

Abstract

Zimbabwean mainstream media has been profoundly polarised by two significant camps, namely the pro-government and anti-government media. Public opinion has primarily split between the binary ideological alignments of these two camps. The heavily censored political environment in Zimbabwe since the imposition of the Public Order and Security Act 11:17 (and regulated in a multiplicity of overt and covert ways) resulted in political expressive space being constrained. Online media, however, has created alternative media spaces and contexts that are far more enabling to audiences when it comes in dialogic co-production of meaning and new or alternative value positions to those advanced by traditional media. This article explores the negotiation of meaning by online readers of the state-owned daily, *The Herald*. Dialogism theory is used to explore discourse and ideological interaction occurring between mass media and its audiences in the news website comments section and how online communication is in fact a reciprocal social practice that is both modelled and remodelled through processes of co-production and negotiation of meaning. The research also takes into account the naming practices that the participants employ in their online interaction.