is conceived but rather if focus is placed on the first day the business started operating, that can help establish when the organisation started running. In the case of Bustop TV as outlined in this research, it rebranded from the popular online TV channel PO. Box TV.

However most founders of these young firms in Zimbabwe rarely view themselves as an emerging start-up that will eventually mature into an established business entity. Rather they consider themselves as being self-employed. Being self-employed cannot be placed in a specific category because the idea is widely contested and in part because there is no legal definition that exits (Dellot, 2014). Considering a perspective of the media being an industry, these young ambitious practitioners can be viewed as entrepreneurs in the business of the media.

2.5 Media and the emergence of online business

Business over the internet has revolutionised commerce allowing for industry to grow exponentially. The media industry has also explored this avenue because of its potential to reach mass audience. According to Lightman (2002) 100 million people connected to the Internet in the first 16 years of its emergence as compared to 50 million people owning a radio 38 years after it was on the market.

Online business also known as *e-commerce* is made possible by the convergence of media technologies. Most businesses have taken commerce onto the World Wide Web because of its convenience in communication, wide reach and minimised operational cost as compared to traditional means of business. The potential to allow marketers to connect to thousands in a short space of time makes new media an important element for business professionals and in 2014 there were 1.32 billion and 1.07 billon monthly active users on Facebook and mobile device users respectively (Chinakidzwa et al, 2016).

As for Zimbabwe the mobile penetration rate continues to expand exponentially as documented in recent years. Tele-density is a measure of active mobile phone subscribers' identity module cards and landlines as a percentage of the country's potential users and in 2011 it was at 73.2 percent while in the first quarter of 2012 it was 75.9 percent rising to 89.8 percent by end of that same year (Moyo and Makore 2013). What these statistics translate to is that online based content producers have access to a wider reach as compared to traditional media content producers since they take advantage of *Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)* in reaching an audience. However the survival of these online content producers is not guaranteed in Zimbabwe's media landscape due to varying factors, with lack of investors and corporates involvement being part of it.

The likes of Bustop TV and Magamba TV are some of the online TV channels that have jumped for the opportunity to utilise online social networks to reach audiences and establish organisations. Therefore online TV channels generate their revenue from ads that play before their videos and brand deals on youtube (Schepp and

Schepp, 2009). Bustop TV in specific makes money from brand deals they enter with local corporates (Gambanga, 2016). Like any market there is competition and the online activity in Zimbabwe is saturated by many of these online TV channels competing for the same clients. Even though there are various ways these start-ups make money from online presence there still is a gap in understanding how they sustain operations given that the revenue generated is not exactly sufficient enough to run the start-up.

2.6 The media landscape in Zimbabwe and its uncertainty

Running a media company in Zimbabwe is not always a sustainable endeavour due to various factors that bedevil the industry. "Zimbabwe's media companies are seriously struggling for survival in an inexorably deteriorating economic environment characterised by far-reaching technological disruptions, lack of alternative funding models, hostile political climate, ethical challenges and corruption creeping onto the profession," (Muleya, 2016:1). Focusing on the print media Zimbabwe has on average six dailies but this number is not constant as newspapers constantly close down. The dailies that have stood the test of time are the state-owned publications under the Zimbabwe papers (Zimpapers) stable that include The Herald and Chronicle. In addition Zimpapers has weeklies such as Sunday Mail and Sunday News and tabloids H-Metro and B-Metro. Other publications come from the private sector like NewsDay (Alpha Media Holdings) and Daily News (Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe).

As for television there is Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) which has a monopoly over the airwaves. In 2001 the *Broadcasting Services Bill* paved way for the formation of the *Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe* (BAZ) after *Capital Radio* made a challenge through the Supreme Court over the monopoly of ZBC. Instead the formation of BAZ as a regulatory body has stifled the plurality and diversity of the broadcast media (Mano, 2016; Chiumbu,

2009).   However this phenomenon is nearing its end with the digitisation of broadcast signals. Zimbabwe's Supreme Court in 2003 repealed section 6 and 9 of the Broadcast Services Act (BSA) thus transferring licensing authority from the minister to the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) thereby making legal provisions for more broadcasters with a national range to come on board (Thompson, 2012).

Another challenge faced by the content producer operating in Zimbabwe is the issue of censorship. ZBC being the sole broadcaster, even independently produced programs are subject to state censorship as seen with episode 61 of *Studio 263* which was censored for portraying workers taking industrial action in demanding pay raise at a time workers at the national broadcaster were on strike demanding a salary increase (Thompson, 2012). In her argument Thompson (2012) explains that *Mai Chisamba Show* when it became independently produced and moved away from social to political issues it was taken off air. These censorship issues take a different mould when it comes to online content producers as they practice more of self-censorship. The *Cybercrime bill* which was tabled in parliament has a potential to stifle the operations of the online content producers. Recent cabinet reshuffle saw the emergence of the *Cyber Security, Threat Detection and Mitigation Ministry* and most online content producers are keen to understand the operations of this new ministry and its effects on their operations. Evidently BSA is used by the state not only to limit access to independent information but also to prevent information about problems in the country from going beyond the borders of Zimbabwe (Thompson, 2012)

On the other hand these traditional forms of mass media are being challenged by the wave of new media powered by information and communication technologies. The business models in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world are facing competition by new ways in which people

communicate and consume content because of hi-tech innovations (Muleya, 2016; Chinakidzwa et al, 2016). This new wave brought about by convergence of the media has resulted in changing patterns of advertising and consumption of media content.

2.7 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework is a set of assumptions that create a conceptual base from which rules and principles that govern ideas can be derived from. These are the ideas and beliefs that are associated with a phenomenon (Lavrakas, 2008).

2.8 Dual Product Market Place

The most dominant form of media in Zimbabwe is print media (mainly the newspaper) followed by electronic media (mainly television) and a look into this industry can provide an understanding of media business in Zimbabwe. I will focus on two theories in understanding the nature of media business (and/or economics) and these are; *Dual product marketplace and Advertising revenue model.* The most used model is the dual product marketplace which makes use of two commodities and these are content and the audience whereby content is created for sale to the consumer and a target audience is then, packaged and sold to advertisers (Pennings, 2011). This model in Zimbabwe is applied in both print and electronic media for instance newspapers like the *Financial Gazette* is targeted at the corporate world and as a result this audience is sold to advertisers who have a business interest with this kind of audience. Same applies with television, the programs have specific target audiences who are then numbered (otherwise known as "ratings") and sold to the advertiser as a potential market.

2.9 Advertising revenue model

The advertising revenue model is based on advertising as the main source of revenue in the media industry. Sinclair (2015) asserts "…not only does advertising have a visibility in the cultural environment: it is also the most vital source of the revenue that supports and motivates the vast majority of commercial media." Advertising has also taken centre stage in the new media however an evident shift can be noticed where focus is no longer on agencies as the driving factor in advertising but because of the nature of new media the balance of power is gravitating towards consumers as the consumer has also become a producer of content. To buttress this point Chinakidzwa et al (2016:34) outlines that, "The upshot is that the customer is now in a primary role as an innovator, as a source of forward-pointing information around taste and preference…" Bustop TV and Magamba TV also apply the advertising revenue model whereby they have corporates advertising when they flight their skits online. On the other hand they may be commissioned by the corporates to create content aimed at advertising particular products.

Conclusion

The chapter's focus was on reviewing literature from other scholars in particular looking at online TV channels in the context of a business or start-up. The review locates the study in the background of film, media landscape in Zimbabwe and aspects of online media activity. The conceptual framework delves on theories of media economics to establish models used in generation of revenue in the media industry.

Chapter three: Research methods and methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the focus is on the research design. This is the approach the researcher used to obtain data concerning the topic under research that is; the survival strategies used by Bustop TV and Magamba TV in Zimbabwe's uncertain media landscape. The chapter also brings to attention the methods of data collection employed that is in-depth interviews and also the sampling technique; purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique. It further explores the research population and also the chapter considers methods of data analysis and data presentation. The researcher makes use of the qualitative research paradigm to understand the tactics used for survival by Bustop TV and Magamba TV in an uncertain media landscape. To further understand the phenomenon the researcher employs a case study which makes use of qualitative methodology.

3.2 Research design

The research design employed by the researcher is the case study which puts into consideration a few cases allowing for in-depth investigation. Thus in-depth knowledge is acquired and also the focus on a small number of cases allows for a rich insight (Neuman, 2013). This research employs a case study of two online TV channels (Bustop TV and Magamba TV) in order to have an insight on the numerous online TV channels in Zimbabwe. Case study makes use of interviews.

Therefore in-depth interviews become of great importance as they generate qualitative data which leads to understanding important aspect of the phenomenon under study. The most commonly used qualitative methods include participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups and each is relevant for obtaining a particular type of data (Mack et al, 2005).

Giving particular attention to survival strategies applied by these online TV channels the aim is to get descriptive information that brings to light how these organisations manage to continue operating. Thus the researcher makes use of in-depth interviews focusing on the founders of the start-ups in order to derive key information relevant to the study. As such a semi-structured approach to gathering information was applied as it is more effective for collecting necessary data. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling where Bustop TV and Magamba TV were specifically selected because they have been in the industry for at least three years considering most of these online channels do not pass the two year mark. As such these two start-ups make a good case in studying the survival strategies of such organisations.

To get in-depth information on how Bustop TV and Magamba TV survive in an uncertain media environment the researcher opted for the qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative research is more applicable for social sciences as it allows for the interrogation of the *how, what and why* questions which otherwise cannot be addressed by the quantitative paradigm (Trochim, 2007; Palys, 2008; Neuman, 2013). Qualitative designs generally produce textual data for analysis as opposed to numeric data which is characteristic of a quantitative research design (Neuman, 2013). Qualitative researchers place emphasis on the nature of reality that is socially constructed.

3.3 Population

The research population or research universe are the elements/objects or individuals that are at the centre of scientific enquiry (Neuman, 2013). Because the study cannot extend to all the online media TV channels or firms, the research will be confined to two organisations that is Bustop TV and Magamba TV. According to Lavrakas (2008:1), "The universe consists of all survey elements that qualify for inclusion in the research study." Due to limited resources

including time among other factors, the researcher is unable to study every online media start-up in Zimbabwe, as such Bustop TV and Magamba TV serve to represent the rest of the organisations in the country.

3.4 Sampling technique

Sampling is a technique employed to ensure that research subjects from where the data is collected, represents a lager universe we seek to generalise. Williamson et al in Chawawa (nd:233) suggests, "Participant observers must fashion sampling procedures to be certain that observations made in some setting are representative of what generally goes on in that setting." There are various sampling techniques that a research may choose to employ and each one of these is suited for different situations.

The sampling technique of choice in this research is non-probability sampling technique which does not involve random selection and the researcher specifically made use of purposive sampling also known as subjective or selective sampling (Trochim, 2007; Palys, 2008). This sampling technique is effective because instead of picking the research population randomly the researcher can intentionally focus on the subjects that can provide the relevant information pertaining to the research. Thus sampling involves choosing units from a population under study in order to generalise the results back to the research universe from which they were initially taken from (Trochim, 2007). In purposive sampling the sample is selected for a specific purpose which aids the researcher to arrive at particular information necessary for the research. Cohen et al (2000:103) asserts, "In purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality." Therefore by picking these two; Bustop TV and Magamba TV they provide us with an insight of how these organisations have continued operations in an uncertain media environment.

3.5 Methods of data collection

The researcher made use of interviews directed at the founders of the start-ups. This allowed for the researcher to gather key information on the actual processes Bustop TV and Magamba TV implement to stay afloat. By specifically targeting the founders it allowed for collected data to be of a qualitative nature as these individuals are more knowledgeable about the day to day running of the start-up and how it was set up. As alluded to by Cohen et al (2000:184), "Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view."

Therefore to get accurate data of a qualitative nature the researcher used specifically in-depth interviews as they assisted the researcher in collecting data from individuals who have first-hand information. The in-depth interview as defined by (Mack et al, 2005:29), "…is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic." The interviewers approach is driven by the need to acquire as much knowledge as they can from the participant. As such the interviewee is viewed as the expert whereas the interviewer is considered the student when it comes to in-depth interviews (Mack et al, 2005).

Firstly the researcher familiarised with the owners of the start-ups by engaging them prior the actual day of the interview. This way the researcher had the opportunity to discuss the intentions of the research and the role the research participants were expected to take. Two founders from the online TV channels were interviewed. The researcher on the day of the interview managed to conduct face to face interviews by interviewing one participant at a time. This is an effective way of getting individuals to discuss from a personal point of view sharing opinions, personal feelings and experiences in the process.

During the interview the researcher posed questions neutrally and attentively listening to feedback. The researcher then made a follow-up based on the feedback to further probe the participant. Mack et al (2005:29) stresses, "They [researchers] do not lead participants according to any preconceived notions, nor do they encourage participants to provide particular answers by expressing approval or disapproval of what they say." This type of interview is semi-structured resulting in data collection of a qualitative nature. That is both interviewer and interviewee have the liberty to expand their horizon in addressing the phenomenon under study.

Unlike focus groups which concentrate more on group norms specific to particular communities, in-depth interviews give an insight into individuals' perspectives. One advantage in-depth interviews have is that they are effective in acquiring sensitive information from participants. However the data collected is in the form of interviewer's notes, recordings and typed transcripts of the recordings. The notes usually possess observations about the interview content, the participant and the context (Mack et al, 2005).

3.6 Methods of data analysis

Data analysis is the process of interpretation of accumulated information on a particular study. Sunday (nd) suggests, "Qualitative data analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been collected, into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating." Unlike quantitative data analysis that requires modelling techniques to explain how data addresses the original question, in qualitative data analysis the question will be answered by descriptive statistics (Lacey and Luff, 2007). That is the amount of textual data accumulated needs to be described and summarised. This requires the researchers to seek relationships between different themes. According to Lacey and Luff (2007:6), "Analysis of

qualitative data goes through all or some of the stages: familiarisation with the data through review, reading, listening etc, transcription of tape recorded material, organisation and indexing of data for easy retrieval and identification, anonymising of sensitive data, coding…" These are just some of the many stages but the researcher makes use of those that are relevant to the study.

This study makes use of content analysis as a method of data analysis because of the qualitative nature of the research. Content analysis is concerned with categorising verbal or behavioural data with the intention to classify, summarise and/or tabulate (Sunday, nd). Content analysis can be applied on two levels and these are descriptive and interpretive level. Analysing data is characterised by systematic organisation, integrating and examining of data in search of patterns and relationships among the specific details (Neuman, 2013). Analysis of data begins during gathering but this analysis is not complete therefore there is need to connect certain data to concepts and themes allowing for better understanding, improved knowledge and further development of theory.

The researcher uses specific themes in the collection of data allowing for the study of emerging patterns which helps to reveal the strategies of survival implemented by Bustop TV and Magamba TV in uncertain media landscape. Several concepts will be used against which data can be analysed in order to establish if these start-ups are operating within some of the well-used models in economics of the media. As such an in-depth understanding of the operations of these firms can be outlined hence increasing the knowledge of how the economics of these online TV channels actually operates.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics in academic research entail the conduct through which the study is carried out. That is the methods should be within acceptable confines in the world of academia. Resnik (2013)

argues, "One may define ethics as a method, procedure, or perspective for deciding how to act and for analysing complex problems and issues." Setting norms facilitates for research to have good knowledge, truth and also allows to minimise on errors.

However involvement with society may present ethical dilemmas in various ways. Neuman (2013) asserts that the researcher may be aware of the ethical consideration before entering the field of research but ethical issues arise during the course of study and interaction in the field. Neuman (2013) further explains that there are five ethical considerations in the field and these include; covert research, confidentiality, involvement with illegal behaviour, the powerful and publishing reports.

The researcher obtained consent from the interviewees and also permission to make use of their media products. Cohen et al (2000:50) explain, "Much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and co-operation of subjects who are to assist in the investigations..." The researcher explained to the subjects thoroughly as to the nature of study that they will be involved in by participating and giving the required information during the course of this research. Whereby participants fully agree to co-operate after having a comprehension of their involvement in the process of research.

That is the researchers ethics are mainly guided by informed consent. Diener and Crandall (1978) as cited by Cohen et al (2000:51) define informed consent as, "the procedures in which individuals choose to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions." Cohen et al (2000) further outlines that informed consent involves four aspects that are; full information, comprehension, competence and voluntarism.

Also the researcher made sure that participants understood the nature of the research and over and above the researcher offered anonymity to any interviewees who require it. The

researcher should have a commitment to protect the anonymity of the research participants and maintain confidentiality of research data (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). However the collected data will be assessed accordingly to give a true reflection of the level of participation by the subjects aiding to give in-depth knowledge on how business is undertaken by Bustop TV and Magamba TV.

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter focuses on research methods and methodology outlining how the researcher arrived at the necessary information as accurately and as factual as possible. The chapter also delves on methods of data collection, sampling techniques and research population. Furthermore it gives insight into data analysis methods that were employed in the study.

Chapter four: Organisational analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the organisational analysis of the online TV channels under study (that is Magamba TV and Bustop TV) focusing on the ownership structure, how income is generated and how these start-ups are run. Definitely the advent of the digital age has made a difference on how media content is produced and distributed. The digital age has afforded the audience an interaction with the media in a unique way allowing the consumer to become the producer. As such the extent to which content is generated and shared across the globe has facilitated for diversity of ideas shaping societies. Thus this chapter will delve in the political economy of online media start-ups to establish the significance of the ownership patterns and whose interests they serve.

There is no doubt that social media and/or online platforms have opened up channels for more voices to contribute in matters concerning political discourse and socio-economic aspects among other pertinent issues people encounter in their day to day lives. Of great interest is the ability of the platform to reach a large audience base giving it the potential to make a significant contribution to business that is, in particular advertisers in their bid to reach potential markets.

4.2 Political Economy

Political economy is interested in the ownership and control patterns of organisations and their interests ultimately. In other words it aims at understanding power relations behind production, distribution and consumption of resources (Mosco in Wasko, 2004). Thus the chapter explores who has power to determine what content is produced by online TV channels and to what effect. To a certain extent the research studies the power relations

around online content production in relation to the broader context of its reception by audiences and who gets to benefit the most from the relationship.

A glimpse into classic political economy forwards the idea of profit generation and wealth creation and it is more inclined to the ideologies of capitalism. Political economy from a classic perspective is about allocation of scarce resources and the process of production through to distribution keeping in mind how wealth is consumed and its consequences to welfare of people in society (Wasko, 2004).

While Marx and Engels approach is a critique to the idea of capitalism as a mode of production and they propose critical political economy with emphasis on impact to equity, justice and public good (Golding and Murdock, 1991). As seen with these local online TV channels the likes of Magamba TV and Bustop TV, much as there is need to generate revenue and derive a sustainable way of doing business and surviving off it, the drive is more on meeting the needs of the individual and society at large by creating content that has a socio-political relevance to the audience.

4.3 Historical background of Bustop TV and Magamba TV

Bustop TV was established in 2014 originally as P.O. Box TV by three co-founders; Lucky Aaroni, Roland Lunga and Admire Kuzhangaira. After two of the co-founders broke away to form P.O. Box Reloaded leaving Aaroni with the P.O. Box TV brand, he later rebranded the online TV channel to Bustop TV to avoid confusion.
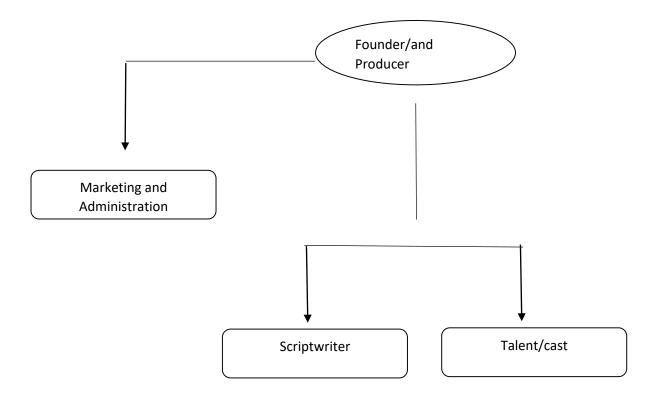
Armed with just cameras and sound equipment accompanied by a single concept the trio short their first one minute production and posted it online. Upon realising the overwhelming response from audiences the young enthusiastic filmmakers saw a need there by co-founded

P.O. Box TV. Unlike most start-ups elsewhere especially in the global north where founding entrepreneurs put down a small investment to get the ball rolling with the aim to bring on board angel investors or venture capitalists, for Aaroni and friends it was not as such as they did not have money nor an investor to take up their idea to dizzying heights. A start-up is forced to mobilise resources allowing it to compete in a market and of note the start-up is not produced in an instant but gradually evolves (Gartner, 1985).

Magamba TV has a longer history having been co-founded in 2007 by Samm "Comrade Fatso" Monro and Tongai "Outspoken" Makawa. Magamba TV is grounded in a creative organisation known as Magamba Network that encompasses various other exploits such as Shoko Festival, KalabashMedia.com one of Zimbabwe's leading youth opinion blogs and Moto Republik, Zimbabwe's first creative hub among others.

Start-ups are mostly driven by technically astute individuals as they put their knowledge and skill to work much like in the case of both Magamba TV and Bustop TV. Thus founders of a new venture should gain knowledge in products, process, technology and the market (Gartner, 1985). Lucky Aaroni and the initial co-founders Lunga and Kuzhangaira are trained filmmakers from the Zimbabwe Film and Television School of Southern Africa (ZIFTESSA). The same is true for the new outfit which constitute Bustop TV with Sharon Chideu also a student of the film school and Samatha Kureya a screen actor among other members who have acquired expertise in their respective areas in Bustop TV as an organisation. As for Magamba TV, Monro and Makawa are both spoken word artists involved in poetry, song writing, screen writing including other creative literary works.

4.4 Administrative structure and organisations' core business

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  Founder/and    │
                    │  Producer       │
                    └─────────────────┘
           │                 │
           ▼                 │
┌──────────────────┐         │
│ Marketing and    │         │
│ Administration   │         │
└──────────────────┘         │
                    ┌────────┴────────┐
                    │                 │
                    ▼                 ▼
          ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
          │ Scriptwriter │   │ Talent/cast  │
          └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
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A. Organisational structure: Bustop TV

As expected of all start-ups there should be growth and Bustop TV is undergoing this phase. It has since moved towards establishing structures that allow for it to operate on a professional level. Thus the online start-up has founder/and producer Lucky Aaroni who has a background in film and television production having studied at ZIFTESSA. He oversees the overall operations of the organisation which is based in Harare. This is followed by Silvia Mukwindidza who is in charge of marketing and administration and has a background in media and public relations. The duties encompass client services where it is the link point between Bustop TV and the client when working with corporates and/or advertisers. The position also includes the day to day running of the entity paying special attention to organisation of information for smooth running.

There is also the scriptwriter Dereck Nzwiyakwi who has a background in theatre and is responsible for crystallising the concepts into screenplay format. Then follows the talent/cast Sharon Chideu who also studied film and television production at ZIFTESSA and Samantha Kureya a screen actor and stand-up comedian.

As for Magamba TV the individuals at the helm of the start-up are Samm Monro also known as "Comrade Fatso" (Cde Fatso) and Tongai Makawa also known as "Outspoken". Samm Monro is the creative director overseeing the running of the organisation in addition to the creative aspect. Tongai Makawa is the projects manager supervising projects and their implementation.

Thus as mentioned earlier in this study Magamba TV is a component of a larger organisation Magamba Network that is involved in various other creative enterprises thus the administrative structure becomes specific to each particular entity. However the position of creative director and project manager resonates throughout the network's various arms.

Now focusing on the core business of both organisations they produce online media content to reach audiences around the globe primarily targeting Zimbabweans and Zimbabweans in the diaspora. Magamba TV concentrates on political satire and comedy, producing various skits and weekly shows that are uploaded online for viewers to access. Same applies for Bustop TV that produces skits that address current affairs with a sense of comic relief and also have content in the form of news format for the serious audience pursuing facts on issues surrounding socio-economic and political aspects in society. Over and above the two organisation offer social commentary thus allowing the general public stay informed on current affairs.

4.5 Use of social media to generate revenue

The content producer for online TV channel makes use of the social media platforms to reach the audiences as a result attracting advertisers who target these audiences with their corporate communication as potential markets. The most favoured social media platforms include; YouTube, Facebook, Vevo and also WhatsApp. However when considering video streaming YouTube is said to have had an approximate one billion views per day globally in 2008 (Wasko and Erickson, 2009). In Zimbabwe the use of promotional data bundles in accessing data via mobile devices makes other social networks more popular for instance Facebook is visited more frequently as compared to YouTube for this reason (Chikadaya, 2016; Gambanga, 2016). Thus views for online content in Zimbabwe is distributed over various platforms in order to capture various audiences and on the other hand attract revenue by uploading on another platform.

YouTube runs advertisements (ads) at the bottom of the screen allowing for views to click and view ads (Wasko, and Erickson, 2009). Therefore when viewers click on these ads a percentage of an amount of fee paid by the advertisers to YouTube is transferred to content producers with each click (a model known as pay per click [PPC]). Optionally the ads are placed at the beginning or end of a video and when the video is viewed the content producer again gets a percentage as in the above scenario. In the instance of Magamba TV or Bustop TV in addition they create corporate sponsored content and upload allowing them to also generate revenue directly from the advertiser.

Generally what these online TV channels do is they collect statistics on the number of viewers that they have on their channel and present to potential advertisers who then bank on

the numbers to advertise products and services. Another model similar to this is also followed by YouTube where by the content producer is paid according to the number of views that visit the online channel. However the various models offered by YouTube for content producers to generate revenue do not guarantee survival of the start-up as the number translate to small figures (Wasko, 2004).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided an organisational analysis of both Bustop TV and Magamba TV giving an insight on the business operations. In addition it focused the use of social media to generate revenue and also the political economy of the start-ups.

Chapter five: Data presentation and analysis

5.1 Introduction

The research looks into survival strategies of online media start-ups with respect to uncertainty of the media landscape in Zimbabwe due to economic challenges in the industry. The data being analysed in this chapter was collected using in-depth interviews conducted on the owners of Magamba TV and Bustop TV. Therefore the researcher will make use of content analysis to compile key information that will assist in arriving to a conclusion. The presentation of data will be of qualitative nature where themes are drawn from collected data and presented in thematic form. That is the focus is on what kind of media product (content) is being produced and how much online traffic it generates. This then leads the researcher to investigate the extent to which the online platforms are a direct source of income for the firm. Data will be analysed from online statistics and data derived content producers during the in-depth interviews.

5.2 The extent to which online platforms are a direct source of revenue

Bustop TV complies statistics on online traffic (covering all the platforms they have a presence) on a monthly basis and by using analysing tools such as those found on Facebook the organisation can have specific numbers of the audience visiting their platform including demography such as age and sex.

In September of 2017 Bustop TV produced 6 productions and had a total of 505 302 on all the platforms. In October they produced 13 productions and generated 741 941 from Facebook and YouTube combined. Thus Facebook had 447 241 views while YouTube had 294 700. Followership across all platforms continue to grow for Bustop TV with Facebook page increasing from 92 475 in September to 98 050 followers in October. YouTube channel

has increased from 16 561 in September to 17 880 subscribers in October while Instagram has 43 612 followers.

According to Tongai Makawa a co-founder of Magamba TV season one and season two of *The Week* Magamba TV's weekly programme on current affairs has a combined 1.5 million views to date (October, 2017). The ideal situation for the online content producer is if all the traffic was directed to a single platform specifically YouTube because with YouTube the greater the traffic the more the content producer receives in pay-outs. The challenge comes with the fact that YouTube is not catered for under the special bundles promotions offered by local mobile operator. Ultimately accumulating traffic on YouTube is slow while Facebook enjoys the advantage of the mobile data bundles, the platform is easily accessible to the public.

Both Magamba TV and Bustop TV survive on a combination of dual product market place and advertising revenue model. Dual product market place is the most widely used model in generating revenue for media organisations. It works by content creation for sale to audiences and in turn the audiences are sold as a potential market to the advertiser (Pennings, 2011). While the advertising revenue model is based on advertising to generating revenue. That is the media organisations thrives on advertisers to sustain business (Sinclair 2015). Most content creators use the advertising revenue model to conduct business because it is challenging to make viewers pay for content especially in this digital age where there is free access to media content. Therefore the basic approach is to produce a product that greatly attracts viewers and as a result attract advertisers that need to reach the audience.

The findings show that Bustop TV compiles statistics of online traffic they generate and present them to advertisers in order to secure adverting.

> *"Corporates are aware of the numbers of followers on our Facebook page and YouTube channel so they get enticed to place ads on our social media. We also collect statistics of number of actual views we get on a monthly basis and when we*
>
> *approach advertisers and we present these numbers to them,"* said Lucky Aaroni the founder of Bustop TV during an in-depth interview.

Aaroni further explains that they have a number of corporates that bring in sponsorship for advertisements on regular basis such as Gloria Flour, Jan Jam, Nash Paints and many others.

> *"We now have three major clients that we engage regularly and many more to support   our operations,"* said Aaroni.

Therefore Bustop TV generates its revenue primarily by making use of the numbers of audiences that visit their channel and enticing corporates to come on board and advertise. Thus they make use of the dual product market place model to sustain business. In addition to this the channel also proposes to create content specifically for a client thus they make a sponsored video which they upload to their channel and they get paid for it.

> "Tinogadzira ma sponsored videos as well tobhadharwa a once of payment then we upload it to our channel yogarapo forever and ever…" explained Lucky.

This approach answers to the advertising revenue model where potential clients are approached and agreements are entered into allowing for the content producer to get paid by the advertiser.

Also Magamba TV uses the same approach where they have sponsored videos adhering to the advertising revenue model and advertisements appearing before and after their videos or below the screen also in relation to the dual product marketplace. However both owners of

Magamba TV and Bustop TV highlighted the fact that these online revenue generating techniques do not fully cater for the cost needed to run the start-up.

"Yes advertisers respond to the numbers that visit our online channel but this does not necessarily translate to the much needed revenue," expressed Samm Monro.

As such for continued operations the research revealed that there is need for alternative streams of revenue to sustain business for these online start-ups. From this analysis it is evident that the advertising revenue model and dual product market place fall short on justifying the sustained operations of the online media business in Zimbabwe.

5.4 The survival strategies employed by Bustop TV and Magamba TV

Having gathered that the traditional theories by which economics of the media is justified were not sufficient enough for the local online firms to survive in the media environment, the researcher further interrogated what other possible means survival is guaranteed. The data gathered pointed to the issue that the online content producer invested much on the media product in various ways that insured the channel remained relevant to the audience.

To stay relevant Magamba TV tackles political issues and applies humour to give a different dimension from the typical current affairs approach which is mainly prevalent on television production. In other words Magamba TV thrives on political satire and comedy with a target audience of between 16-35 years of age.

"When creating content on the one hand we try and find burning issues that are relevant and topical, and resonate with young people. At the same time we present them in a funny way," Monro explained.

Magamba TV has a weekly programme titled *The Week* where they discuss topical issues happening around the country during that week. It also follows through some of the burning stories making the rounds in both mainstream and online media and making further follow ups by interviewing key individuals in some of the matters. The channel also has *Zambezi News* a parody on News that has made waves not only locally but across the continent and globally.

On the other hand Bustop TV studies social trends, follows online and mainstream media then create a relevant media product for the audience to consume. Aaroni the founder and producer for the channel is directly involved with the creative process and explains that when creating the right product they just follow trending issues be it jokes and they adapt these for the visual audio medium. He argues that no matter how people may share information orally or via text it can never be as interesting as experiencing it through the audio visual channel.

> "…we use social media, follow Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and by applying these stories to audio/visual it becomes more powerful and interesting," said Lucky.

Bustop TV creates skits that address current issues and/or current affairs and apply an element of comic relief. However after running a survey the team at Bustop TV realised that there was another set of audience that was not necessarily interested in comic relief or humour but were more interested in facts. As a result the team brainstormed and birthed a new program which tackled issues from a more serious perspective. The channel then introduced Bustop News, a bulletin that follows socio-economic and political issues and presenting the stories to the audience. This product was well received and is competing with the long established skit format of Bustop TV content.

> *"Ya! News dzirikufaya, especially our recent look into the AfriForum issue. It generated a lot of interest," exclaimed an excited Lucky.*

As a media house they have decided to invest more on the product by way of giving maximum concentration on the creative process. The main area of concern is formulating everything around a powerful concept. Aaroni further explains that as an organisation they felt the threat when *Baba Tencen* came onto the scene. But on realising the importance of staying 'fresh' on concepts, his [Aaroni] organisation focused on building content that constantly stays relevant with the times and sure enough Bustop TV saw Baba Tencen fizzle out.

The data from the research shows that for these start-ups to sustain operations there are alternative sources of revenue that are besides online activity. In the case of Magamba TV, content like Zambezi News has taken a live show format. That is there is live performance of the program and Zambezi News team goes on tour getting paid for the shows. These tours have received international recognition going to places like Cape Town South Africa and also in Europe.

> *"We generate revenue from a combination of getting sponsorship to do corporate videos and getting paid to do live shows and we have toured internationally doing live shows on Zambezi news," said Makawa.*

Innovation is what has kept Magamba TV afloat as the organisation has ventured into different areas such as festivals. The *Shoko Festival* is a brand under Magamba Network and its efforts also feed into survival of Magamba TV.

> *"It is key to be always innovative and to diversify so as Magamba we work in anything from festivals, to live shows, to media…" said Monro.*

As for Bustop TV the alternative sources of revenue is obtained through stand-up comedy where the likes of Gonyeti one of the characters on Bustop TV stages stand-up comedy in front of live audiences. The characters on Bustop TV Magi and Gonyeti are also hired to

emcee events in addition to being hired to various functions including corporate functions for photo shoot sessions.

> "We are trying to also engage offline, we have realised that there is money to be made offline," explained Lucky.

Thus in addition to the revenue generated directly from online activity the start-ups also venture in other revenue generating projects.

Another means of survival is the legal structure and as for Bustop TV is a registered company and is registered as a private limited company. According to Deloitte (2013:6) "Zimbabwe business is based on English mercantile, company and insolvency law." This facilitates for easy of business with large enterprises meaning they (have a competitive edge over the online channels that are operating without registering. Bustop TV has turned down potential investors that continue approaching them from all spheres of society claiming that these interested investors are not presenting them with a fair offer. However in the pipeline, Bustop TV is already working on registering the organisation as a trust instead and they have approached potential board members. The selection of members cuts across professions that are necessary for the operations of Bustop TV.

Magamba Network is already registered as a trust and partners several other organisations in the work it undertakes. Trusts are required to obtain a trust deed with the Deeds Registry Office (Deloitte, 2013). The advantage of trusts is that they have tax exemptions and as such this may minimise costs for the organisation.

5.7 Challenges encountered in the media landscape in Zimbabwe

One of the main challenges faced by media practitioners in Zimbabwe is economic related. That is running a media enterprise might prove fruitless in the long run since corporates as main revenue sources shy away from funding the business side of media.

> "The economy is in a dire situation and there is less funding and sponsorship available," mentioned Samm Monro.

There is also problems presented from a political perspective with regulations that hinder the efforts of media personnel but however operating online has an advantage in that to a certain extent it is a democratised space. Social media has removed communication barriers and facilitated a communication channel that is decentralized allowing for more voices to participate in a more democratic way especially in repressive countries (Amedie, 2015). However most of online media practitioners practice self-censorship owing to the volatility of the media environment in which they operate. Lucky Aaroni explained that they do not face problems from authorities when it comes to censorship but rather there is a level of self-censorship that they practice. Most practitioners tend to practice self-censorship because of legal restrictions and media regulations in the country especially involving sensitive issues (Misa-Zimbabwe, 2016).

5.8 Conclusion

The chapter presented the findings of the research and data was in thematic form since a qualitative approach was employed to the study. Content analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the in-depth interviews that were conducted. The key issue that arose is that on line TV channels do not entirely depend on revenue generated through online activity. Rather they employ other strategies to sustain operations. That is in addition to the models used in the economics of media in generating revenue, the start-ups are also involved in other

activities away from the online activities (though they are an extension of the original online media products to some extent). Thus for survival both Magamba TV and Bustop TV undertake in live performances engaging live audiences and they generate extra revenue that is channelled towards the online channel.

Chapter six: Summary recommendation and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the entire research and gives recommendations derived from the findings and analysed data. The chapter will also arrive to a conclusion of the dissertation.

6.2 Summary of the study

The research was aimed at understanding the survival strategies employed by online TV channels specifically Bustop TV and Magamba TV in Zimbabwe's uncertain media landscape. The study was located in theories of media economics with the point of departure being the dual product market place and the advertising revenue model. These two theories help explain how revenue is generated in the media industry however in relation to online media business in Zimbabwe they are not adequate in explaining the continued survival of a few of the online TV channels.

Dual product market place proposes that content producers sell content to the audiences and in turn sell the audience to the advertisers thus theory makes use of two commodities creating revenue. While the advertising revenue model pursues the idea that the content producer generates revenue through securing advertisers for their content. These theories are applicable to some extent but however for online media firms the money generated through these models is not sufficient enough to keep the business afloat.

The methodological approach used was of the qualitative paradigm where the research design was a case study. For data collection, in-depth interviews were employed. They allow for specific data to be obtained (Mack et al, 2005). Thus in-depth interviews were conducted on the founders of the organisation. The sampling method of choice was purposive sampling

which is a non-probability sampling technique was applied. The method of analysis for this qualitative design was content analysis which made use of a thematic presentation of collected data. This allows for analysis of generated data placing it into specific themes and finding the meaning produced from various sources under the same theme (Sunday, nd).

The key findings show that even though the online platforms are a direct source of revenue the revenue is not enough to support survival of the organisation. Thus the online TV channels generate as much as over a half million views for certain products over a considerable period of time but in turn not enough revenue is produced by these numbers. Therefore the dual product market place theory does not justify the continued operations of online TV channels in Zimbabwe.

The survival strategies employed by these start-ups in their survival include alternative sources of revenue such as live shows, festivals, stand-up comedy, celebrity photo shoots and international tours. In addition the firms pay special attention to the quality of product as this retains audiences and ultimately the advertisers. The legal registration of the company can also determine the extent to which the organisation can secure large deals and also less taxation.

The challenges that are faced by the start-ups are mainly economic as there is low investment in the industry. Also regulation is a challenge however most of it is as a result of self-censorship.

6.3 Concluding remarks

The study was carried out to find out the survival strategies used by Bustop TV and Magamaba TV in Zimbabwe's uncertain media landscape. The study established that in addition to the revenue models applied in economics of the media, for online TV channels in

Zimbabwe the organisations need to implement alternative sources of revenue generation to survive.

6.4 Recommendations

As evidenced by the models used to generate revenue online which depend on traffic and number of viewers, the researcher recommends that the Zimbabwean online content producer should create products that are relevant to a wider audience across Africa which will guarantee the much needed numbers. Zimbabwe has a small population and as such play to the disadvantage of the content producer. The Zimbabwean content producer should take an approach similar to that of the Ugandan sensation Ann Kansiime who has a continental appeal.

Therefore language plays a key role. In other words the content producer should try a more universal approach that encompasses language and concepts that resonate throughout the greater parts of Africa. Future study can explore the cultural aspect of the production of content and perhaps this can provide a solution for a universal reach of audience. This will help nations with a small population such as Zimbabwe to have a wider reach of audiences.

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