

**SUSTAINABILITY OF PRINT MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A STUDY OF
SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSPAPERS**

by

MABASA ENGETANI LUCIA

THESIS

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SUPERVISOR: DR BD SEADIRA

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Chansi Morris Makhuvele (1958-2021). He was a proud father. May his soul rest in peace.

DECLARATION

I declare that the “**SUSTAINABILITY OF PRINT MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A STUDY OF SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSPAPERS**” thesis hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Media Studies has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

FULLNAMES: ENGETANI LUCIA MABASA

DATE: 01 September 2025

SIGNATURE: _____  _____

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, the print media face numerous challenges. The rise of digital media, particularly new internet-based media, has aided to the downfall of print media. Traditional media, especially newspapers, experience both opportunities and threats from digital media. Owing to these challenges and threats to print media, several newspapers have ceased operations, while others have moved to digital formats. The purpose of this study is to determine the sustainability of print newspapers given the ongoing media digitalisation competition. This research focused on several strategies that media companies could employ to remain sustainable.

On the other hand, there is a lack of research in South Africa on how print media companies can remain sustainable despite the many digital obstacles they face. Thus, the purpose of this study is to close this knowledge gap. Moreover, by evaluating strategies adopted by print newspapers to maintain the viability of their media companies in the digital age, the study sought to broaden the body of knowledge on the sustainability of print newspapers in the digital age. Furthermore, outlining some best practices and techniques, the study provided suitable approaches that media managers can use to properly handle and manage their media companies in the digital era. This study employed a qualitative methodology, drawing samples from readers, print media experts, and the practitioners of the selected print newspapers through interview processes. It examined various attempts in which newspapers achieve sustainability in the digital era. This was done using semi-structured interviews. It is important to note that media sustainability in the digital age extends beyond financial sustainability. It should consider its institutional and social sustainability. The findings reveal that, for print media companies to survive in the digital era, they should constantly promote subscriptions, interact with readers, and maintain their credibility and trustworthiness.

Theoretically, mediamorphosis proved that print and digital media may coexist; the expansion of one does not always mean that the other would be diminished. This study has been able to further knowledge by outlining strategies for print newspapers to become sustainable in the digital age.

KEYWORDS: South Africa, Sustainability, Print Media, Newspapers, Mediamorphosis, Digital era

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary means of disseminating ideas and information for centuries has been the newspapers. They have traditionally been seen as a crucial source of information for democratic societies, and for most readers, they still are today (Kiesow, Zouh, & Guo, 2023). According to Schoder and Hassan (2018), the media landscape has undergone a significant transformation and with the help of the internet, people can now quickly and easily access more of the content they are interested in directly from their mobile and tablet devices, making it easy to get any needed content anywhere and at any time (Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020).

The emergence of new media has presented major concerns about businesses engaged in the print media's publishing industry, according to Kaustubha (2021). Villi and Picard (2019) maintain that the internet has destroyed the function that print media previously served and compelled publishers to re-evaluate their business models to conform to the new media environment.

The internet changed the level of dependence that people have on printed items for news and information. Recent technological advancements in digital publication have made them the newest threat to print media; therefore, the future of printed newspapers is uncertain (Sutherland, 2020). Investigating ways to maintain newspapers in the face of potential negative repercussions from the new digital media could aid the print industry in getting ready to compete with its electronic-based rival and maintain its former role. Vill and Picard (2019) claim that due to the development of electronic gadgets like e-readers, tablets, and laptops that have reduced the necessity for printed material, conventional print newspapers now must position themselves in the digital sphere. According to Yanqui (2021), with more accessibility readily available technology, and unparalleled convenience, some readers have turned to e-digital newspapers as their source of information.

Printed newspapers, in comparison to digital media have advantages. One such advantage is that newspapers offer information in hardcopy and may be saved for future usage. However, due to the internet and the digital era's emergence, newspapers are currently facing challenges (Hassan, Latiff Azmi & Yahaya-Nasidi, 2018). Print newspapers appear to be in danger of going extinct from the extreme availability of "free news" online causing a decline in sales of printed newspapers (Abbey, 2019). This situation has created some concerns about the future of the newspaper industry; nevertheless, printed publications are still thought to be important for some readers (Malherbe, Seedat & Suffla, 2021).

This study attempts to analyse how the print media are sustaining themselves in this digital era, by analysing their survival strategies. The study focuses on the following national newspapers namely: *Sowetan*, *The Star*, *Citizen*, *City Press*, *Mail & Guardian* and *Sunday World*.

1.1.1 Digital era defined

According to Mafani (2015), the term digital era refers to a period that is characterised by the widespread use and integration of digital technologies in various aspects of human life, including communication, business, education, entertainment, and more. It represents a shift from analogue and mechanical technologies to digital ones, where information is processed electronically. Mafani, (2015) further added that the primary defining factor of the digital era is the prevalence of digital technologies, this includes computers, smartphones, tablets, and other devices that use digital signals for communication and data processing. Internet connectivity, the digital era is strongly associated with the widespread availability and use of the internet. The Internet facilitates global connectivity, information exchange, and online collaboration.

1.1.2 Sustainability Defined

The sustainability of print media refers to the long-term feasibility and success of traditional print publications such as newspapers (Olorunyomi, 2021). Sustainability elaborates on the means and measures that the newspapers put in place to remain operational.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The digital era has had an impact on human life as well as on journalism. Norman (2023) claims that human's distinguishing quality of always being connected to the digital world, via portable gadgets has caused mobile technologies to significantly alter human interaction. According to Bhuller, Havnes, McCauley and Mogstad (2020), fewer individuals are reading printed newspapers regularly, as every day more people are using digital devices to get information. People find it simpler to access information on devices than on print newspapers, as Saeed and Ullah (2021) noted. Newspaper readership is therefore declining as more people utilise digital devices and the Internet for everything. The print media is now threatened by the growth of the new media in the digital age.

According to literature, advertisers have reduced the placing of ads in the traditional media because of the readership loss (Popiołek, Hapek & Barańska, 2021; Ogidi & Anthony, 2016). Since 2012, journalists have been losing their jobs and COVID-19 has caused a rise in that number. Ogidi and Anthony, (2016) continued to express that the majority of senior experienced journalists who were unable to receive training for the creation of news content with a digital focus lost their employment.

In this context, it is evident that print media is facing serious challenges as the proliferation of digital media platforms continues to challenge their relevancy in the 21st century. The rise in the use of digital devices, thus, is a threat to the printed newspaper industry. This study seeks to investigate how the print media in South Africa has responded to these challenges.

1.3 ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY

Thus, to describe and discuss the sustainability of print media in this digital era, the researcher has chosen to use Mediamorphosis and niche theories of the media as the theoretical framework for this study. There are other theories that speak to the study, such as media convergence, media displacement, and mediatization theories that elaborate on merging or advancing old media with new technologies, but for this study, only two theories were discussed. The Mediamorphosis theory, therefore, has to underpin the examination of the print media's sustainability methods in the current digital era.

1.3.1 Mediamorphosis theory

Mohammed (2021) defines mediamorphosis as the transformation of the communication media, prompted by the complex interaction of perceived demands, political, economic, and social pressures, as well as new social and technological developments. The term refers to the processes of evolution and adaptation of strategies by existing media and in this context; traditional media should constantly adjust, and figure out how to survive, even as new forms of media appear. The theory assists in comprehending the interconnectedness of technology, media and communication. The theory of mediamorphosis offers a framework for comprehending the possible impact of developments in the digital era on the newspaper industry, in various social circumstances.

The idea of mediamorphosis, according to Benson (2022), explains why the emergence of a new media should not result in the demise of an existing one because the latter may adopt and so coexist with the new medium for enhanced performance and better customer service. The "digital metamorphosis," or mediamorphosis theory, describes and predicts modifications in the digital environment and its culture. According to Fidler (2003), "new media" is produced to modernise and enhance traditional media, in an atmosphere where technology is always evolving and Fidler (2003) coined the word "mediamorphosis" to describe how the digital world has evolved.

The mediamorphosis theory maintains that any strategies of new media can assist in improving traditional media, such as printed newspapers, rather than causing their

demise. From this reasoning, print media should not dissolve because of the digital age as it has its benefits and own functions different from digital media. New media is a result of old media; however, old media should never go away; instead, it develops into something that people may find equally appealing to own or use. Fidler (2003) maintained that new media do not develop unexpectedly and independently but rather gradually as a result of the transformation of traditional media.

The theory assisted in discussing the role that the digital media has played in assisting print newspapers to survive, to handle the challenges, and to remain sustainable in the digital era. According to Fidler (2003), new media evolve from pre-existing forms rather than developing independently. As a result, to build a successful media landscape, both new and old media must coexist rather than one destroying the other. The theory will assist the researcher in analysing how the publications under study survive in this digital era and whether they see the digital era as a threat or media that can push them to survive. The theory is discussed in details in chapter 3.

1.3.2 The Niche theory of the media

To further describe the sustainability of print media in this digital era, the researcher has added the niche theory of the media as the theoretical framework for this study. The study introduced a second theory to broaden the framework and complement the other theory; the mediamorphosis explains that the emergence of one medium should not be the reason another has to end, but can coexist. The niche theory explains that the medium with the most resources is likely to survive better than the one with fewer resources; however, in this case, the study explains that both can support each other to ensure sustainability. Most media companies now have both print and digital newspapers, and they share resources for sustainability and survival.

According to the niche theory of mass media, a medium's ability to compete and live with another medium depends on how it uses its limited resources to survive (Humphreys, Karnowski & Von Pape, 2018).

To explain the rivalry between the media industries, Domminick and Rothenbuhler (1984) created the niche theory. Typically, a niche is described as how a population

makes use of its resources. Because a population frequently makes use of multiple resources, a niche has multiple dimensions. A population is a collection of comparable organisations with shared traits. Print newspapers are one population in this scenario and the digital media, such as online platforms for information access are another population. Both a generalist and a specialised medium are used for the conversation. A generalist medium has a wider scope, which increases audience size. The generalist is better able to maintain its viability if the environment changes in ways that influence the resources it utilises. According to Dimmick and Rothenbuhler's research, although the specialist medium could be better at utilising its resource base, their ability to adapt to shifting settings has a major impact on how well they can use the resources that are available to them.

The three elements of the idea are niche superiority, niche breadth and niche overlaps.

Niche breadth: The scope of a niche encompasses both the volume and scope of resource used by a population. A population is a specialised population if it exclusively uses a small number of resource categories because it fills a specific niche. Specialists are skilled in making optimal use of resources, but they struggle to adapt to significant environmental changes to stay alive. Print newspapers are specialised media that should ensure sustainability and survival in the face of the digital era's numerous features. As a result, the newspaper struggles for life with limited abilities. The use of the Internet, according to Taipale, Oinas, and Karhinen (2021), will cut down on the amount of time people spend on traditional media because it occupies the time that people spend reading print newspapers and using digital media.

Niche overlaps: While competitive superiority is used to determine how much one population is superior to another population in terms of their ability to utilise resources, niche overlap assesses the extent to which two populations use the same resources (Puthiyakat & Goswami, 2021). As a result, if two populations' niche overlap is substantial, the superior population is likely to displace the inferior. One medium's power outweighs another medium. The sharing of resources or other elements, whether entirely or partially, is referred to as niche overlap (consumers, space, funds, and so on). Niche overlaps are supposed to decide whether media may coexist in a given

environment; it is a key notion in the media. Additionally, a higher degree of overlap suggests greater competition. If print media has tactics that can ensure sustainability, it is likely to survive and cohabit with other media. Both traditional and digital media can share resources and abilities to survive in a strenuous environment.

According to Stiegler (2022), every media outlet in the sector relies on finite resources, just like an organism does. As a result, there will inevitably be a fierce battle for survival among the media sector's competitors for the same resources. The media sector is a place where rivalry and harmony coexist. The theory analysed how print media and digital media inevitably develop a competitive relationship and coexist. The theory has assisted in data collection by seeking answers to questions such as, Is the print medium fit to survive?

1.4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Aim of the study

The study aimed to investigate strategies that may sustain print media in the digital era.

1.4.2 Objectives of the study

Thus, to achieve the aim of the study, the study addressed the following objectives:

- Interrogated ways in which the print media sector sought to overcome sustainability challenges that might be encountered.
- Examined the value of print newspapers to readers.
- Ascertained and recommended sustainability and job-saving strategies for the selected print newspapers.

1.5. Profile of the selected newspapers

The following newspapers were selected due to their audience reach. Each newspaper caters to a unique demographic segment, their diverse editorial perspective and wide distribution.

I. *The star*

The Star is a daily newspaper based in Gauteng, South Africa. The paper is distributed in Gauteng and other provinces such as Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West, and Free

State. *The Star* is one of the titles of the South African Independent News & Media group (INL), owned by Sekunjalo Media Consortium whose founder and chairperson is Dr. Iqbal Survé. For many years, *The Star* was owned by the Argus Printing & Publishing Company, controlled by the Anglo-American Corporation. The Irish Independent News & Media (INM) bought and renamed *the Argus* in the early 1990s. *Sekunjalo* acquired INL in 2013. The content published in *The Star* focuses on leading daily national, local, and international national news and analysis. Its leader and opinion page offers a platform for thought leaders to contribute their opinions on topical news (www.thestar.co.za).

II. Sowetan

The English-language South African daily newspaper started in 1981 as a liberation struggle publication that serves a proudly South African readership who have earned the right to be knowledgeable and on the move. Nwabisa Makunga is the editor of the newspaper. It is one of the largest national newspapers in South Africa. Regarded as having a left-leaning editorial tone, it carried a readership of almost 2 million and a circulation of 124,000 in 2006.

The newspaper is the property of a South African media company Arena Holdings (formerly Tiso Blackstar Group, Avusa and Times Media Group). Before that, it belonged to Dr. Nthato Motlana (1925–30 November 2008), a prominent South African businessperson, physician and anti-apartheid activist who took a leading role in the formation of the New African Investments Limited (NAIL), which purchased *The Sowetan* following the apartheid.

The Sowetan started in 1981 as a replacement for *The Post* Transvaal newspaper, which itself consisted of editorial staff that migrated from another newspaper, *The World*. At the time, there was a total strike at *The Post* (for better increases). The strike lasted so long that *The Post*, which was financially independent of the Argus printing and publishing, nearly went bankrupt, resulting in the property and printing presses being sold to Caxtons. Caxtons then got the contract to print *The Post*, and another building was found in Industria.

Two days before publishing *The Post*, the government decided to ban it again. *The Post* had more newspaper names registered and after some deliberation, it was decided to go with *The Sowetan*. This was a weekly, Saturday and Sunday paper. *The latter* was later closed as it was never financially viable. *The Sowetan* never was a free sheet, as it was never published before this date. The name was registered at the time to publish at a huge cost. It was one of more titles registered as a backup at the time.

Sales in the beginning, were slow because people wrongly assumed that *The Sowetan* had only news from Soweto. It was a countrywide newspaper from the beginning and was distributed in the Transvaal, Natal and Orange Free State, with copies also going to Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. Due to the poor sales and high costs, the Port Elizabeth and Cape Town distribution were stopped after a few years. It took two years before it was accepted and sales started soaring. Percy Qoboza was the editor at the time but was soon replaced by Joe Latakomo. Latagomo started as a sports editor in 1967 (www.sowetan.co.za).

III. *The Citizen*

The Citizen is a South African daily newspaper published in Johannesburg, South Africa. The newspaper is distributed nationally in South Africa. It has long been considered a newspaper of record in South Africa. While its core readership is in Gauteng, it also distributes to surrounding provinces such as the Free State, the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the North-West. The newspaper is owned by Caxton and CTP Publishers and Printers Limited, a public company listed on the JSE.

The newspaper was founded in 1976 during the apartheid era by Louis Luyt, at which time it was the only major English-language newspaper favourable to the ruling National Party. In 1978, during the Muldergate Scandal, it was revealed that the money to establish and finance the newspaper had come from a secret slush fund of the Department of Information and the Department of Defence.

In 1998, ownership of the newspaper was transferred from Perskor to Caxton and CTP Publishers and Printers Limited. The company is involved in various fields of publishing and printing, such as newspapers, magazines, commercial print and book printings.

IV. City Press

City Press is a South African news brand that publishes on multiple platforms. Its flagship print edition is distributed nationally on Sunday, and it has a daily newsletter, online platform and other social media platforms. These include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The publication also runs a popular, daily morning newsletter called *On a Point of Order*, a play on the South African Parliament scene, which frequently sees members of Parliament rising "on a point of order" to protest something that somebody has said.

The newspaper was established in 1982 as the *Golden City Press* by James R. A. Bailey and the South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN) group. The following year, "Golden" was dropped from the newspaper's name. SAAN later withdrew from its partnership with Bailey, and the newspaper ran into financial difficulties.

Nasionale Pers took over the publication of the newspaper as well as its sister publications, *Drum* and *True Love & Family*, on 1 April 1984. South Africa's leading company currently owns the newspaper, Media24, which is the media arm of Naspers. The editor-in-chief of the *City Press* news brand is Mondli Makhanya. He has been at the helm of the news brand since 1 August 2016. Before Makhanya, the news brand was edited by Ferial Haffajee, who joined *City Press* on 1 July 2009. It counts among its ranks of former editors Khathu Mamaila, Mathatha Tsedu, and Len Kalane, who droughted a book about his experiences as editor of *City Press*, entitled *The Chapter We Wrote: The City Press Story* (www.citypress.co.za).

V. Sunday World

Sunday World, published by Fundudzi Media in Johannesburg, is a tabloid-format newspaper with an editorial focus that reflects the world of the young, aspirational black consumer—racy infotainment, celebrities, sport, and gossip (Shwashwi), a lifestyle section and specialist pages about fashion, beauty, health, motoring and money. *Sunday World* is part of the Tiso Blackstar Group, a South African media company. The newspaper was established to provide a mix of news and entertainment content,

particularly focusing on the interests of its Sunday readership. The newspaper typically covers a variety of topics, including celebrity news, lifestyle features, entertainment events, and general news stories. It is known for its tabloid-style coverage and emphasis on popular culture (www.sundayworld.co.za).

VI. *Mail & Guardian*

The *Mail & Guardian* has a rich history that dates to 1985, when it was established as the *Weekly Mail*, an alternative newspaper that emerged as a response to the closure of influential liberal newspapers during the apartheid era. Since then, we have evolved and adapted to the changing media landscape, becoming the first news organisation in South Africa to launch a website in 1994.

The publication began as the *Weekly Mail*, an alternative newspaper by a group of journalists in 1985 after the closure of two leading liberal newspapers, *The Rand Daily Mail* and *Sunday Express*. *Weekly Mail* was one of the first newspapers to use Apple Mac desktop publishing.

The *Weekly Mail* criticised the government and its apartheid policies, which led to the banning of the paper in 1988 by then State President P. W. Botha. The paper was renamed the *Weekly Mail & Guardian* on 30 July 1993. The London-based Guardian Media Group (GMG), the publisher of *The Guardian* became the majority shareholder of the print edition in 1995 and the name was changed to *Mail & Guardian*.

The *Mail & Guardian* derives more than 90% of its funds from commercial activities, which ensures financial independence and freedom from undue influence. This funding model allows us to uphold *Mail & Guardian's* commitment to editorial independence and deliver unbiased reporting. While commercial activities form the majority of the funding, the paper also receives support from donors who share their vision. Donor funding is ring-fenced for specific content sections, such as environment and other social justice issues, ensuring that these important topics receive dedicated coverage (www.mg.co.za).

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Printed newspapers currently have reduced consumers because of the rapid increase in digital media usage. Nevertheless, print media is still in existence in remote areas where access to digitalised content is a challenge. Newspaper publications are created with readers in mind and are marketed to them using captivating material that draws in devoted readers and generates revenue for advertisers through pertinent articles and product placements. The strength of the printed newspaper industry, however, depends on how it responds to change (Altman, 2021).

It is expected that this study provides print media with feasible response mechanisms to contest digital media strengths. This includes giving future projections on how newspapers can remain relevant in the digital era. The study aims to help create awareness and increase public knowledge about print media's survival strategies in this digital era. The study also gives a strong sense that this information can strengthen and build other emerging printed newspapers. The study will not only assist national newspapers but also community and emerging newspapers as well, to know and understand that with the rise of digital media, print newspapers do not have to perish but can coexist with new media. The nature of this research was to explore the sustainability challenges of print media in this digital era.

In addition to contributing to the body of knowledge in the field of media studies, the study can help media studies scholars to be innovative in terms of technology, also upskilling scholars with necessary skills that they can use in journalism in a digital environment. The scholars can also delve into producing new theories that can cover the life cycle of media technologies and industries.

In summary, the study will not only advance theoretical understanding of media evolution but also tackle real-world problems about economic models, cultural norms, environmental concerns, and media accessibility. This deepens current debates concerning the role of media in a quickly evolving technology environment.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study are summarised as follows:

- The study had proposed to select seven national newspapers, but due to other circumstances, it was limited to only six print newspapers.
- The study was limited to only 25 readers of the selected newspapers and not all provinces were reached.
- The study had proposed to collect secondary data from newspapers on archival records but it did not materialise as the researcher could not obtain written documents from the newspapers but limited to interviews and media messages.
- This study did not focus on measuring the impact of the challenges of new digital technologies on print newspapers which serves as a limitation for this study.
- The argument is that the impact of digitalization on media is evident, hence the effort is to evolve approaches for print newspapers to tackle the challenges of digitalization to remain sustainable in the digital era.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 introduced the study and presented the background and objectives of the study. It further outlines the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the rationale, the scope of the study, the theoretical framework, and the significance of the study. The chapter concludes by giving a summary of all chapters in the study.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 outlined the overview and defined key concepts of the study, namely, the digital era and sustainability. It further explained the study's research problem, the role of theory in the study, the purpose of the study, a profile of the selected print newspapers, the significance and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 presents the literature review of this study. It tackles the discourses and perspectives around print newspapers sustainability in the digital era globally and nationally. The chapter discusses the literature based on the objectives of the study. This chapter is divided into 3 sections, section 1 explains the origin of print newspapers across the globe the freedom of the press and further explains the contextual background history and development of newspapers in South Africa. The section concludes by giving a brief development of the press in South Africa.

Section 2 starts by giving a brief discussion on the development of the Internet in South Africa, zooming in on how the Internet started and how it developed to various digital platforms that then affected the print industry. Section 3 explains the state of print newspapers in this digital era. It delves into discussing the value of print newspapers to readers and the changes and difficulties faced by print industries during this evolving digital era. The section further provides strategies that are currently used by print industries for the sustainability of print media. It concludes by giving the strength of print newspapers in a digital environment.

CHAPTER 3

The chapter deals with the methodological perspectives of the study. The study employed a qualitative method. Formal, in-depth face-to-face and online interviews were employed as a data collection tool for this study. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. This chapter also outlined the criteria for ensuring the rigour of qualitative research. The other facets that the chapter dealt with include sampling methods and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4

This chapter discusses in details the analysis of the theoretical framework, the assumptions and the assertions of the theories tested against the findings of the study. The theories are the mediamorphosis theory and the niche theory.

CHAPTER 5

This chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis. It is divided into four sections, and each section analyses a selected theme in line with the research objectives of this study. Section 1 is the introductory part, which elaborates on the demographic information of the reader participants. Section 2 looked at the position and value of the newspapers to the readers. It examines the reasons behind the hardcopy preferences of readers and concludes by discussing their value and benefits. The section concludes by providing sustainability strategies from the reader's point of view.

Section 3 presents and interprets the data collected from media experts/industry professionals through virtual interviews using Microsoft Teams. It presents the perspectives and probable recommendations for printed newspaper sustainability strategies in the digital era, as viewed and analysed by industry experts. It also identifies and recommends sustainable job-saving initiatives, emerging themes, and challenges that require clarification from industry experts. The section concludes with SA FM's Mediated Conversation and analysis of the future of print media, further harnessing the views of the other five (5) print media experts the research interviewed.

Section 4 explains the last two themes of the study: it examines the future of print newspapers and the threat that digital media poses to print from the perspective of the editors and officials.

CHAPTER 6

This chapter presents a summary of the interpretation and discussion of findings. It outlines the findings from the readers of the selected newspapers, the industry experts and the newspaper representatives (editors/head reporters). The results are based on the objectives of the study. The findings revealed that the print industry has experienced a change since the emergence of digital platforms; however, strategies for sustainability have been recommended. The chapter concludes by giving a theoretical presentation of findings, whereby it proves the assumptions of both theories that were used in the study. The mediamorphosis theory highlighted that there can be a coexistence of traditional media with digital media, and this is what most print industries are currently

doing. The niche theory also highlights that the print industry can share resources with digital platforms to ensure sustainability.

CHAPTER 7

Chapter 7 concludes the study, it starts by revisiting the objectives, giving a summary of the study's conclusions based on the objectives. Drawing from the findings of the study, conceptual frameworks and the literature reviewed, the chapter suggests ways that the print newspaper industry can use to remain sustainable in the digital era. It gives the contribution of the study to the field of media studies, recommendations for future research and the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the literature reviewed for this study. It lays out the pertinent information, theories and arguments that have been written about the study area and reinforces the viewpoint put forth. The chapter discusses the origins of print newspapers and the characteristics of newspapers and goes on to explain sustainability practices and the effects of the digital age on print media. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section 1 outlines the history of print media (newspapers) worldwide and digs deep into the origin of newspapers; then it concludes by describing the historical setting of newspapers in a country in Africa. Section 2 gives a thorough background of the digital era, the current state and its impact on printed newspapers. Section 3 of this chapter explores the challenges as affected by digital transformation and concludes by exploring the sustainability strategies of printed newspapers in this digital era.

SECTION 1

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NEWSPAPERS ACROSS THE GLOBE

2.2.1 Origin of Print, China

Although word-of-mouth has always been the primary method of disseminating news, communication became increasingly important as language evolved into writing and literacy and as governments influenced people's daily lives (Hiebert & Gibbons, 2017). On the other hand, disseminating news and information on paper was extremely difficult. According to Hiebert and Gibbons (2017), widespread distribution was not possible when each copy needed to be handwritten.

Both De vinne (2016) and Eisenstein (1980) concur that writing on palm leaves was a common practice among humans before paper was invented. The Chinese invented printing by carving wooden blocks on which to print the alphabet. This started during the

Tang Dynasty in the year 600 AD. According to Lippit (2017), cited by Keyworth (2023), the earliest known surviving printed work on a woodblock dates to 684 AD. It was on display at the Calligraphy Museum in Tokyo, the capital of Japan.

There are still several Buddhist texts copies in Chinese museums that date back to 1377. The idea of sharing news and information goes back several centuries, long before there was anything resembling a modern newspaper. Before printing, the public had to rely on hearsay and rumour or make do with whatever information it could get from official sources.

2.2.2 Venice, Italy

According to Dooley (2010), the first news sheets were widely distributed in Venice in 1566. These weekly publications covered political and military developments throughout Italy and Europe. From 1609 to 1675, German weekly newspapers were published. The *Relation Aller Frnemmen and Gedenckwrdigen Historian*, published by Johann Carolus in 1604, is regarded as the first newspaper ever published. It was a legitimate newspaper in every sense; it was easy for the general public to read, it had enough content, it was printed on one sheet, and it was printed on both sides. The *London Gazette* took over as the official government newsbook in 1666, replacing the Oxford Gazette, which had been established as one in 1665.

2.2.3 Rome

According to Mitchell and Greatrex (2023), written news originated in the Roman Empire in 59 BC. Rome was the hub of Western civilisation at the time and a trailblazer in the invention, contributing to the development of concrete and grid-based towns. Historians agree that the regular written news bulletins originated with the Romans. Despite this, newspapers are occasionally presented as having the "oldest" news. If the newsletter has to be called the "oldest" news media, then it certainly deserves that title. Shaw (2021) and Hills (2018) claim that the government published *Acta Diurna*, a daily newsletter that covered politics, military campaigns, chariot races, and executions, every day and was posted in the Roman Forum. *Acta Diurna* was hard-carved news on sheets of stone or metal. The *Acta* had initially been kept secret until Julius Caesar

made it public in 59 BC. For centuries before the invention of newspapers, Roman *Acta Diurna* served as official noticeboards and news sources regularly.

They were carved from stone or metal and put on display on message boards in public areas such as the Roman Forum. Another name for them was *Acta*, because *Acta Diurna* was handwritten, and it had a limited print run. However, it had a large readership (for ancient Rome) because it was shown at many popular locations at the time, like the bathhouses. The *Acta* was read aloud in public places to keep everyone informed about what was happening inside the empire, even the illiterate. It was also included in the oral tradition.

Shaw (2021) asserts that throughout the course of its two centuries of publication, *Acta Diurna* shifted its focus from delivering official news to more frequently read items like gossip, crime, divorce, and marriage news. The *Acta Diurna* has long since been lost yet references to it can still be discovered in ancient literature and historical accounts.

According to Jones (2016), the Latin expression "publicare et propagare," which means "make public and propagate," was introduced in the "*Acta Diurna*," which in part supplanted the contemporary newspaper and the official government publication. Towards the end of the writings, this expression provided relief to both Roman citizens and non-citizens. News travelled by travelogues, songs, ballads, letters, and official reports after the fall of the empire. Around the world, a new tradition of independent news reporting was taking shape. China has a rich history of literature and was a centre of technological innovation. One invention, in particular, helped the newsletter and all print media develop in both the East and the West. In 105 AD, the paper was developed in China. However, the Chinese imperial court set up a postal system that encompassed the whole Chinese empire long before this innovation, during the Han period (Jones, 2016).

2.2.4 Germany

The publishing sector was drastically changed by Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. Gutenberg invented a movable-type press in 1440 that made it possible to duplicate printed texts in excellent quality at a rate of about 4,000 pages per

day, 1,000 times quicker than a scribe could handwrite. Thanks to this innovation, printed materials are now more widely available and more reasonably priced. The invention of the printing press, which drastically changed the newspaper's audience and breadth, allowed for the creation of modern journalism (Anderson, Downie & Schudson, 2016). The first two decades of the 17th century saw the appearance of regular papers printed from moveable type in Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. First published in Amsterdam in 1620, the English and French versions of the Dutch "*corantos*" ("currents of news") gathered news articles from foreign magazines. Moeran, (2001) states that the first English corantos made their London premiere in 1621. Basic newspapers were published in Denmark, Sweden, and Poland in 1610, 1620, 1634, 1620, 1645, and 1661 in Switzerland, Austria, and Denmark. The first social news newspapers were published in Japan during the Tokugawa period (1603–1867).

2.3 THE PRESS'S FREEDOM IN THE EARLY UNITED STATES

In 1791, the fledgling United States of America passed the First Amendment as part of the Bill of Rights. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances," per this law (Cornell University Law School). In this one sentence, press freedom was explicitly guaranteed by U.S. law (Bhagwat, 2015). On the other hand, "writing, printing, uttering, or publishing any false, scandalous, and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States" was punishable by a fine and imprisonment under the Sedition Act, which Congress passed in response to virulent partisan writing. By letting the Sedition Act run its course, Thomas Jefferson claimed that, upon his election as president in 1800, he was contributing his time to "a great experiment to show the fallacy of the pretext that freedom of the press is incompatible with orderly government (University of Virginia)". Furthermore, Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Sinkinson (2014) noted that this experiment with a free press has continued to this day.

2.4 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF NEWSPAPERS IN AFRICA

2.4.1 Oldest Newspapers Published in Africa

In 1773, the French established the continent's first newspaper on the island of Mauritius. Nicolas Lambert published *Annonces*, the first book in Africa, on January 13, 1773. The newspaper was printed in French and released once a week. The first Indian Ocean newspaper carried local announcements, advertisements, and other information from the Isles of France's possessions. The Royal Printing Office in Port Louis printed the newspaper. The second-oldest newspaper is the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, which was the first publication in South Africa (Chan-Meetoo, 2018).

2.4.2 Nigeria

Senam (2021), cited in Omenugha and Uzuegbunam (2018), agrees that "*Iwe Iroyin fun awon Egba ati Yoruba*," or "A Newspaper for the Egba and Yoruba 2 Nations," was the name of the first newspaper published in Nigeria. It was started on December 3, 1859, by a Christian missionary named Reverend Henry Townsend. The *Iwe Iroyin* Newspaper, established in 1859, was Nigeria's first national newspaper, according to the historical evolution of the media in that country. Nowadays, private individuals own every major newspaper in the country. When Rahman and Alam (2014) state that "television started and remains largely state-owned, even though the print press originated and today works as a commercial sector, they accurately summarise the situation. No government in Nigeria presently controls any major newspapers, in contrast to the 1970s and 1980s, when government-controlled publications predominated privately owned periodicals. Unlike the commercial orientation that sets apart contemporary Nigerian publications, a historical narrative show that the *Iwe Iroyin* Newspaper was likewise a commercial instrument for the promotion of the so-called lawful trade at that time (Rahman & Alam, 2014). The newspaper's owner, Henry Townsend, took use of it when the slave trade stopped making money to meet the British government's commercial and mercantilist demands. Newspapers and readers are increasingly being referred to in Nigerian newsrooms by terminology from the market language, such as products, brands, accounts, and clients (Rahman & Alam, 2014).

Lloyd and Toogood (2015) hinted that reporters are being sent to business universities to learn business and marketing principles rather than journalism skills to maintain viability. Oso concludes, therefore, that "this is the reason why newspapers with readership possessing purchasing power appeal to advertisers" (ibid.).

The historical history of newspapers in Nigeria can be divided into three separate eras, according to several literary works: missionary newspapers, nationalist newspapers, and post-independent newspapers (Oboh, 2021). The first wave of foreign Christian missionaries launched newspapers in Nigeria during the missionary era. Nationalist media are newspapers that were founded by Nigerian elites and used as forums to advocate for the nation's independence from British rule. Newspapers released after Nigeria gained its independence are considered to have been published in the post-independent era. It is noteworthy that every one of these eras had a vital role in the growth and advancement of the Nigerian newspaper industry in its current form. Henry Townsend laid out the fundamental ideas of *Iwe Iroyin* from the start, which were the advancement of literacy or Western education and Christian evangelism (Oboh, 2021: Jatula, 2019).

At 120 cowries per copy, *Iwe Iroyin*, as it is more popularly known, started printing fortnightly in Yorùbá. The publication became multilingual in March 1860 with the addition of an English language supplement (Jatula, 2019). In addition to news about ordinations, the journal covered business news concerning farm products and their prices, local health issues, and news about Christian activities, such as church officials' travels to and from a parish or region.

Between 1867 and 1880, Nigeria issued no newspapers. Because of this, this era is referred to as "the blank period" in the history of Nigeria's mass media (Malu, 2016). Following this, newspapers made a comeback to Nigeria during what Malu (2016) calls the "flowering of the press." *Iwe Iroyin Fun* was the first newspaper published in an indigenous language in both Nigeria and Africa. The year was 1859. In South Africa, two of the first periodicals are *UmAfrika* (1888) and *Imvo Zabatsundu* (1884). Up until 1997, *Imvo Zabatsundu* (Native Opinion), a Xhosa newspaper, was published for 113 years.

Africans were first taught to write and print by colonialists and missionaries, but they quickly saw that speaking their tongues was necessary for efficient communication both inside and between African communities. *Iroyin Fun* won, Reverend Henry Townsend of the Anglican mission, established *Ara Egba ati Yoruba* in 1859 to promote reading among the Egba and Yoruba people as a means of acquiring new knowledge.

Tommy (2014) noted the emergence of other publications following the death of *Iwe Iroyin*, including *African Messenger*, *The West African Pilot*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Anglo-African*, *Lagos Time* and *Gold Coast Advertiser*, *Lagos Observer*, *The Eagle* and *Lagos Critic*, *The Mirror*, *The Nigerian Chronicle*, *The Lagos Standard*, *Lagos Weekly Record*, and others. Tommy (2014) describes this era, which separated itself from religious media, as the nation's second stage of newspaper growth. Nigeria saw the emergence of nationalist newspapers during this time as well as secular newspapers run by journalists who went on to become politicians and strategically exploited this institution to fight colonialism.

Their significance in Nigeria's political history and subsequent development was cemented when Nigeria gained independence in 1960. Babasola (2017), who asserts that the media had a major role in the anti-colonial movement in Nigeria, lends weight to this. The bulk of Nigeria's contemporary newspaper generation has roots in the 1980s and beyond, except for the Tribune, which has been publishing since its founding. Newspapers like *Guardian*, *the Punch*, *Concord*, *Comet* (the forerunner of today's Nation newspaper), *Vanguard*, *Sun*, *This Day*, and others helped mould the Nigerian newspaper industry into what it is today, although they were created during this period.

2.5 TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF NEWSPAPERS AND THE HISTORY OF THE PRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.5.1 The First Newspaper

According to Botma (2023), South Africa's first newspaper was the *Cape Town Gazette* and *African Advertiser*, which debuted in 1800. John Robertson and Alexander Walker the journal, two slave dealers, and was originally printed and published in the Cape Colony by John Fairbairn, the first printer and publisher. Early on, the journal functioned as the official spokesperson for the administration. After the owners fought the

government for a long time and the colony gave up press freedom, the newspaper was finally emancipated from government control in 1829.

As a result, the number of newspapers increased, boosting the newspaper sector. The newspaper was still published in both Dutch and English after changing its name to the *Dutch Kaapsche Courant* in 1803. This may have been influenced by the colony's shifting political landscape at the time (Botma, 2023). The Dutch had recently seized control of the colony from the British in 1802. The colony was ruled by the British again in 1806. According to Botma (2023), the *African Advertiser* and *Cape Town Gazette* are recognised for having laid the groundwork for the many newspapers that are being published throughout Africa. Weekly news from around the world, as well as local news, was published in The Gazette. The British South African Government published a weekly edition of the journal from August 16, 1800, until 1929. On August 16, 1800, the *Cape Town Gazette* and *African Advertiser*, the continent's first newspaper, were published. This marked a significant milestone in Africa's publication history. This was about 150 years after the first Dutch colonists arrived in South Africa at the Cape of Good Hope and at least 85 years before European colonial powers partitioned Africa. Three months after it first appeared, the paper folded.

According to Rabe (2020), there are a few possibilities that could explain the swift collapse of Africa's first newspaper, even though the exact explanation is unknown. The mouthpiece only functioned as the government's official spokesperson and was made available in both Dutch and English (Rabe, 2020). The *African Advertiser* and *Cape Town Gazette* are credited with inspiring most of today's African newspapers. First published in 1824, *The South African Commercial Advertiser* was a free newspaper published in South Africa. It was released in both English and Dutch. The Cape Town governor ordered it to be censored numerous times. But the publication was a fervent supporter of the Cape Colony's democracy.

The historical evolution of the media in Africa reflects a well-known pattern that has emerged in other regions of the world where colonial rule has continued. The creation of colonial government publications, the missionary press, the growth of the private press, the nationalist press as a weapon against colonial repression, and so on have all been

examples of this (ibid.). The authoritarian media and the libertarian paradigm have coevolved in this context. This is consistent with the pattern of political development in Africa, where one-party systems, military regimes, and democratic governance have repeatedly alternated.

As a result, periods of libertarian press have often been followed by authoritarian measures right after, before returning to some variation of libertarianism (Boaz, 2015; Levy, 2021; & Muller, 2021). The general pattern was indicative of the political environment in each country, even though the media did not always view it as representative of all countries. Because of this, even under the harshest military administrations, nations like Nigeria have traditionally produced some of the liveliest newspapers.

Cover, Haw, and Thompson (2022) note that much of this had to do with colonial authority, even though the press industry in Africa began long before the continent was partitioned by European nations during the disastrous Berlin Conference of 1885. African cultures and the media were severely impacted by African colonialism, which was an authoritarian type of administration. For example, the horrifying experience those countries endured as colonies of Belgium and Portugal served as a metaphor for the press's sluggish development in the Belgian Congo at the time and in the Portuguese colonies. However, the establishment of the press predates the introduction of colonialism in the regions that would later become British colonies in West Africa.

In such nations early on, the press had a major political role, especially in Nigeria, Ghana's Gold Coast, and Sierra Leone (Cover, Haw & Thompson, 2022). Other parts of the continent quickly saw this trend emerge. Because of the media's power, politics and the press came to complement one another, and many journalists went on to become politicians. Many others used their positions as journalists to make the loudest claims for political independence in Africa.

2.5.2 Impact of apartheid on the history of newspapers

The political and economic climate of South Africa has had a major impact on the history of the press as well as the media landscape (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales,

2019). In addition to "subjecting the press to two kinds of government controls: coercive and manipulative," the apartheid administration also "subjected the press to economic and political racial segregation," as the history of the South African press indicates (ibid.). The apartheid administration employed laws that curtailed press freedom to control and censor the media.

Press freedom and democracy are inextricably linked. Press freedom in particular is only preserved by "strong democracies, while that democracy needs media freedom to exist." Many people's rights in South Africa were severely curtailed during the apartheid era, to the extent that "defying the system could quite literally mean death to a publication" (Cover, Haw & Thompson, 2022). This left reporters without bounds.

The nation's press freedom was curtailed by more than 25 laws enacted by the apartheid government (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). The ability of editors to oversee their publications is impacted by these limitations in both direct and indirect ways. A number of these laws were enacted under the guise of national security. The passed legislation, which prohibited black journalists from covering specific events in particular urban areas, was one of the unintended regulations they had to abide by (ibid.). The legislation that has had a direct and greater impact on media outlets and journalists is listed below.

2.5.3 Press freedom in South Africa violated

Human rights violations go unrecorded because of these restrictions on press freedom. This is because the law prohibited the publication of all noteworthy issues related to the struggle for freedom against the apartheid government (Gamlashe, 2012). There were restrictions on press and populace rights in South Africa. According to Gamlashe (2012), the acts enacted during apartheid had the following consequences for the general public: journalists were under pressure from the state to self-censor, or else they risked having their articles rejected or facing legal action from the state for breaking the law.

This hindered the press's ability to inform the public because readers frequently did not receive transparent, balanced information. The news did not cover a lot of South Africa's

reality. Legislation may be imposed by authorities at their discretion. When it came to important state-related decisions, the general public was incapable of making informed decisions. Even though it could seem that a lot of journalistic liberties were upheld, this was simply done by the apartheid government to maintain the country's impression of democracy (Mihail, 2016).

2.6 STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.6.1 The English Press

After the Dutch gave the British authority over the Cape in 1795, the first local publication began (Jamil & Appiah-Adjei, 2019). *The African Advertiser* and *Cape Town Gazette (Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte)* initially published their first edition in 1800 (Newman, 2018). The periodical was published in a government-owned press and received most of its audience from English speakers. The British governor maintained strict control over it from 1814 and 1826.

All private periodicals were banned, except those published by missionaries. First published in 1824, the *South African Commercial Advertiser* was the first non-government newspaper. George Greig owned *the journal*, even though Thomas Pringle and John Fairbairn edited it. It was published in English, although ads and news in Dutch were accepted. The governor of the Cape Colony promptly issued an order to stop publishing the paper. Pringle and Fairbairn established *The South African Journal* and *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydskrift*, a bilingual publication that was later closed down for opposing the government, two months after the *Commercial Advertiser's* launch (Hamada, Hughes, Hanitzsch, Hollings, Lauerer, Arroyave & Splendore, 2019).

In August 1925, Greig resumed the *Commercial Advertiser*, but he later ended it because Fairbairn depicted Lord Somerset as a vindictive figure. Consequently, the press war continued. Three things led to the granting of press freedom from government control: the departure of Lord Somerset from the Cape on March 5, 1926; the appointment of pro-press General Richard Bourke as governor; and John Fairbairn's persistent pursuit of press-related issues with the British government.

The development of the press was also influenced by the arrival of 5,000 British settlers in 1820, who brought printing presses and expertise with them. By the turn of the nineteenth century, most towns had their newspaper. The press was no longer in danger from government control, but they were still subject to indirect control in the form of silent pressure (Finkelstein, 2020). A new law regarding libel was passed, which presented a threat to press freedom. Official limitations on advertising, astronomical telegraph charges, official mistreatment of newsmen's disputes, and logistical problems all threatened the newspaper's survival.

Santos and Mare, (2021) went on to explain that the press could only endure if it united behind a common goal. On November 27, 1882, 26 reporters got together in Grahamstown to form the Newspaper Press Union (NPU), intending to defend and advance the interests of the South African press. Natal's first newspaper was called *De Natalier*. When it first came out in 1844, it was mostly in Dutch with some English. It was closed in 1846 after its editor was sued for libel. *The bilingual* replaced it with *The Natal Witness*, which is currently the oldest newspaper still in publication in South Africa and the daily newspaper in Pietermaritzburg. First published in English by Durban in 1852, the *Natal Mercury* was first published in 1852.

The first *Transvaal* newspaper, *De Oude Emigrant*, was released in 1859. The *Transvaal Argus* was established in 1866. The *Johannesburg Daily* is published in English. In Grahamstown, *The Star* was formerly known as *The Eastern Star* before being moved to Johannesburg in 1899. The *Friend of the Sovereignty* and *Bloemfontein Gazette*, which was published in 1850, was the first newspaper in the Free State. It was closed 130 years later (Santos & Mare, 2021; Rabe, 2020).

2.6.2 The Afrikaans Press

The liberal views of John Fairbairn were a major factor in the early emergence of the Dutch/African press, according to Ward's (2019) documentation of press phases. The weekly newspaper *De Verzamelaar*, which debuted in 1826, was the first journal to be written solely in Dutch (Rafail & McCarthy, 2018; Raaijmakers & Ekama, 2023). Nevertheless, it was published during the first twenty-two years of its existence by a Portuguese Jew and faced financial difficulties. The Afrikaans language was pushed by

Die Afrikaanse Patriot, which debuted in the Western Cape in 1876. Even though it ceased operations in 1904, it is recognised for having made a substantial contribution to the linguistic development of Afrikaans (Raaijmakers & Ekama, 2023).

Throughout the nineteenth century, the English and Afrikaans languages grew significantly differently, and these differences are extremely important. The Afrikaans-language publications were: The results did not reflect professional journalism, as the majority of the editors were religious pastors. The development of the Afrikaans press in the 20th century was influenced by Afrikaners in South African politics.

Furthermore, Dick (2020) noted that three important magazines were formed in 1915, the year the National Party was founded. *Die Burger* was published in Cape Town in 1915; *Het Volksblad* made its debut in Potchefstroom in 1915; *OnsVaderland* made its debut in Pretoria in 1915; and *Die Vaderland* changed its name in 1931. *Die Transvaler*, the northern counterpart of *Die Burger*, was established in 1937 and played a role in advancing Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa. On the eve of World War II, *Die Burger* promoted nationalist and capitalist interests, while Hendrik Verwoerd's *Die Transvaler* became increasingly republican.

2.6.3 The Black Press

According to Douglas (2022), the history of the Black Press in South Africa can be divided into four separate periods, missionary rule, which lasted from 1830 to 1880; independent elitism, which lasted from 1880 to 1930; white ownership, which lasted from 1930 to 1980; and multicultural dominance, which lasted from 1980 to 1995. Newspapers catering to African American readers began to emerge following Cape Colony's 1829 Ordinance No. 60 granting press freedom. The Wesleyan Mission Society produced *Umshumayeli Wendaba*, the first newspaper designed exclusively for black readers, from 1837 to 1841 (Douglas, 2022).

The majority of the black press was issued by missionary groups between 1830 and 1880. *Ikwezi* made its debut in 1844, followed by the bilingual Xhosa/English daily *Indaba* in 1862 and the multilingual periodical *The Kafir Express* in 1870. When the newspaper's Xhosa section split off to become its weekly in 1876, *Isigidimi Sama Xhosa*

became the first to be edited by African American journalists. When John Tengo Jabavu founded *ImvoZabantsundu* in 1884 after leaving his post as editor of *Isigidimi Sama Xhosa*, it became the first newspaper in South Africa to be written, owned, and operated by people of African descent (Deckard, Browne, Rodriguez, Martinez-Cola & Leal, 2020).

The newspaper also became more influential in the expression of black philosophy, encouraging nonviolent concepts and working with progressive White people to effect change. Since *Izwi laBantu* promoted socialism and helped readers improve their lot, it was thought to be much more radical than *Imvo* when it initially came out in 1897. John Dube founded *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1903, which became the first important Zulu newspaper (Motsaathebe, 2018).

Orton (2018) states that in 1912, Dube was selected as the first chairperson of the South African National Congress (SANNC), which later changed its name to the African National Congress (ANC). The SANNC was the organisation that most early-career black journalists belonged to, and they founded *the daily Abantu-Batho* to serve as the organisation's public face. *Mahatma Ghandi* started the Indian Opinion as a weekly journal in 1903, and it became incredibly popular amazingly fast. In 1932, white man Bertram Paver established Bantu Press Ltd. after seeing there was money to be made in the burgeoning black market. Bantu World, introduced by The Bantu Press Ltd., signalled the shift in the black press from local to national. Fourteen months later, the Argus Company bought the company and controlled it until 1952, becoming the first media monopoly in southern Africa.

In June 1976, *Peter Qoboza* was appointed editor of *The World*, making him the first African American editor to work without a white supervisor. October 19, 1977: The publication was ruled unlawful. Jim Bailey's founding of the African Drum in 1951 and the Golden City Post in 1955 marked another significant turning point. The vast majority of black South Africans with education exploited crime, sex, and sports as a means of attraction. By 1947, *the weekly African Drum*, which preceded *Drum*, was circulated more broadly than throughout the majority of South Africa (Finneman & Thomas, 2021).

In the black community and emphasising the contributions notable black authors and musicians have made to South African culture. *The Rand Daily Mail* began publishing more township news in every part of the newspaper, and eighty percent of its readers were African Americans by the time it closed in 1985. The *Soweto Mirror* was a free newspaper that was first published in a nearby township. Later, it changed its name to *Sowetan* and became a daily tabloid. In 1994, The Argus Group sold the newspaper to New Africa Investment Limited, a black commercial organisation, to initiate the process of black economic empowerment.

2.6.4 The Alternative Press

According to Motsaathebe (2018), an alternative press usually arises when the political, economic, social, or cultural opinions of specific social groups are excluded from the mainstream media market. In South Africa, the anti-apartheid movement and the burgeoning alternative press frequently coexist. During the time of opposition and resistance from the 1930s to the 1960s, newspapers such as *Fighting Talk* (1942–1963), *Inkundla* (1930–1951), and *The Guardian* (1937–1963) commented on the development of political movements against a backdrop of internal struggle and political passivity. The *black awareness era*, which lasted from the early 1960s to the 1970s, also saw a resurgence of the alternative press, thanks to publications like the South African Students Organisation's SASP Newsletter and Steve Biko's Black Viewpoint. Due to the alternative press's important role in recruiting Black people for these revolutions, the government outlawed publications, organisations, and leadership (Wasserman, 2020).

The United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) were formed in the 1980s, and this coincided with the second rebirth of the alternative press (Rone, 2022). This era of resistance to government policies and acts was marked by a bottom-up strategy in which the alternative press played a major role. The progressive alternative press, the left commercial press, and the independent social-democratic press were the three distinct categories of alternative press during this period.

The study's thesis is strongly supported by the historical analysis of conventional newspapers, which makes the case that despite the press's ongoing struggles and

historical context, printed newspapers are still deserving of preservation. The history of the digital age, its current state, and how it affects printed newspapers are covered in the next section.

SECTION 2

2.7 THE DIGITAL ERA AND ITS IMPACT ON PRINT MEDIA NEWSPAPERS

2.7.1 Internet development

Digital media, according to Chayko (2020), is any information transfer that deviates from traditional means of communication and uses digital technology. The range of digital media platforms includes the Internet, mobile devices, and other social media platforms. Chayko (2020) went on to say that the introduction of these digital media channels has a significant impact on people's lives. Molesky and Cameron (2019) also observed that there was a notable surge in the number of internet users in the late 1990s.

Most individuals liked to use different digital media platforms in the latter half of the 20th century to interact with others or learn new things. He continued by saying that people's use of traditional media has changed as a result of the new methods they use to obtain information in the current digital era, which poses challenges to the development of traditional media (Chayko, 2020). The arrival of digital media has had different effects in developed and poor countries. In certain poor countries, the emergence of digital media has minimal bearing on the continued existence of traditional media. Most individuals still prefer to get their news from print publications (Schroder, 2018).

Every aspect of human life is touched by the digital age, but communication is especially so. According to Greengard (2021), the swift expansion of the internet has compelled people to access digital content easily and quickly through smartphones or other gadgets. Since some of its devoted readers are likely to go to online media, print media is now vulnerable. While print media does have certain unique advantages like clear, thorough, and detailed news the truth is dangerous for print media enterprises. Furthermore, it is hard to overlook the millennia-long role print media has played in the advancement of human civilisation (Hjort & Poulsen, 2019). The only tools available to access internet media are those that are currently in use, and not everyone has access

to or a functional grasp of them. Online media is only accessible to a small number of individuals, even though it is quick, up to date, and continuous.

Chen and Melon (2018) define "new media" as "the new modes of publication and transmission of information through web sites, news portals, blogs, email, and podcasts." People's interactions with one another and access to new information sources have changed dramatically as a result of the internet (Greengard, 2021). According to Zhuravskaya, Petrova, and Enikolopov (2020), people no longer rely on information sources that are physically close to them since they have access to an unlimited web of information that is updated often. Online news material is always becoming more widely available, and mobile media consumption is becoming increasingly popular. Digital media has opened up an entirely new world for journalism. Because of digital media, it also introduced new problems with copyrights and intellectual property.

Feriyanto and Triana (2015), cited by Pamuji and Ida (2022), are of the view that in the digital age, newspapers as a whole are faced with numerous challenges. Newspapers compete with businesses that provide more effective or affordable goods and services. Among these rivals are other newspapers operating in the same social and technological domain as newspapers but in a different media format. Some rivals are recent entrants into the news industry. The same rivals are also "hungry" for the money that newspapers "traditionally" make from advertising.

For traditional media, particularly newspapers, the emergence of digital media poses both a challenge and a threat. Because of these obstacles and dangers to print media, some newspapers have closed and others have switched to digital formats. The public's growing disinterest in newspapers (print media) and their ability to sell newspapers and advertising services is the true effect of the widespread use of digital media. People may now locate and send news fast thanks to the digital technology revolution, which facilitates effective communication (Pamuji & Ida, 2022).

Situations such as these have an additional effect on the newspaper industry, specifically on the newspaper's sustainability and profitability. This is where the fear of the growing digital business in the mass media, particularly in print, first surfaced. In the

mid-2000s, media convergence emerged as a significant concern for the sector. Large media firms are beginning to create platforms that they never did before: citizen journalism, digital television stations, online news and social media sites, and even new print media. They think they need to quickly transform into a multi-platform business to adapt to the fragmentation brought about by the internet and to be commercially viable in the digital age (Vara-Miguel, Sánchez-Blanco, Sádaba Chalezquer & Negrodo, 2021).

It has been long predicted that print media would enter a period of gloom and death. The demise of print media is a troubling development in today's world of mass media. Some experts predicted that print media will be replaced by electronic media radio broadcasts when radio emerged in the 19th century and became a new, more potent form of mass communication (Pamuji & Ida, 2022). The prediction is based on a fairly simple argument: audiences may be reached more easily by radio mass media than by human distribution networks. Because radio broadcasts use an in-the-air frequency network, the public accepts them with great ease. In addition, the distribution range is faster and wider than print mass media.

Nechushtai and Zalmanson (2021) concur that newspapers receive funding from two sources: the sale of advertising space in newspapers and subscription income from people who purchase the paper. The latter is typically significantly more significant of the two. For instance, these sources account for 80% of the money received by American newspapers. The classifieds section, which contributes 30% of overall revenue and between 25 and 50% of US newspaper advertising revenues, is one of the most significant components of the advertisements seen in newspapers.

Three categories predominate in these classified ads: homes, vehicles, and jobs. With many of the same specific elements as good classifieds, image ads bought by local retailers are another important mainstay of American newspaper advertising. According to Olsen, Kalsnes, and Barland (2021), national display advertising is comparatively insignificant in US print media and has a secondary role in local print media in other countries.

Newspapers' continued survival is thought to be threatened by digital technology, especially given their longstanding dedication to covering a broad range of news and

current affairs as well as their role as a platform for public discussion. Given that these are the two main facets of modern democratic political life, it makes sense that the flawed modern public sphere could be threatened by the growth of the internet. It is too early to tell how serious the threat is or whether any significant alternatives will materialise, but the preliminary data is not encouraging. Technology that is able to address a number of the mass media's issues appears to be evolving in a way that is worsening the situation for the newspaper industry (Olsen, Kalsnes & Barland, 2021).

2.7.2 Impact of digital technology on print newspapers

New Digital Technology's Evolution 1995 was the so-called Year of the Internet. The number of global internet users has grown since then. The government either directly or indirectly sets the boundaries of freedom and space that are reported in the mainstream media. As a result, the traditional media landscape has contributed to the concerning self-censorship mentality that exists among journalists. As a result, new digital media became well-known and accepted by society at large. Now that they are free, anyone can use the Internet to produce their news (Loos & Ivan, 2024).

Loos and Ivan (2024) further added that these days, anyone with a mobile may record videos, anyone with a blog can report, and everyone from a social networking site can serve as an editor. Social networking platforms enable the general public to quickly disseminate information about any horrific event or catastrophe since new media is known for its speed. These days, the media that was formerly used to disseminate news and information is now also used to save lives.

2.7.3 Effects of digital technology on traditional newspapers

Similarly, Dongre, Singh, and Tilak (2021) added that whenever new technology emerges, it always leads to new possibilities that were previously unthinkable or impractical. For instance, although we have an abundance of news sources available to us online, we are no longer as dependent on conventional print newspapers as we once were as a primary source of global news. The Internet has had a significant impact on how newspapers are read, operated, funded, and staffed, for better or ill.

They further added that as per the "State of the News Media 2012" report by the Pew Research Centre, there has been a consistent decline in the number of newspapers and their adult readership since 1999. This decrease was observed irrespective of the respondents' race, income bracket, or educational attainment. But in 2011, there was a 17 percent increase in the number of people visiting online news sites compared to the previous year.

❖ **Cost cutting**

Newspapers have to monitor their financial bottom lines much like any other firm. Expenses must be reduced when revenue drops, which has resulted in a reduction in newspaper staff across the board through forced retirements or layoffs. As to the 2010 census, there were 41,600 newsroom employees in 2010, down from a peak of 56,900 in 1990, a decrease of more than 27 percent.

A reduction in the workforce has resulted in the strong right arm of the news world that was previously comprised of major newspaper sources. There must be compensatory work done. The scope of news coverage has surpassed that of conventional print media. All of the additional providers, however, are unable to match large newspapers for the previously available resources. As a result, even with increased coverage, it might not be as thorough as it could be.

Dongre, Singh, and Tilak (2021) mentioned that adaptation is an obstacle in newspapers. Newspapers have launched online versions in response to reader demands for immediate access to news. While some of these editions are available for free, others can be obtained for a discounted price or through digital media on devices like the Kindle, Nook, or iPhone. With these forms, print and distribution costs are eliminated, allowing newspapers to deliver news faster and more effectively. These formats currently only serve as an addition to the conventional mat print, but in the future, they might become the only choice.

2.8 ERA OF THE DIGITAL

The shift from an industry-based economy to an information-based economy, utilising computers and other technical devices as a means of communication, is known as the

"digital era." Ansong and Boateng (2019) define the "digital era" as a time where information is easily accessible, rapidly shared, and straightforward to utilise. Most people use the Internet to transfer and retrieve information. The current is referred to as the "digital era." Numerous novel technologies have been created to simplify everyday tasks and commercial dealings for people.

A portion of the data has been converted from an analogue to an electronic format. The digital era saw the development of modern devices like smartphones, tablets, PDAs, and mobile computers, which are indispensable to this generation. The nature of technology has changed over time. The newest digital technology is at the disposal of today's millennials. They make use of gadgets like iPads, digital cameras, video games, mobiles, and PCs, among others. Enterprises conduct business via the Internet. Information is exchanged electronically. This is new, as opposed to the preceding era. The emergence of new media, most notably the Internet platform, has been one of the most popular movements in the media and communication fields in recent years.

The advent of mobiles and the Internet has put the news industry's stranglehold over the news business in jeopardy (Hirst, 2020). This is so that people may now quickly obtain the information they need via digital devices. The Internet was initially created as a communication network, making it one of the most adaptable features of new media. Since then, it has expanded to a global market. These days, millions of individuals use the internet for a variety of media-related purposes. According to Harerimana and Mtshali (2018), the growth of the Internet has led to information rearrangement, cross-cultural social contacts, and increased involvement. It has also encouraged the usage of personal computers. The Internet played a role in some of the biggest challenges and joys facing print media today.

2.8.1 South African news websites and the internet

According to Hjort and Poulsen (2019), South Africa is among the developing nations with the most sophisticated technological infrastructure. South Africa received its first Internet connection in 1988. It was believed that there was a connection between Rhodes University, then housed in the tiny Grahamstown settlement, and Randy Bush's Portland, Oregon, home. It opened for business in 1989. However, the 1990s saw the

purchase of South Africa's superhighway Internet service, which is still expanding today (Lewis, 2020).

Other public spaces, such as legislatures and salons, are places where common people in a community can get together and talk about problems without interference from the government or the dominant religion. Even though the notion of the public sphere has been subject to significant criticism, this study still skimmed over Ojukwu, Mutula & Saliu, (2021) perspective. Voor pointed out that Habermas's idealisation of the public sphere contained many noteworthy omissions, such as gender and class disparities.

According to Ojukwu, Mutula and Saliu, (2021), Habermas' idea of the public sphere is distinct (one-sided), constantly concentrates on masculinist ideology, and mostly ignores women and their involvement in politics. The public world as defined by Habermas was found to be insufficiently explained. In light of this, Hjort and Poulsen (2019) recommended: "societies tolerate contestation among a multiplicity of competing public spheres, rather than singularity." Her key argument was that the participation of multiple groups in society would better promote participatory egalitarianism than a single, all-encompassing public domain (Hjort & Poulsen, 2019).

As was previously indicated concerning the public sphere, the main point underscored reveals that everybody can participate. Thus, it follows that social group with a range of values will live in a society that upholds the right to free speech and association (Ojukwu, Mutula & Saliu, 2021).

As per the previously described concepts, the Internet has emerged as a medium that has facilitated the growth of the modern political public sphere (Harerimana & Mtshali, 2018). The Internet is used for more than just communication purposes because of its dynamic nature; a variety of social groupings have embraced it. The characteristics of digital journalism have been observed to be a developing phenomenon that has taken the conventional media by surprise. However, in South Africa, the use of online media for news broadcasts is not entirely new. Although the Internet and digital technologies were not yet widely used, print newspapers such as the Mail & Guardian and Financial Mail started using websites for news delivery in the mid-1990s.

Abdulrahman, Faruk, Oloyede, Surajudeen-Bakinde, Olawoyin, Mejabi, and Azeez (2020) reported that from 1995 to 2000, a significant number of newspaper titles embraced the use of online media. However, because most newspapers could not sustain the medium, using news sites was a fleeting experience for them. At the time, newspapers only posted material to text-heavy websites, which made it possible for a limited portion of readers to use the Internet. The fact that the majority of South African readers did not have access to the Internet in the early 2000s is another factor that works in their favour. Advertisers consequently felt that the media did not provide them with enough help to meet their advertising needs (ibid.).

Because more people in South Africa are using the Internet, everyone is using digital technology more increasingly, including journalists. As a result, the Internet allowed a lot of online news sites to grow and removed a lot of barriers to professional journalism. Murire, Flowerday, Strydom, and Fourie (2020) claim that this increased audience engagement resulted in a greater participation rate. Utilising the printed newspaper in tandem is one unique method that digital journalism is conducted in South Africa.

Due to the Internet's broad use in South Africa's media environment, the majority of media operators there, including the smaller businesses, have a strong online presence. Media firms like M-Net (Electronic Media Network) and DStv (Digital Satellite Television), both owned by Nasionale Pers (Naspers), are examples of those in the broadcasting industry that have powerful interactive websites that draw viewers to their television programs (Hjort & Poulsen, 2019; Lewis, 2019). Most print media organisations have also embraced the advancement of online news sites, which is considered an effort to increase readership for their print publications. South African newspapers and digitalisation.

Berger, Masala, Dragomir, Thompson, Jamaï, Chan & Tambini, (2012) found that although some journalists in South Africa are excited about the opportunities presented by digitalisation, others feel overburdened and incapable of managing them because of the interactive nature of new media journalism. Responding to reader emails or enquiries on social media is a common task for writers, but it takes effort and has no instant payoff. As a result, the authors of the original articles would be unable to

respond to a large number of comments on their online reports by journalists. Then there is the issue of the additional workload brought on by finicky editors who feel they have to provide support for many platforms. According to Holton, Lewis, and Coddington (2020), multitasking by reporters is becoming more common as a means of producing material for their newspaper's online and mobile versions.

Beyond juggling the different platforms utilised for news distribution, journalists use social networking sites to update their audience on breaking news as it happens. The problem, according to Holton, Lewis, and Coddington (2020), is that there is a chance that digital media will encourage lazy journalism. As a result, they have so many articles to write and deadlines to meet that journalists do not have much time for independent research or fact-checking. Quotations are routinely used by journalists without contacting the original authors. The issue of utilising social media posts as sources without thoroughly verifying their accuracy also exists.

In South Africa, the move to digital media occurred against a backdrop of diminishing print media advertising and daily newspaper sales. Due to the rise of social networks, especially Twitter and Facebook, South African newspapers decided that print was no longer the mainstay and should instead be just one of many news products offered to readers. This required active engagement with readers and meeting their need to satisfy their need to stay up to date on breaking news on social networks, as noted by Wasserman (2020). A study on the effects of new media on South African journalism describes the country's newsrooms as "a ship sailing against extreme headwinds of change," including "technology disruption, regulatory reform, and government enmity," in addition to "downsized newsrooms, dwindling circulation, and altering income models." According to Wasserman (2020), despite their inability to predict the outcome, South African journalists were optimistic about the shift from traditional to digital media.

Apart from dispensing news on several platforms, such as tablets and smartphones, an increasing number of newsrooms are adopting the "digital first" approach and incorporating social media, especially Twitter, into their routine tasks. Journalists find it challenging to multitask, and publishers need to think about their internet revenue streams and business strategies. Journalists are urged to have social media accounts.

They use their account to tweet, being mindful of their company's reputation. Following the digital shift, a poll of newspaper readers in South Africa and Nigeria revealed that one of the biggest challenges facing Africa is the continent's infrastructure.

Little has changed since Phokeer (2021) cited the lack of electricity and broadband Internet, which can easily provide data-intensive video content, as major obstacles to the growth of the media in Africa. The need to address that issue is now even greater given that media and information consumers in the digital age depend on electricity to continue operating. Although the state of the Internet has improved since Berger made his observation a decade ago, the problem of electricity persists, and as Phokeer (2021) further notes, "The new media technologies will remain theoretical from the point of view of using them to circulate mass information unless media can lead the charge for governments to sort out the ubiquitous problems of this fundamental economic resource."

2.8.2 Performing in an online setting

Aside from the basic changes and challenges in the print media business, the most significant changes and problems that print newspapers face when functioning in an online setting are the numerous new strategies, they engage with to reach their readers. (Su & Borah, 2019; Nel & Milburn-Curtis, 2019; Supadiyanto, 2020). According to Supadiyanto (2020), journalists face a challenge when it comes to interacting with their audiences because, in the same way, that Web 2.0 was designed to foster interaction, journalists strive to forge connections between their publications and their readers as well as between the readers and the publications themselves. As to the findings of Holton et al. (2020) and Su and Borah (2019), newspapers can strengthen their attachment, or relationship, with their readers by leveraging the various interactive elements offered by online media platforms.

According to Supadiyanto (2020), interactive aspects are valuable for print newspapers operating in an online environment since they can be used to measure reader satisfaction and loyalty and attract younger readers. According to Gutsche and Hess (2020), community attachment can have an impact on an audience's opinion of a publication's validity, hence it is crucial to foster it. In journalism, newspaper companies

would gain insight into their readers' perceptions of their dependability. This is particularly important in the modern age of new media when competition from different online news and information sources is getting easier to obtain. Because journalists leave their readers to primarily connect on their publications' online platforms, community newspapers still have the opportunity to get input from their readership (Nelson, 2021). Martin and Murrell (2021) assert that print newspapers have the opportunity to reach a larger audience through the interactive features seen on internet media platforms. Nelson (2021) argues, however, that although print newspapers can expand their readership and reach new audiences by working in an online environment, they are usually too small and underfunded to do so.

Based on the results of a study he conducted on the impact of technology on the degree of interaction between print newspapers and their readers in an online environment, Supadiyanto (2020) argues that print newspapers fail to carry on their tradition of interaction with their audience online and risk alienating them. In addition to boosting reader engagement, citizen journalism is now a component of the digital media landscape in South Africa (Jenkins, 2020).

All aspects of people's lives are impacted by new technologies, and media across all platforms is influenced by the Internet (Rao & Kalyani, 2022). Newspapers, however, are more impacted than periodicals, books, and other written materials because their primary function is to enlighten readers about national and local happenings. While newspapers were the primary and most convenient way to obtain news a half-century ago, the advent of the Internet has made it simpler to obtain news online. Media formats are evolving, but not for the first time.

Thus, adding on existing Newspapers that first appeared approximately 1200 years ago. The first American newspaper appeared in Boston in 1690. Later, as radio and television gained popularity, newspaper manufacturing began to progressively fall as a result of how quick and easy it was to obtain breaking news through these new media. TV was still unable to compete with newspapers, though, as the latter offered more in-depth information. Newspapers had a lot more stress in the 1990s following the introduction of the Internet. Today, there are about 67 million blog readers and 21

million blog authors, which has resulted in an explosion of new writers and consumer feedback platforms that did not exist even five years ago.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace receive over 70 million monthly users, and businesses are beginning to use these tools to connect management and staff globally. Everything in the world is going online these days. The amount of printed material is declining these days due to the popularity of public editions. Newspapers are still relevant because of four key factors: content, readers, advertisers, and format. In addition, the author refutes each of these characteristics and contends that newspapers will not be around in five years.

To begin with, newspapers are similar remarkably similar to one another. The same information is available online. For a newspaper, the reader is the most crucial thing. Without readers, newspapers cannot survive. Though they can manage without printed editions, an increasing number of people concur that they are pleasant to have. Despite the argument that older generations should be accustomed to paper records and not wish to change, statistics show that a growing number of individuals are using the Internet. A poll indicates that in just four years, the percentage of people in the 70–75 age range who use the Internet climbed from 26% to 45%.

It may be surprising to learn that 4% of Internet users are older than 73. Online news reading is popular among Internet users. Where does the money for publications come from? "Advertisers" is the most reasonable response. If printed newspapers are not remarkably successful, will advertisers still sponsor them? Large metropolitan newspapers are under greater threat these days than smaller ones. Newspaper advertising may be fairly costly, especially when there are so many other options available, such as radio, magazines, websites, and billboards. In small towns, advertisers are limited in their options; thus, to reach the public, they should place their advertisement in the local newspapers.

Local newspapers now have a better chance of surviving as a result. Online adverts are another source of income for newspapers. For both parties, it is even more convenient because it is simpler to monitor the number of clicks on this link than it is to determine the number of individuals who read newspapers and paid any attention to the ads.

Newspapers are not good for the environment. To create and deliver the papers, a lot of electricity, a lot of wood, and a lot of delivery tracks are needed. However, from an environmental perspective, printing periodicals makes no sense because the Internet is quite harmless for the environment.

Although, a lot of technological items are needed to use the Internet, including laptops, notebooks, iPads, and other devices, but even with the manufacturing of newspapers moving online, there will still be a demand for these electronic gadgets. There is a belief that knowledgeable internet moderators recommend certain publications to read to familiarise oneself with current events. There should be newspapers, if only in tiny quantities because this type of service will not undergo significant change. Newspapers will not be replaced by the internet.

Newspapers need to provide readers with something more than simply printed content if they hope to keep their readers interested. Since publishers' content is what is posted online in the first place, internet businesses are reluctant to "steal" the money from newspapers. "Using Google's webmaster tools, publishers can prevent Google from indexing their sites entirely, or they can prevent specific Google services, like Google News, from indexing their content."

2.8.3 Convergence of the media and online journalism

Erdal (2019) claims that the demands from the communication and information revolution in the mid-1990s pushed journalism professors to talk about alternate curricular options. The convergence proved to be the solution. There are several meanings associated with the term "convergence". In this context, it is seen and described as a part of journalism. The terms "integrated journalism" and "multi-platform publication" are used to characterise the convergence of journalism (Prayogi, Sjafirah & Dewi, 2020).

The rate at which ideas are adopted and disseminated in the contemporary media industry presents a formidable obstacle for media educators, notwithstanding the newsroom's seeming perpetual innovation relative to the classroom. Argues that although media convergence presents serious challenges for the newspaper industry, it

also presents chances to use new content and channels in response to shifting consumer expectations. Newspaper publishers operate in a changed socioeconomic environment as a result of convergence. The expansion of the Internet, the digitisation of data, and the blurring of boundaries between media platforms are its defining characteristics. Broadly speaking, media convergence refers to the general trend where the boundaries between the formerly discrete information technology, media, and telecommunications sectors have become increasingly hazy and the many sectors within the media industry have become more intertwined. According to Mbata (2019), cited by Antwi-Darkwa (2019), internet readership for conventional publications is rising. The core of the simultaneous changes in people's interactions with news is the internet and mobile technology. The importance of social media platforms for news consumption is growing.

People use social media and other networking technologies to filter, assess, and react to the news, claims Antwi-Darkwa (2019). This convergence has been facilitated in large part by the Internet and the digitisation of all media output, but there are other levels at which its implications can be investigated, including those related to industries, technology, media content, and journalistic techniques. Convergence has made it possible for newspapers to provide content that incorporates various multimedia elements, such as text, graphics, audio, video, photographs, and social networks. Use a variety of media platforms to distribute these goods (Kalombe & Phiri, 2019).

Convergence has led to the development of technologies that have helped advertisers increase their sales because multimedia platforms provide them with a range of platforms to interact with their audience and expand their reach through online resources such as video advertisements (Chaffey & Smith, 2022). The results could occasionally be negative due to audience segmentation and the upheaval of current economic institutions. Social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of life have been impacted by the creation and continued expansion of the Web. Advertising and marketing tactics have changed as a result of online platforms and audience preferences. According to Sama's (2019) assessment, as people increasingly busier, they require knowledge at their convenience. As a result, there is less physical space

for news as more people rely on digital media sources. Newspaper companies have responded to this by following the audience wherever they are in an attempt to keep readers and increase income.

2.8.4 Media digitalization and journalism

Users have the power to improve the transparency of the reporting process since they can see, hear, or read the information sources on websites. It is not merely a mass communication medium; it can reach every person on Earth (Zayani, 2021). The internet is the most popular type of mass media because of its ability to make other media more useful and effective as well as because it can turn viewers into active participants through interactive content. Because it enables users to provide feedback, interaction is one of the primary features of the Internet (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2021; Perreault & Ferrucci, 2020 & Duffy & Ang, 2019).

In summary, the internet has fundamentally altered how news content is distributed and consumed (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2021). Because it offers instantaneous news delivery, readers may stay informed at all times and receive news instantly. Digital news is highly valued by readers because it meets their ever-changing news needs. The Nordic countries are thought to have a particularly strong tradition of newspaper reading, according to Kenny (2020). Newspaper readership fell from 1996 to 2002 and again from 2005 to 2006, despite this widespread reading habit. However, since the advent of the internet, reading patterns for print newspapers have hardly changed in Sweden. In the other Nordic countries, daily newspaper circulation declined overall, with the biggest declines occurring in Norway and Denmark and the least in Sweden and Finland. There was plenty of evidence to suggest that the decline in newspaper readership was caused by the development of new media and the Internet. According to Perreault and Ferrucci (2020), the trend of digitalisation has a very disruptive effect on journalism as a profession and as a practice. As such, employees in the media industry will be impacted by any meaningful changes made to the industry. Journalists have experienced and will continue to experience unique repercussions from digitalisation that, in certain cases, may run counter to their professional ethics of truthful and impartial reporting (Kenny, 2020). At this moment, the digital revolution has also helped journalists. Shearer and

Mitchell (2021) assert that in many emerging nations, digital media in particular has emerged as a major information source.

Furthermore, digital media enhanced reader communication with editorial staff, simplifying the process for journalists to comprehend readers' interests and reading preferences (Kenny, 2020; Shearer & Mitchell, 2021). The proliferation of digital media outlets worldwide and "international investigative journalism collaborations" have led to the publication of more alternative viewpoints. For example, journalists from different countries and media organisations can collaborate well on multidisciplinary investigative stories. The alarming proliferation of online "fake news" and an overall abundance of unverifiable material has led to an increased focus on journalistic education and professional standards within the business. Along with other benefits, this has led to a noticeable increase in the availability of internet resources for media workers. While there are many ways that digitalisation may and does improve and enrich journalism, Perreault and Ferrucci (2020) concurred that it has had a negative impact on the field of journalism within well-established media organisations. Around the globe, media organisations have responded to mounting financial pressure on their dual-business model by cutting costs. Bringing multiple media enterprises under one roof is an effective way to keep expenses in check in the media sector while yet ensuring a respectable level of revenue and content output. In this method, media organisations can achieve economies of scale and reach.

While these practices are entirely acceptable from a business perspective, they can and do negatively affect the calibre of the content and the job that journalists do. Additionally, as media house consolidations and mergers are a recent phenomenon that significantly affects the media industry as a whole, this could jeopardise or negatively affect press freedom in a country. Globally, there is extreme pressure on journalists' ability to find and share independent, unbiased, and critical content (Dunwoody, 2021). According to Saeed, Raza and Ali (2022), the unfavourable working conditions faced by media practitioners provide a clear example of the challenges facing journalism worldwide.

According to a recent incisive media study from Rhodes University, jobs in journalism are already far more contingent and insecure than they used to be, and they also require a far larger range of skills. Particularly in South Africa, journalists are expected to work faster and complete more articles in less time and with fewer resources than they did just five years ago. Apart from the detrimental consequences that financial demands on media outlets have on journalists, the rise of digital (Dunwoody, 2021). Media workers need to be proficient in social media account management, video recording and editing, and website content updating (Saeed, Raza & Ali, 2022).

Moreover, media corporations are more likely to cut back on financing for important journalism, such as assistance with pricey investigative reporting. The goal of the business side of editorial management is to reduce, if not completely eradicate, unfavourable stories that could hurt sales for the company. In the worst situation, of being critical, reporting on the actions of significant advertising clients may be uncritical (East, Singh, Wright & Vanhuele, 2021). The regrettable result is a significant decline in media independence as topics of public concern are either completely or uncritically covered, undermining the independent media outlets' long-standing "watchdog role" in relation to national commercial and governmental authorities.

According to Hayes (2021), media plurality and the scope of reporting are also diminished as a result of broadcasting stations skipping costly stories and newsrooms having fewer employees and resources to cover them. According to Tabane (2020), the regrettable result is that public interest topics are either completely ignored or presented without question, which negatively impacts media independence and undermines the independent media's long-standing "watchdog role" in relation to the country's governmental and commercial authorities. According to Tabane (2020), "As broadcasting stations skip costly stories and newsrooms have fewer staff members and resources to cover stories, media plurality and the diversity of reporting are also reduced.

2.8.5 A transition to digital from print

Lowery (2019) argues that customers are already moving away from print media and towards electronic alternatives because the younger generation has grown up with

computers, iPods, and other portable technologies. Kids who have grown up with the internet at their fingertips are used to getting much of their information from search engines like Google, and electronic books and texts are ideal for them. In the same vein, censorship does not apply to all online content that is accessed through social media and other unapproved avenues. Acting as though this is not happening is pointless because most individuals now read books online and have made significant changes to their daily routines.

Whillans, Perlow and Turek (2021) state that Whillans is the best option for today's readers since they value promptness, transparency, and engagement. They should use stored computerised data that can be retrieved instantly (Burchell, 2015). Nonetheless, print media continues to rule the new media space and is the most active kind at the moment, according to Burchell (2015). The most notable advantage of print journalism is its attitude to reporting, which is fair, unbiased, and rigorous. If they can seize the chance, print media could be able to play an indispensable role due to its social authority and reputation. According to Sinatra and Lombardi (2020), there is little data to back up the broad use of online news sources in place of print newspapers. According to Sinatra and Lombardi (2020), some news consumption has shifted from offline to online, but not to the extent that some sources claim. Moreover, the impact on printed newspapers has not been so severe as to imply the "death" of the printed newspaper. Dowling (2020) argues that because online advertising is not an adequate substitute for traditional print advertising, the internet news medium functions as a supplement rather than a replacement. Martin (2019) refutes his previous claim that the printed newspaper is becoming less of a traditional news source by claiming that consumers have not stopped consuming news altogether but have instead shifted to different mediums. Nonetheless, certain investigators have detected a noteworthy modification that is unique in its extent.

2.9 NEW MEDIA AND HOW IT AFFECTS HOW NEWS IS DELIVERED

Fridolfsson (2021) hinted that in the era of "fake news," the days of waiting for breaking news on the morning show or poring over gossip magazines to find the latest rumours involving celebrities are long gone. All the information we need is now accessible with

only a few taps on an app, and most people get their news online these days, especially via social media. Today, news travels swiftly (Fridolfsson, 2021). In the future, the story of today will be forgotten. The speed at which news can spread these days makes it easy to miss things. It is great to have so much information available, but you should never believe anything you read in the headlines and always double-check your sources. Now that digital media is our new news manager, it is up to us to be the media's fact-checkers (Singh, 2024).

Potnis and Tahamtan (2021) assert that digital technology and social media have radically altered how news is obtained, processed, and distributed. They have also made it harder to continue producing news that is transparent, moral, and of the highest calibre. They argue that maintaining the standard of journalism may prove to be difficult given the changes and challenges associated with news production in the era of digital media (Potnis & Tahamtan, 2021). As the technological environment has changed, several new pressures have also emerged (accelerated news cycles, reduced resources, etc.). All of these have the potential to cause behavioural changes in newsrooms, which could weaken traditional gatekeeping mechanisms and jeopardise the fundamental values of high-quality, ethical journalism that the media strives to uphold.

Bunce (2019) concluded that the internet and digital media have also transformed the way these newsrooms operate based on their interviews with journalists employed in South African newsrooms utilising a variety of social media and digital technology tactics. The people who work in newsrooms that have traditionally relied only on print were most affected by the decline in revenue. Bunce (2019) went on to say that the journalism crew was overworked and had less time to write "high quality" articles, follow-ups, or stories that fell outside the purview of their primary duties as a result of the ensuing budget cuts. The idea of "fewer hands-on deck" left a lasting effect on the interviews. Worldwide employment losses and revenue losses are a concern for the journalism business, especially in traditional print media. The second most frequent problem they encountered was the deluge of online content, which made it challenging for participants to keep up with everything that required their attention (Bunce, 2019).

The amount of information was overwhelming, and participants found it difficult to stay up with competitors and other new media news sources. According to Srisaracam (2019), these challenges result in the following situation: The impact of fewer journalists being accessible (due to budgetary constraints) is significantly more substantial given the increased amount of online material that journalists must sift through, the increased number of articles they are expected to write, and the increased amount of labour. Stupart (2021) emphasised that newsroom pressures are increasing, and this has an effect on the quality of reporting that journalists do. According to Stupart (2021), they struggle to balance "the speed-driven character of current news with the requirement for dependability and rigour in their investigations". As a result, fundamental requirements of excellent journalism such as fact-checking, consulting primary sources, and pursuing leads fall between the cracks, jeopardising not only the accuracy of journalists' reporting but also their ability to act as gatekeepers (Stupart, 2021). According to Callison and Young (2019), the lack of resources journalists face also restricts the amount of time they have available.

They can scrutinise, assess, and clarify material for their audience. Consequently, some journalists repackage PR and advertising content and portray it as news, turning them into "conduits for PR practitioners and advertisers to distribute information to an eager audience under the pretence of news" (Callison & Young, 2019). Editors in South African newsrooms are not exempt from these shifts and challenges; they too must find methods to provide notable content in an increasingly commercialised industry. This trade-off between what people seem to be talking about and what they should be talking about when allocating resources and space in the magazine further affects the quality of print publications (Bunce, 2019). Editors also face challenges in determining how to best use the newsroom's personnel and resources to generate the most valuable products.

Hirst (2020) points out that the internet and other digital media have the potential to help journalists in modern newsrooms improve the calibre of their reporting by enabling them to reach a broader audience and develop multimedia stories. It is still unclear, though, how journalists may take advantage of this chance while working under intense

pressure to fulfil their other obligations. An important feature of journalism practice before the advent of new media was how specific stories are assembled and presented by the newspapers or news organisations that the public consumes as news (Hirst, 2020).

2.9.1 Media digitalization and its impacts

Digital journalism or online journalism activities are intricately linked to new media and its features in terms of news generation and distribution (Engelke, 2019). The term "digital journalism" did not appear to have a universal definition among specialists, nevertheless. Digital journalism, also known as cause, citizen, participatory, or public journalism, is broad and has been interpreted in many different ways. Blassnig and Esser (2022) define "digital journalism" as the use of digital technologies for a range of functions, including the creation, dissemination, and collection of news and information to a wide range of computer-literate customers, to emphasise the idea.

Hyper-textuality, interactivity, the usage of multimedia, nonlinearity, convergence, personalisation, and customisation are a few traits of digital journalism (Engelke, 2019; Blassing & Esser, 2022). Although traditional journalists have access to a multitude of materials, they may find it challenging to understand these advancements in media technology. According to Drok and Hermans (2020), journalists may now carry out their tasks in ways that they previously would not have been able to due to the abundance of tools available in the new media. The media landscape has changed dramatically due to communication technology breakthroughs that have provided journalists with a wealth of advanced resources. These advancements in instruments have allowed journalists, even with sufficient skills, to access greater material from government archives, computer databases, and the Internet, among other sources. It is also critical to remember that these journalistic instruments are unparalleled in their ability to swiftly disseminate news and information throughout the globe. These advancements provided lone journalists with the space and tools they required to make a greater impact than they did previously.

Since amateur and public users have utilised these resources for the same purposes as professional journalists, the audience for new media platforms has grown. Reporters are

needed to integrate methods increasingly for obtaining information and presenting stories across various media platforms (Kulkarni, Thomas, Komorowski & Lewis, 2023). Multitasking comes with some pressure because it requires journalists to integrate traditional workflows with evolving story requirements (Newman, 2018).

Dierickx (2020) found that multitasking makes journalists busier, stressed, and less skilled. Some scholars argue that increased workloads and time constraints are detrimental to the journalism profession; journalists must now take on additional responsibilities for the same compensation (Newman, 2018). The demands that new media technology has placed on the newsroom are seen in these changes in the workload for journalists. However, the new medium also brought some advantageous features, such flexibility, which made it possible for journalists to do their work quickly (Dierickx, 2020). Journalists for newspapers need to work harder than before to stay on top of the evolving media environment. This points to the inevitable demise of the traditional media control paradigm at the hands of new media.

Notwithstanding these most current shifts in the news landscape, the influence of new media, and the growth of digital journalism. It is imperative to bear in mind that professional journalists still have the same goals as established news reporters (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2021). For most of their history, professional journalists have sought to report on stories as fast and correctly as they can. However, some argue that since new media practices continue to clash with news production norms of practice, the ideology of professional journalism may no longer be as driven by the need for truth-seeking (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2021). Also, new communication technologies have played a major role in the spread of misinformation. Thus, the profession of journalism might not survive.

The Conte (2020) Daily Maverick reported that understanding the reader is essential for print to appeal to readers. This was said when the publication introduced a new print newspaper, which left the general public perplexed as to why it was being uttered in the current digital era. After numerous delays, the perfect edition was finally released with a huge push and some reader research or consultation. Based on the diverse information demands of the readers, it had to be done. According to the report, this newspaper

would be about reviving the weekend reading ritual for readers, which was something that came up frequently in our one-on-one conversations with our team and readers (Conte, 2020).

In the era of the internet, readers would rather read articles about trending issues than traditional, boring ones. These conventional publications are now in jeopardy as a result (Tong, 2018). As a result, the vast majority of established publications change. The way that consumers want to read has altered in the digital age. Nowadays audiences have stopped using traditional texts and images. Instead, people favour engaging and well-liked subjects. Readers' earlier topics were out-of-date, and readers found them boring (Tong, 2018).

2.9.2 New media's effect on traditional media

According to Bejinaru (2019), digitisation has played a critical role in providing society with reliable information. Information can now travel fast and instantly thanks to digitalisation. The material has been widely shared in some venues. Due to digitisation, people's spending patterns have drastically changed. The way individuals communicate, view the world, and obtain information has changed as a result of technology. Digitisation has made the process simple and easy to understand. With the introduction of the internet, the world has changed. Bejinaru (2019) claims that digitisation is the biggest technological breakthrough of the modern era.

When used in conjunction with the Internet and personal computers, digital media has had a disruptive effect on publishing, journalism, public relations, entertainment, education, commerce, and politics. Digital media has brought forth some important problems for copyright and intellectual property. a possible digital dark age in which media from earlier eras cannot be accessed by information systems that are either out-of-date or current (ibid).

Digital is usually chosen by businesses overprint due to its rapid growth and inclination to overtake print because of its instantaneous nature, capacity to build relationships with audiences, and capacity to acquire data about audiences (Hernandez & Roberts, 2018). Newspapers have indeed suffered in the contemporary media environment. This is

evidenced by the gradually falling number of people reading newspapers after social media and the Internet became popular, as well as by the state of the economy. For example, a survey conducted in the United States in 2017 revealed that the unprecedented reliance of consumers on digital news sources caused a drastic reduction in newspaper readership (Chyi & Tenenboim, 2019).

However, with all the challenges study by Peters, Schrøder, Lehaff, and Vulpius, (2022) confirms that elderly people still enjoy newspapers and other heritage print media, younger and middle-aged people prefer to obtain their news and other information from online sources. Print and new media will inevitably coexist and support one another. There does not appear to be much of a purpose to pay for a newspaper subscription when you can easily obtain online news for free. The "End" of print media has not occurred; rather, print and news organisations' have adapted to quickly shifting consumer patterns and a matching shift towards digital content, which has caused new media to have an impact on society more quickly.

SECTION 3

2.10 THE NATURE, VALUE OF PRINT MEDIA AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

This section presents the literature reviewed for this study. In an essay, thesis, or research project, a literature review is crucial for establishing pertinent knowledge, ideas, and arguments that have been written about this study or studies related to it (Melo, Queiroz, Junior, de Sousa, Yushimito & Pereira, 2023). It is also crucial for providing support for the argument put forth. It begins by examining the characteristics of print media, specifically newspapers. The topic proceeds further through a thorough examination of the numerous difficulties and sustainability problems facing print media, which also contextualises the effects of the digital era on print media. The background and function of printed newspapers are examined in more detail in this section, which also elaborates on the newspaper's relevance to readers and the reasons why it should do so.

Newspapers have long served as a source of information that keeps readers informed about events both locally and globally. Yet, this study focuses on the sustainability strategies of print newspapers in current digital age.

According to Seibu (2020), the print media pattern thrived in the pre-internet period when instantaneous news access via mobiles and online news aggregators was out of the grasp of the average person. With the increase in users of digital devices, information access has altered over time. Yet, because the average circulation of print media is declining internationally, it was necessary to study sustainable survival techniques, and the findings will be useful for the future of traditional media (newspapers). Newspapers are sometimes referred to as print media. Newspapers gather, edit, and publish news stories and reports. Newspapers are also issued in the evening (Seibu, 2020). According to Bara, Affandi, Farid, and Marzuki (2021), print media has made a significant contribution to the dissemination of knowledge. Print media still retains appeal and significance today despite the rise of electronic media, and it has the advantage of leaving a stronger impression on readers thanks to its in-depth reporting and analysis (ibid).

2.11 PRINT MEDIA AS MASS MEDIA

Each form of media has advantages of its own, Saragih and Harahap (2020) add that print media is better than electronic media in several ways. The "durability" of information is where print media outperforms electronic media. Print media among the numerous forms of mass media provides benefits that other media do not. The printout is irreversible and can be saved so that, if necessary, the reader can repeat it until they comprehend the message being communicated without incurring any additional costs. Baron (2021) claims that one of their benefits is that it may be saved and read multiple times, which encourages readers to consider the writing's subject matter more carefully.

It is possible to save or gather the information's contents. The cost is more reasonable. Flexible in deciding when advertisements and publications (whether local, regional, or national) will be published to the people the advertisement is targeting. Newspapers are able to reach readers in accordance with their geographic locations and can be enjoyed

longer (Sheller, 2018). Sheller (2018) also mentioned that print media must wait for print to distribute news to the public and that they are slow to provide information.

Baron, (2021) agrees that production costs are high since print material must be printed and sent before the general public may access it. On the other hand, newspapers have the drawbacks of being simple to ignore and fast becoming stale. Newspaper readers only need 15 to 30 minutes to read a newspaper, and they typically only read it once, although it has a large and recorded audience. Messiness; If the contents and layout are disorganised, the reader's interpretation of the advertisement's message will be impacted. Newspapers are unable to reach some demographics, such as the lower middle class or those under the age of 15. Items that do not fit; some things require demonstrations and cannot be advertised in newspapers (Sheller, 2018).

2.12 VALUE OF PRINT MEDIA

Delgado, Vargas, Ackerman and Salmerón (2018) claim print media provides many poor South Africans with the only affordable source of local and national news, which will continue to be essential to the nation's media environment. Print thus meets a need by fostering a sense of community and connection among people from different socioeconomic backgrounds and by helping advertisers reach a wide range of viewers. Since digital platforms are expensive to access, the majority of South Africans do not enjoy 24/7 free access to them. Print will continue as long as data is not made widely accessible to anyone. Media owners must devise creative and original ways to adjust to change if they want to maintain their workforce's engagement and the relevance of their print media brands.

Since print media is a traditional method of development communication, it is the most accessible to those who need to hear messages about development, such as farmers and workers (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 2021). They went on to say that newspapers were the ones who accorded development themes the most weight in the print medium. Deacon, Pickering, Golding, and Murdock (2021) discussed numerous government development schemes and how the populace may take advantage of them in their writing. They discuss farming and related topics and provide information on the weather, market prices, and the accessibility of new seeds and tools. According to

Khanna and Kaur (2020), new media are developing as the old ones are being upgraded, and as a result, their accessibility has multiplied. Even the most distant and inaccessible parts of the earth are now under their control. The first mass media used to disseminate information was print newspapers. Print media continues to be a significant form of communication for rural residents (Khanna & Kaur, 2020).

Print newspapers, according to Thakur (2020), carry out all of the traditional media functions, such as "monitoring, correlation, transfer of the social history, and amusement." Newspaper writers and editors agree that while the old functions are still significant, their watchdog function has evolved, according to their research (Palmer, Toff & Nielsen, 2020). They contend that the three most significant roles of print newspapers nationally are "serving as the public's watchdog, inspiring civic involvement and establishing a sense of belonging and unity, and functioning as coordinating and socialising agents."

Firmstone (2019) claims that the readers' perceptions of the roles and functions of newspapers stay constant, whether a newspaper is produced as a print newspaper or an online newspaper. Nonetheless, the order of whatever function is the most crucial does fluctuate (Firmstone, 2019). According to Firmstone (2019), viewers believe that newspapers' populist mobiliser role is the most significant in an online context, followed by its interpretive and disseminator responsibilities. Because they place a great value on the speed with which news is provided, the audience views the aforementioned as significant (Firmstone, 2019). The major reasons why print newspapers are still useful in some places are their capacity to promote communication about issues and the development of social cohesion in a community (Toff & Palmer, 2019).

The emphasis on local news and other hyperlocal content and the connection it fosters between print newspapers and their readers, according to Firmstone (2019), is the most obvious key to their success (Toff & Palmer, 2019). According to Dodd (2021), readers are happier with the publications' content. Regardless, newspaper's position and responsibilities are the same. According to Jacobs (2011), the printing medium is gaining ground in the nation as the literacy rate rises. It has begun pumping out fresh news in print. It promotes the daily dissemination of the news and spreads it throughout

the entire nation. News can be found in print newspapers for a fair fee. It assists in including news as a component of advertising content. All media outlets are linked together as line neighbourhoods on a global scale. The ability of the print media to evaluate and present the actual facts that are seen by millions of individuals around the nation is crucial.

According to Jensen (2022), print media's key function is to keep people informed by giving them the most recent information on a variety of issues, including politics, economics, sports, agriculture, forests, and fishing, as well as the stock market and weather updates. Being a component of the print media, a newspaper ensures that those who have a significant need for information on the stock market, the state of business and economics, sports, etc., will receive it. Newspapers publish other news in addition to airing various public issues and their solutions in public columns. Another fantastic benefit of print media is that it gives advertisers and product promoters a strong platform to reach out to their daily readers. Everyone rapidly learns about the information as a result (Allern & Pollack, 2019). Jensen (2022) said that print media have a crucial role in raising everyone is understanding of human affairs in a society. Also, it is beneficial to improve the educational process and develop the intellect and perspective of students who consistently read the daily newspaper.

According to Sanchez, Grzenda, Varias, Widge, Carpenter, McDonald and Rodriguez (2020) print newspapers are the principal medium for news distribution at a cost-effective price. It assists in including news as a component of advertising content. All media are linked together as a line neighbourhood on a global scale. The ability of the print media to evaluate and present the facts that are seen by millions of individuals around the nation is crucial. According to Sanchez et al. (2020), one other significant benefit of print media is that it gives advertisers and product promoters a strong platform to reach their everyday readers. Everyone rapidly learns about the information as a result. In a society, print media are crucial for raising everyone is understanding of human concerns. Also, it is beneficial to improve the educational process and hone the intellect and perspective of students who frequently read the daily newspaper (ibid).

According to Fletcher and Nielsen (2018), although technology has crept into our workplaces and homes, it has not yet completely engulfed us. The following justifications are provided by Fletcher and Nielsen for the benefits of print publishing: One of the most important advantages of print publishing is the distribution's capacity to reach your audience. Due to actual paper and printing costs, printing is more expensive than online publishing; yet the benefit of print publishing is that it puts content in the hands of your audience.

When it comes to online publishing, all one can do is point people to a website. Only the person searching for the publication or accidentally coming across it while browsing the Web can drive someone to sit down in front of a computer, check it up, and read from it. Yet, it is also crucial to consider how long it will take for your audience to receive printed material. Ivić (2019) claims that the fact that printed newspapers are more advantageous for research and note-taking, which then aid in long-term memory recall, is a final advantage.

According to Thurman (2018), printed publications have the advantage of establishing a design based on whatever capabilities the publisher has in terms of fonts, layout, photographs, and overall publication size. This is advantageous in terms of reader capacities. When a printed publication is in the reader's hands, their vision and reading abilities are the only things still needed. Online publications are constrained by technological factors such as the user's screen size and memory capacity, thus this is not always as simple (ibid.).

2.12.1 Print media's importance in education

A lot has been said about the value of digital media in education, Sonderling (2019) hinted. He emphasised that although print media still has a lot of influence and can give kids access to an infinite amount of knowledge, it is crucial to remember this. Reading comprehension is facilitated by print media in a way that is not possible with only internet content. The use of print media in education is crucial, print media can be an effective teaching and learning tool. Throughout the past few decades, there has been a sharp fall in the usage of print media in education. According to Sonderling (2019),

adopting print media in the classroom has various advantages, including assisting kids in learning to read and enhancing their reading abilities.

It has been demonstrated that students who read using more conventional approaches comprehend texts better than those who do not. For children's development and awareness of the world around them, schools should think about adding more printed resources to their curriculum. For an exceptionally long time, print media has been a crucial component of education. The impact of the development of digital technology on this medium is still unknown, but when used properly, it can still provide several advantages (Martens, Aguiar, Gomez-Herrera & Mueller-Langer, 2018).

Print newspapers are the most ideal for adding more knowledge on the fundamentals that students need to know for a program like journalism at universities or colleges. The ability to construct a duplicate while looking at a tangible copy becomes incredibly convenient.

2.12.2 Power of the medium

According to Vella (2020), newspapers consistently deliver news to millions of readers between the ages of 18 and 80. Newspapers are regarded as the most effective medium for disseminating information and influencing public opinion. Before the advent of the digital era, print media has always been the most significant aspect of anyone's life. Saragih and Harahap (2020), postulate that print media plays an extremely important role in the global spread of information. They go on to say that the most genuine medium is the newspaper, commonly referred to as the "ancient media." Newspapers are regarded as reliable since they report the news after learning the entire story. Newspapers are media that provide news on a variety of topics, including politics, crime, education, sports, and entertainment. Vella (2020) believes that reading the newspaper has the benefit of letting one stay up to date on local events because it covers every nook and cranny of the city. Local newspapers are provided, allowing readers to read in their tongue. Also, print media provides details on nearby businesses that still draw a lot of attention to their newspaper advertisements (Neijens & Voorveld, 2018).

As a result of the abundance of information available on online platforms, differences between genuine news and rumour or fake news are often difficult to distinguish. By integrating the web, newspapers can play a significant role in providing credible information, which could increase their popularity. Traditional newspapers do not require internet access. Thus, for readers who do not have access to the internet, reading print newspapers is still the best option. Through full integration of new technology, newspapers can attract advertisers for both print and online versions. Advertisers still spend on the print model, especially national newspapers. Print drives most of the advertising revenue (Powers, 2020).

Powers (2020) further adds on the view that in online platforms, real-time updates are constant, but important news feeds often go unnoticed as they are forced out of the limelight with the latest updates. Traditional newspapers do not have this disadvantage. Most elder people are not conversant with new technology, and hence traditional newspapers can satisfy their news demand. Due to economic reasons, some readers opt for traditional news because of the cost of internet and web browsing devices (Hindman, 2018).

In today's fake news era and highly competitive media industry, by taking advantage of digital technology, newspapers could equip readers with reliable information, knowledge, and insights that will give them the needed advantage over other forms of media. This effort could also help readers achieve an unbiased and informative worldview (Ireton & Posetti, 2018). Newspapers can successfully coexist with new media in the digital environment at least within the provision of news and information (Flores Vivar, 2019; Westlund, 2013; Ireton & Posetti, 2018). Rather than driving out traditional newspapers, "the internet will complement them in serving the seemingly insatiable news and information needs among a substantial segment of society" (Nguyen & Tran, 2019). The major issues with traditional newspapers include production costs and a lack of timely updates rather than credibility or content quality (Ireton & Posetti, 2018).

2.13 SOUTH AFRICA'S NEWS MEDIA'S CURRENT STATE

According to Dugmore (2018), the arrival of Covid-19 in South Africa, the subsequent state of emergency, and the lockdown, destroyed the print media. When referring to news media, the term "media extinction event" was used, and it was predicted that Coronavirus may "mean the end for many of Africa's print newspapers (Pahayahay & Khalili-Mahani, 2020)." Dugmore (2018) pointed out that the Paying the Piper report acknowledged that the issues print media faced were not new, and the Covid-19 crisis just made them worse by hastening the transition from the comparatively ad-rich print media environment to the sparsely ad-funded online world. It is important to note that newspaper circulations had been decreasing for years prior to the Covid-19 issue and are now significantly lower than they were before the crisis.

Therefore, according to the South African National Editors Forum report by Rumney (2023), everyday Newspapers From the end of 2019 and the end of 2021, the total daily newspaper circulation decreased by about 46%. This was due to the restructuring of the Media24 stable's newspapers, including the Sun's reduced circulation and the closure of the Eastern Cape version of Son, as well as sharp declines in numerous Independent Media publications and Arena Holding's Sowetan newspaper. Over the period, Son's circulation decreased by 52%, and the mass-appeal tabloid Daily Sun's readership decreased by over 60%. The circulation of the *Cape Times*, the *Cape Argus*, *The Star*, and the *Daily News*, all part of Independent Media, has been cut in half or more than that. The circulation of the company's Zulu-language newspaper fell by 47%, while I.M.'s the *Mercury* fell by 45%. Arena's *Sowetan* newspaper dropped 47%, but the group's other publications fared better, especially *Business Day*, while *Beeld* and *Die Burger* also did well. In contrast to the decline in the fourth quarter of 2020, certain newspapers' fourth-quarter circulations showed modest improvement in the fourth quarter of 2021. The fourth quarter of 2021 had an almost 25% increase in the circulation of the *Cape Times*, *Cape Argus*, and *The Star* compared to the fourth quarter of 2020. Day at Work increased 14%. Even the Pretoria News, whose circulation has fallen 76% from pre-COVID levels, had a 22% increase in quarter four of 2021 compared to quarter four of 2020, but this increase only amounted to 405 extra copies.

The largest daily newspaper publisher in the first quarter of 2022 was *Media24*, yet if newspapers close or go online, that position may change once more (Rumney, 2023).

Bureau of Audit of Circulations Publishers, (2022) noted that the future is bleak without a strategy to develop a strong business model independent of both offline and online ad revenue. The audience is quickly refocusing their attention elsewhere, helped by the emergence of substitutes and dissatisfaction with certain print offerings. With the vast audiences of news on TV and the reach of African-language radio, broadcasting is definitely how the majority of South Africans get the most of their news. News for aggregation or supplementation on news websites comes from newspaper newsrooms.

News sources will be reduced if the financial viability of the newspapers is in doubt, which must be given the startling declines since the pandemic. A decline in newspaper circulation means lesser earnings for many current news organizations. According to the Global Press Trends Report 2021's initial findings, print still accounts for the majority of publishers' sales and advertising revenues. However, the publishing industry must make certain crucial improvements to address dwindling sales and market share. There are some elements at play here that need to be considered to try to salvage the print industry or, at the absolute least, prevent its collapse.

2.14 CHANGES AND DIFFICULTIES FACING THE PRINT MEDIA SECTOR

Digital journalism has been practiced for some time in South Africa and is not a recent development in the traditional print media sector, as is the case in other nations throughout the world. It was preceded by various changes and difficulties. The main challenges they highlight include a drop in circulation, the emergence of free newspapers, the use of advertorials in place of content, and the shrinking size of editorial staff (Deuze, 2021). According to Dodd (2021), the major issues in the South African context are the juniorisation of newsrooms and an excessive dependence on press releases. According to Deuze (2021), the challenges and developments have made it necessary to alter how print media journalists approach their work. Traditional print media in South Africa used a variety of strategies to accomplish this. The *Sunday Times* introduced *The Times*, a new daily print edition with the same material that was only available to *The Sunday Times* subscribers, as well as a distinct online edition

(Mokwena, 2018). A redesigned newsroom with a new workflow system and organizational structure that assigned journalists to either the website or print publication went along with the new editions (Mokwena, 2018). Mokwena further (2019) contends that alterations made to *Die Burger*, one of Media24's oldest print publications in South Africa, are justified as a great illustration of how a publication changed its layout to create multimedia content. A team dedicated to creating multimedia stories was formed after the publication adopted a "digital first" approach, and the workflow was modified to allow the print edition and online to work together seamlessly (Sibiya, 2017).

According to Cover, Haw, and Thompson (2022), innovations like the telegraph allowed for changes and problems in the print media sector to arise before the digital disruption. Radio and television, changed how the public and news media communicated (Schroder, 2018). Yet, Cover et al. (2022) assert that the internet is the invention that has unleashed the most disruptive change. Although it was initially regarded as a new publishing method, the internet has since brought about cycles of disruption in the news media sector. According to Schroder (2018), there has been a rise in the availability of networks for disseminating information and in the interaction between news producers and consumers. The most immediate result of the internet's growing influence in news media was the escalation of the financial issues that print media outlets' business models, which rely on revenue from advertising, face. Print newspapers that rely on the revenue from their classified section suffer (Deuze, 2021).

The circulation of print news publications decreased along with the revenue from advertising as young readers bought fewer newspapers. According to Van der Spuy (2020), one of the biggest shocks encountered in newsrooms especially those at community print newspapers who thought they had a monopoly over the local readership is the decline in circulation. In the end, this has led to a decrease in the number of reporters who are employed, the amount of training they receive, and the amount of unique content they generate (Sibiya, 2017).

Although journalists are aware of the scale of the changes and difficulties brought about by the media's digital disruption, they have been hesitant to adapt to survive. Van der Spuy (2020), postulates that Journalists, who frequently gave speeches to politicians

and business leaders about the importance of flexibility and being open to change, the majority did not do much better; they supported change in theory so long as it did not negatively impact someone else in practice.

This is why some media pundits have blamed the media industry's inability to adjust to changes and difficulties on journalists, who frequently have rigid beliefs about how journalism should be done (Van der Spuy, 2020).

2.14.1 Constraints for print newspapers

The limitations of conventional typesetting, printing, logistics, sales, and other links prevent it from competing with the new media in terms of timeliness, according to Bai, Huang, Zhu, and Zhu (2021). The timeliness and interactivity of print media are poor. Due to media restrictions, newspapers only have a limited reach and little audience participation, making them a unilateral form of communication (Bai, Huang, Zhu & Zhu, 2021). Veleva and Tsvetanova (2020) went on to say that this approach is outdated when contrasted with the qualities of digital products, such as high interactivity, quick transmission speeds, and numerous transmission channels. They assert that "quickness" is the major factor in determining the winner and that timeliness has always been the most desired characteristic of news. The print media has no advantage in a time when everyone is a media consumer and the media is so pervasive. Publishing has a high production cost since it requires reporters to gather information and write it down as well as evaluate, edit, and create editions of it before printing and distributing it. Each link must incur the necessary expenses. Yet, these do not apply to new media (ibid.).

Murray (2018) claims that media executives all over the world are scrambling to find answers to the problems associated with handling the ambiguity and uncertainty brought on by the digital era, which threatens to destroy their lucrative businesses based on traditional media tools. The 'traditional' media is increasingly losing large audiences and some sizable sponsors to digital media, dramatised by mobile and online platforms. That may mark the end of a period in media history when eyes sold to advertising allowed for spectacular growth. The new technology has sometimes even made it possible for advertisers to bypass the media entirely to reach audiences

directly, making it more difficult for newspapers, television stations, and radio stations to continue operating as they do today (Lumi & Selimi, 2018). Now the race is on to quickly develop new business strategies in a media landscape that also presents unheard-of chances to those who embrace change. And to accomplish this rapidly, without assurance, without using a guide. The articles in this comprehensive and educational anthology, which was drawn from that conference, highlight the various and distinctive ways that these African media executives and their teams are experimenting and innovating to address today's challenges (Murray, 2018).

2.15 A SURVIVAL STRATEGY USING ADVERTISING

According to Juska (2021), as Internet technology continues to advance, it is bringing about significant changes in the worldwide advertising sector. He reported that from 2015 to 2017, newspaper advertising experienced its biggest decrease. As a result of the significant influence of Internet advertising, the fall of traditional advertising has become an unavoidable trend, with newspaper advertising experiencing the greatest decline. Low attention rates for advertising. Newspaper advertainments typically do not have the best layout, and readers are more likely to read the news and the sections in which they are interested. Juska went on to say that when active reading is the only option because passive viewing is so uncommon, the effect is only marginally stronger.

According to research conducted by the BMi research group in 2022, print newspaper advertising is not dynamic, has a tiny formal space, is inflexible, and has a small visual impact. Moreover, advertising must adhere to predetermined layout requirements that are influenced by the medium and technology. Newspaper printing is not as high-quality as that of professional publications, direct mail marketing, posters, and other media. Ad arrival rates and sales conversion rates are tough to track. According to advertisers have recently embraced internet advertising since it is affordable, engaging, and can produce effective marketing results. The traditional print media's profit model has been profoundly disrupted by the evolution of commercial advertising, and as a result, the print sector will inevitably confront challenges to its survival and future growth (Meisner & Ledbetter, 2022).

2.16 JOBS SAVING STRATEGIES

Jobs are saved when a print publication is profitable and its methods are maintained. Chyi and Tenenboim (2019) agree that the decline in the print media industry has resulted in the loss of several media jobs. Advertising can provide revenue, allowing the print medium to prosper. Yet, whether or not the advertisement would catch readers' attention will depend on the circulation. This is crucial if print media is to be able to cover its daily costs. Readers fit the profile of the audience targeted by online advertising. Better sales results result from having more readers. A company that is willing to spend millions on advertising strikes the average individual as odd. The business plan and reading statistics for print media's various readership levels, which will be receptive to the products, have already been released (Vella, 2020). It calls for strategies like graphic design, written content, font selection, etc. Rahman, Faheem, and Peerzada (2021) contend that closing the print medium is a difficult decision that involves poor management and leaves the company in the red. or, as a result of political repression, the business is unable to market to government organisations and its partners, which causes a decline in sales and the loss of jobs. Print media has painfully lost ground to internet social media in the twenty-first century. Advertisers would favour online publications over print media.

Small businesses are frantically searching for inexpensive advertising that results in sales. If they think it has a chance of working because it is a cost they can afford, small businesses find less expensive advertising to be quite thrilling (Govenden & Chiumbu, 2020).

2.17 DIGITAL MEDIA VS TRADITIONAL MEDIA

It has been observed that the proliferation of online news platforms has caused a decline in print newspaper circulation. Many authors have examined how online media is endangering print newspapers around the world (Saragih & Harahap, 2020). Saragih and Harahap made the case that consumers find it challenging to pay for newspaper subscriptions since they can simply receive news for free online. The adoption of swiftly evolving consumer trends by print and news organisations, along with a commensurate shift towards digital content, rather than the "Death" of print, has caused the new media

to have an impact on society's dynamics more quickly. According to a Vella (2020) study, the availability of free online news affects revenue. Nevertheless, it does not demonstrate how online media may be used commercially to support traditional print media's revenue. The pupils can quickly obtain information because internet communications are readily available. Lack of time to read newspapers and accessibility to other important communication resources are two of the main conclusions drawn from this study. This e-news is typically seen as time-consuming (Vella, 2020).

Several studies have examined the threat that internet media poses to print newspapers, and some have revealed that "newspaper readership has been declining for decades; market fragmentation has resulted in fewer viewers for any one television news program and fewer readers for any one newspaper" (Wasserman, 2020). The continuous commitment to online formats that have been losing money for years and efforts to "converge" newsrooms show media businesses, if not necessarily the journalists within them, have acknowledged the reality that online news delivery is here to stay. Hirst (2020) suggested that newspapers are losing relevance as a source of the most recent news with the advent of the digital era (internet). Both mediums, nevertheless, have their significance. Written media have a far longer shelf life than electronic ones. The written word has made history accurate and recordable (Hirst, 2020). Electronic media cannot provide this information, but the age of an old document discovered when excavating a historical location can. Everyone can express their opinions and post articles anonymously.

Finding an article's true owner is challenging. According to Sutherland (2020), plagiarism is rampant today because anyone may copy any piece of information from the internet and pass it off as their own. A newspaper typically provides information that is more reliable and truer, but this is not the case with electronic media. Electricity is mostly used by electronic media. It is not a practical substitute for newspapers in remote or frequently blacked-out places. Print media is extensively read and accessible. As it is less expensive and accessible in even the most isolated towns, anyone may purchase it. The demand for newspapers and their breadth are still sustained in this competitive

age since many newspapers have begun to provide analysis of the news as well (Sutherland, 2020).

2.18 DISADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Olsen, Kalsnes, and Barland (2021) assert that it is still challenging to profit from online publication. Currently, the majority of newspapers available online are free for readers and only charge for advertising space. Some are attempting to impose subscription fees, nevertheless. Olsen et al. (2021) note that although online publishing has no or low distribution expenses, it does require some marketing to draw visitors to your website. You must register your publication with as many search engines as you can, which frequently costs money. But if you do not do this, nobody will be able to find your website. If your description or topic shifts and as new search engines are launched, this procedure requires ongoing attention. Also, it is important to follow up with other websites that have consented to link to yours frequently to ensure that the link remains active. Hence, even though marketing and distribution for an online magazine may be less expensive, there are still expenses, particularly in terms of labour and time (Sama, 2019). Another benefit of internet publication is editing. Most of the time, editing happens before the new edition is published online. Werner (2019) noted that we have all encountered a number of mistakes in print materials of all kinds that were not discovered before the publication was delivered to the printer. There is no "finished" result in web publishing; the majority of news is distributed to the public unverified.

2.19 SURVIVAL OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The media industry in South Africa benefits from impressive technology advancements and sophisticated infrastructure. When compared to other African nations, these contemporary technologies facilitate the creation of news and support the free movement of information. It is undeniable that readers of print newspapers are increasingly switching to internet news sources. But it seemed like the South African newspapers were trapped (neither dying rapid death nor growing). According to Tiffen (2020), the existence of technological behemoths weakens the foothold of independent media in South Africa and other African nations, which is the main cause of the murky status of print newspapers in that country.

In other words, the larger media companies can own larger shares in a variety of media industries, particularly the publishing industry. They are also capable of fending off any danger that could undermine their supremacy and sustainability in the news publishing industry. Some of the most persuasive barriers to the spread of the Internet in Africa are psychosocial impacts (Tiffen, 2020; Chenzi, 2021). Tiffen (2020), also highlighted that South Africa's government sectors are still grappling with an economic and political crisis. So, before making any predictions of print newspapers, it is crucial to take these factors into account.

Mohd Hanafiah, Ng and Wan (2021) are of the view that the migration to digital news in South Africa is still a gradual process, despite the fact that digital media is widely used. Digital media, in the opinion of these authors, continue to be inequitable to a broader population of citizens. Practically speaking, most Internet users in South Africa consider the cost of data connection to be quite a luxury. Together with the cost issue, inadequate computer application skills in particular slow down the rapid dissemination of internet news (Zhuravskaya, Petrova & Enikolopov, 2020; Tiffen, 2020 & Chenzi, 2021). Additional reasons that are impeding the Internet's rapid growth in Africa include the digital divide, economic inequality, racial and ethnic discrimination, unemployment, and poverty. However, the gradual expansion of the digital industry and readers' transfer to online sources were both influenced by inequalities in education, family, and communities (Faloye & Ajayi, 2022).

According to Claassen (2018), fake news and the evolution of ignorance favour the survival of print media. Claassen, (2018) noted that fake news is continually on the rise in South Africa's media, which unavoidably poses a challenge to the profession of ethical journalism, which is getting harder by the day. Claassen (2018) added that the rise of fake news has reaffirmed the necessity for all journalists to review and internalise the importance of genuine and trustworthy news reporting that complies with journalistic ethics.

Journalists in print newspapers will be able to stop the spread of false information by focusing on similar themes. To accomplish this, the print newspaper would have to consistently publish high-quality, dependable, and objective material. In the end, it will

increase and deepen the circulation and revenue of print newspapers. Ngwenya (2016) said that due to the high cost of Internet data, many people now choose to read the news in print newspapers. The growth of news websites in Africa is blatantly hampered by a lack of funding, even within well-established news media institutions. This is because subscriber income is insufficient, whereas advertising is the primary source of income for the majority of newspapers. Another area of interest is related to the media's rapid adoption of the practice of recycling material throughout the Webs. Many news websites have shared similar articles in an effort to report the news quickly and compete for advertising, which unmistakably diminishes their credibility (Serazio, 2021). Together with psychosocial consequences, "professional values and context-dependent behaviours" are another area of emphasis (Petre, 2021).

Other justifications for the future of print newspapers claim that reputable publications enjoy greater credibility than unreliable Internet news sources (Serazio, 2021). To elaborate, online platforms have been embraced by the majority of well-known print newspaper organisations in South Africa. The majority have also been able to maintain healthy print circulations (which have been found to have decreased, although not significantly compared to industrialised nations) and strong web traffic at the same time.

Established newspaper companies have been able to assert their existence by placing a lot of emphasis on providing trustworthy and high-quality news material, which is extremely likely to safeguard their future. As an illustration, consider the *Sunday Times*. In addition to having a news website, the newspaper also introduced a "content block" that requires online readers to subscribe to access its high-quality material (*TimesLive*, 2018). The survival of print newspapers in the nation was also confirmed in the Prince Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) (2014) study. According to a PwC report from 2014 by Nel, and Milburn-Curtis (2019), print newspapers were still a popular news source for many South Africans, and many people considered reading digital news to be a luxury because they preferred reading print newspapers. This led to a slight rise in tabloid newspapers that focused on issues that were local to particular geographic areas.

2.20 STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF PRINT MEDIA

Print media must be able to maintain credibility and trust in the information delivered if they are to survive. Only a professional journalist who upholds the principles of journalism, which include presenting true material that has been thoroughly vetted, can establish this credibility and confidence. This is a compelling offer that will allow print media to thrive. According to Usher (2019), if the media industry particularly print media wants to avoid marginalisation, it must undergo reform. One of them is that a strategy change is necessary for print media to thrive. Print media needs to be able to differentiate themselves from the medium. Paper alone cannot be a print medium. Strength and value are derived from more than just content distribution and control (Usher, 2019).

Both newspaper (print) and online media have advantages and disadvantages. Othman, Nayan, Tiung, and Hassan (2019) expressed the view that newspapers appear slowly because readers can only consume the material the next day after it has been blasted to them via television and online media. Online media has the benefit of being quick and comprehensive. For instance, compared to print media, online media give news concerning natural disaster alerts the quickest. Weaknesses in online media, including those related to news reporting veracity. According to Schroeder (2018), print media can still exist despite the fact that online media is growing quickly and print media are expected to decline. Although there was an increase in new media in 2014 compared to prior years, print media was still present. Without losing its existence, print media inclines to adapt to the convergent growth of online and offline media. Othman, Nayan, Tiung, and Hassan (2019) went on to say that if one is talking about solutions, one must consider how online media affects print media. Naturally, print media journalists must be able to grasp the advantages of online media over print media given the inevitable arrival of the digital age. Online media can be a print media partner in delivering messages, with effectiveness and speed of time, in penetrating and delivering news published by Second, reducing wasteful use of paper, in this case cutting trees specifically for paper. This is the positive impact of online media on print media.

There are several very fundamental distinctions between online journalism and traditional journalism (print media), including the media used, the actors or employees in them, as well as the composition and look of the messages, but there are also benefits and drawbacks to both (Van Leuven, Kruikemeier, Lecheler & Hermans, 2018). Its presence cannot be characterised as that of a media that competes or opposes one another, but rather as one that can support one another in journalistic endeavours or the field of journalism. Higgins and Smith, (2020) concur that the two styles of journalism exist with the same fundamental purpose, that is, to deliver news or information that is significant to the general public. The two journalists are perceived as media journalists that are competing with one another because of the distinct systems used and the manner they are presented. In traditional journalism, journalists must also be able to adapt to and be sensitive to the circumstances that arise on the job (Higgins & Smith, 2020). The strain and work involved in gathering, processing, and sharing news is also not as straightforward as what takes on in internet journalism. To satisfy the increasingly diverse information needs of society, journalists may need to be more enthusiastic and adept at learning new applications to maximise the good effects of this technological progress. In addition to the ability to just write news, journalists need to possess a variety of additional skills. This can serve as inspiration for journalists to develop new techniques. Another benefit of social media is that it can be used to market a range of journalism products there quickly and affordably (ibid).

Schroeder (2018) emphasised that the latter idea refers to the capacity to create material and disseminate it across a variety of platforms, saving on the expenses associated with producing unique content for each media outlet. A media firm can reduce costs by consolidating different media operations under one roof, for example, by having one huge advertising department for all media products rather than each medium having its advertising section. This is known as realising economies of scale (Schroeder, 2018). In response to the issues brought on by the traditional publishing industry's current rapid rate of change, management teams of print media have encountered considerable challenges. Due to diminishing profitability brought on by increased competition in the digital era, the feasibility of the methods used by print

newspaper production has been called into doubt. Newspaper publishing companies will need to understand the information and communications landscape.

Compared to the traditional publication environment, the playing field is larger in this information and communications ecosystem. Thus, to succeed in today's quickly changing industry structure and competitive climate, print newspaper publishing firms unquestionably require a solid competitive strategy. They ought to react quickly to these dynamic changes and make the appropriate adjustments to create or maintain their competitive advantage (Sassen, 2020). Newspapers can use differentiation tactics, and publishing companies work to distinguish apart from the competition by emphasising particular qualities that customers value. Then, they may search for one, ten, or even just a few qualities that many customers appreciate, and they position themselves particularly to meet those needs. The differentiation technique must be beneficial for higher customer satisfaction, lower costs, and distinctive features.

According to Usher (2019), print media will need to adopt a change-minded mindset and be flexible to survive the digital revolution and the trust gap that is endangering it. Readers are the print media's intended audience. The idea of "customer centricity" holds that consumers evaluate a newspaper's value based on how it distributes its content, the context of the publication as a whole, and what they read on other news platforms (Cover, Haw & Thompson, 2022). Readers will eventually stop reading news from big news organisations if they do not believe what they read in print, which will lead to fewer readers and a continual fall in readership. Readers are the clients and content is the product of the print media business. By delivering news completely and objectively that enables readers to hear both their voices and the voices of other common people, even when those voices do not sustain the status quo, print media companies may attract and keep readers while implementing a customer-centric strategy (Usher, 2019).

Newsrooms should ensure that articles do not appear to be pursuing an agenda, which is often the perception when a range of opinions are not completely reflected in the media, according to Helmers, Lamal and Cumby, (2021), sustainability is an issue for marketing, however, in contrast to other media platforms like radio and television, the

print industry has not enhanced its marketing efforts. Excellent marketing has always been the cornerstone of successful media platforms, and print media is currently slipping behind because the print media sector does not view marketing as a critical component (Helmets, Lamal & Cumby, (2021). They both agree that editing is still crucial, but they also acknowledge that no media platform can be successful without the support of a marketing division that raises the bar for global greatness.

The way a brand appears to the general public matters. Newspapers have long ignored their brand identity, seeing themselves as little more than newspapers (Vella, 2020). Hence, any marketing dream team will face a problem in developing a compelling brand identity for a newspaper. Print publishing companies must adopt a more marketable strategy that prioritises brand presence. The Times' innovation techniques can help newspapers understand how to deal with competition, and many conventional newspapers struggling to survive the Internet's disruption may find the evaluation and suggestions helpful. The report states that creating excellent journalism continues to be the most important and difficult challenge for media companies in the digital age, and it also states that newspapers have started making dramatic changes to themselves to stay relevant. The research specifies newspapers should "understand the art and science of bringing our journalism to readers" in the digital age. It suggests building newsrooms especially designed for becoming digital first.

The Internet's disruptive potential poses a serious danger to traditional media. It is difficult to forecast what this will entail overall given the unpredictable nature of the Internet, technological changes, and shifting reading preferences. Whillans, Perlow and Turek (2021) questions whether newspapers are in the business of producing news using technology or whether technology companies are in the business of producing news when looking at the challenge of online media. In the months and years to come, the traditional media sector will need to answer this crucial question. Its business strategy and survival tactics will be determined by the answer to this issue. According to Yanqiu (2021), the media and journalists should reconsider their profession and methods because they are undergoing a period of upheaval and great uncertainty. He observes that most news websites struggle to exist and that "many printed newspapers

will never be lucrative again or never as profitable as they once were." But everything is not completely bleak (Hirst, 2020). "The fact that journalism has evolved and will change further is not the same as its ruin," (Yanqiu, 2021). He is gloomy about a portion of the industry that finances it, but he is optimistic that journalism will endure overall.

Hirst (2020) warns well-established newspapers or broadcast channels against defining journalism as themselves and their organisation, claiming that journalism is an idea that will survive journalism institutions. His suggestion to individuals worried about the effects of new media is to "ask what will happen to the notion and principles of journalism when they meet new conditions, rather than asking what will happen to newspapers or broadcasters." One of the four developments in global communication that have had an impact on individuals all around the world, according to Siapera, (2017), is digitization. Consolidation, deregulation, and globalisation are the other three.

Newspapers in South Africa should constantly decide what to do to stay current and profitable as new communication technologies continue to impact the future of the media industry. Newspapers have struggled with several difficulties, including the digital-first policy, integrating social media into daily work, and experimenting with paywalls (Hirst, 2020).

2.21 THE FUTURE OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS

Some authors believe print media publications still have a future, even though print newspapers and the print media sector in general had to deal with several changes and difficulties in their newsrooms (Van der Spuy, 2020; Seow, 2022). Schoder and Hassan (2018) are adamant that journalism will survive even though it has changed and will continue to evolve. He thinks that rather than focusing on how newspapers and publishers will do in the future, the question of what will happen to journalism's ideals and principles will be more important. He contends that journalists should learn to quickly adapt to the changes and challenges they face to uphold the goals of journalism and produce long-term solutions (Seow, 2022).

According to Saragih and Harahap (2020), there are two primary factors that will keep the printed newspaper sector alive for a little longer, first off, newspapers tend to be

more visually appealing and have more authority than other types of media, therefore people prefer reading information in that format. The second factor is the kind of information provided by newspapers and the idea that the news they publish is unique.

These factors may inspire hope for the future of print media, but journalists have already adapted to the challenges and changes that the industry will inevitably face. They "have no choice but to discover ways of supporting journalism in new conditions" (Alfani, 2020). The new trends that print newspapers will need to understand to survive, according to Alfani (2019), are centered on how their readers behave and how the newspapers engage with them. These trends include a decrease in reading time, reader behaviour that differs between print and digital media (print publications still enjoy the highest reader loyalty), a rise in reader participation in content creation, the revolutionization of reader interaction through social networks, and resistance to paying for content. The change from general marketing strategies to those targeted at particular markets and advertisers only paying if they see returns on their advertising expenditures are the two biggest trends in terms of income (Alfani, 2020).

He thinks that to re-attract readers, community newspapers should offer "a better level of journalism, both in volume and quality" to meet the readers' increasing needs for the type of information they generate and interactivity (Meijer, 2020). This is crucial for the future of journalism in general as well as local print media. Meijer (2020) explains we need more journalism and journalists if the transparency to which society is entitled is not going to be spun into oblivion. The problem is entirely financial and has nothing to do with necessity. As we have observed over the last two years, when times are tight, the cuts continue. Yet, newspaper income will recover even though print edition pagination reductions will continue to generate savings. Meijer (2020) further adds that newspapers should apply the online adage "double your audience, double your revenue" to increase their revenue. Thus, to do this, they should refocus their energy, efforts, and content to draw readers to both their print publications and online platforms.

Moreover, for journalists to recognise their contribution to enhancing company performance. The news media will benefit from setting audience engagement goals by seeing great journalism flourish to the extent that it merits and our society demands.

Assuming a financial model can be established, Murschetz, (2020) also contends that newspaper revenues will increase, there is a need for other forms of journalism at the metro level, and that things are moving in the right direction. Journalism is an attitude that journalists of any stripe can adopt, not just a practice or a philosophy. Newspapers must assess their relevance in the current and future landscape of online media. Editorial decisions are made, according to Gulyas and Baines (2020), not only because the news is crucial, but also because editors and designers are aware that they are creating something that will be preserved for years to come.

Murschetz (2020) believes that sacrificing the benefits of print media is made worse by the loss of talent, new media communication channels, and in-depth reports. Transformation is essential in the digital age, and many media outlets continue to try. Also, traditional newspapers should keep to their strengths, carry forward their historical advantages, refine and improve news, win readers by depending on quality, and hope by relying on faith in the face of the fierce impact of the goods of the digital age. The laws of natural selection and the elimination of the inferior are unchangeable, and we wish newspapers a better future.

2.22 IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIGITAL ERA

Although Africa's digital shift is still in its early stages, given the benefits and potential it offers, it seems inevitable that it is here to stay (Union, 2020). Due to its widespread availability and ease of use, digital media will prosper. Bryanov, Vziatysheva, (2021) highlighted that the role of citizens as drivers of this new process is not only by the expansion of communication technology but by the ever-expanding democratic space in Africa and therefore the deregulation of the media landscape.

If the "medium is the message," then news has never been static and is "destined to occupy a smaller and smaller part of our cultural map," in part because powerful social groups, such as governments, have learned how to control the news and in part because new media have replaced the functions that news previously performed. (Martens, Aguiar, Gomez-Herrera & Mueller-Langer, 2018) asserts that news has always been dependent on the advertising sector and that news is now ingrained in the culture of entertainment as a result of changes in corporate ethics brought about by the

development of media technologies. As a result, newspapers are trying to catch up by reinventing themselves to be "as graphic as television, as personal as a phone call, and as visible as anyone else on the Internet. Information is becoming more important than news to those who have money and power, and news is becoming less reliable and more irrelevant. In a media landscape dominated by entertainment and special interests representing political, social, and economic interests, the future of news appears dismal as the affluent and powerful attempt to render it ineffective and useless (Usher, 2019).

This section provided an overview of prior research that examines subjects and ideas related to the subject of the researcher's investigation. Although the material cited in this chapter provides useful background knowledge and insights about how the digital era has changed and challenged print media, it also sheds light on the survival and sustainability methods that print media might use.

2.23 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the historical overview of print newspapers, outlining the history of newspapers across the globe. It further discussed the value of newspapers to readers, the development of the digital era, and the challenges or rather impact of print since the emergence of the digital era. The next chapter discusses the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two, this study mapped the literature relevant for this research. This chapter discusses the different aspects of the research methodology to lay the foundation for collecting and analysing the data to extract the findings required to achieve the objectives of the research as outlined in Chapter One. This includes aspects of the research design, study population, data collection, procedures used to analyse and interpret data, the rigor of research and the ethical consideration.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

The term "research methodology" refers to the instruments, strategies and procedures used to conduct a study. The researcher has employed a qualitative methodology because it allows the chance to observe things from an insider's perspective. Formal in-depth face-to-face and online interviews were used to address the goals and aims of the study. According to Levitt, Morrill, Collins and Rizo (2021), the qualitative approach is

ideal when one wants to look at the traits and needs that set people, groups, communities, organisations, events, places or messages apart. This study explored current trends and future projections for newspapers in the digital age; hence a qualitative method was appropriate.

This chapter further provides an overview of the methodological issues of the study, drawing from the qualitative methodology. It explains how the methodology fits within the bounds of the study. A study without an appropriate methodology has nullified its chances of producing credible findings (Alam, 2020). Thus, to explore the sustainability strategies of print media, the qualitative research paradigm was identified for the study. Neuman posits that qualitative data are in the form of text, written words, phrases, or symbols describing or representing people, actions, and events in social life. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2021), the qualitative research paradigm, in its broadest sense, refers to research that elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions. Qualitative research is useful for exploring the full scope of a little-understood phenomenon. In this chapter, the focus is on the appropriate research design and methodology and explains how the methodology fits within the bounds of the study. In terms of the sampling method, probability sampling methods were applied. The relevant sampling techniques are outlined. The study was conducted on a longitudinal basis and interviewees were selected based on their expertise in the field of print media.

3.2.1 Qualitative methodology

The methodological strategy is the work plan of the research and is the logic by which the researcher goes about responding to the research objectives (Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir & Waseem, 2019). Methodology refers to the entire research strategy towards the achievement of a research objective (Zina, 2021). It encompasses political, theoretical, and philosophical implications on the choices of methods when conducting research (Matta, 2022). Zina (2021) describes methodology as a systematic approach followed by the researcher in answering a research question. For this research, qualitative research methodology was followed to respond to the research objectives. The intention was to study the sustainability of print newspapers during this digital era. The primary goal of qualitative research is to understand and describe as opposed to

explaining human behaviour (Khatri, 2020). Through the use of qualitative research, the researcher was able to understand the reader participants' beliefs, history and context to describe their actions in great detail (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). The method also enabled the researcher to gain insight from the publication in terms of sustainability issues. According to Kivunja and Kuyin (2017), qualitative methodology is about explicating properties, values and features of a particular notion as they are. In terms of data, qualitative research involves kinds of non-numerical or qualitative data, such as information collected through the use of interviews, written texts or documents, visual images observations of behaviour, case studies and so on. In terms of analysis, qualitative research relies on various methods of interpretation since making sense of the data involves interpreting their meaning.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design, in the words of Babbie and Mouton (2017), is a plan for a scientific investigation; it is a way to interact with a phenomenon; similarly, Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018) explicate the term as the strategy for an intended research project. They further contend that it is the setting of parameters for data gathering and analysis (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). The study adopted a descriptive research design which tried to describe or document current conditions or attitudes that exist at the moment (Thompson-Burdine, Thorne, & Sandhu, 2021).

The appropriateness of the qualitative design is determined by its capacity to generate descriptive data pertinent to a study and by its emphasis on gathering as much data as possible from a small sample size; it is a more flexible approach because it allows participants to express themselves in detail, while providing data. Research design is an anticipated plan of how the investigation of the study will be carried out. It describes methods, techniques and tools used to collect, analyse and interpret data (Patel & Patel, 2023). The study employed exploratory qualitative design, as it seeks to explore the sustainability strategies of print newspapers in the digital era. The emphasis of an exploratory research design is to gain insight on the issue being investigated (Patel, 2023; Carter, Andersen, Stagg & Gaunt, 2023). Usually, exploratory research designs are used to establish an understanding of better ways of progressing in studying an

issue or what methodology of gathering information would be best suited to pursue the research problem (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2023).

Exploratory research design is flexible and can address all types of research questions (what, why, how) (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). According to Dehalwar and Sharma (2023) and Lester et al (2020), the goal of exploratory research design is to enable the researcher to familiarise themselves with basic details, settings, concerns and to generate new ideas and assumptions in order to develop tentative theories. Additionally, exploratory research gives direction for future research and techniques to get established.

The researcher chose the exploratory research design due to the nature of the study. Exploratory research affords one insight into and a profound understanding of an issue or phenomenon. It helps determine the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects. A brief overview of how the study was conducted is given below; and this includes data collection methods as well as how data were analysed and interpreted.

3.3.1 Population

Pandey and Pandey (2021) explicate population as a group of things, occasions, or people that conform to a set of specifications. It is the total number of instances that satisfy the researcher's criteria for the analysis unit (Rosenberger, Schumacher, Brown & Hoban, 2021). The population of this study consisted of readers of the national newspapers, five print media experts conveniently selected, who analysed and gave more insight in terms of the trends in the media industry in general. The other unit of analysis included participants from the six selected national newspapers (editors and reporters), who solely provided insight into the operational sustainability challenges of their respective newspapers and how they responded to these challenges. These newspapers include: *Sowetan*, *The Star*, *Citizen*, *City Press*, *Mail & Guardian*, and *Sunday World*. The print newspapers were selected due to their large distribution and reach. Media messages were also collected as part of data collection, in this essence, a podcast discussing the future of print media. The media messages enabled the

researcher to examine both institutional and public discourses surrounding print media's adaptation and survival in a rapidly digitizing environment.”

One of the crucial stages of the research process is deciding on a research population and study sample for a study. The choice of the population and sample is likely to influence generalisability or external validity, which can also be described as comparability, and translatability of the study results (Bhangu Provist & Caduff, 2023). A population is any group that is the subject of research interest (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The study explored the sustainability strategies of print media in this digital era, it was based on six national newspapers, however, for this study, the population consisted of the readers of the South African national newspapers, industry experts, representatives from the publications which comprised of the editors and reporters and also collected data by form of Media messages. According to Lakens (2022), a population consists of all units of the universe, people or things possessing the attributes or characteristics in which the researcher is interested (Lakens, 2022). Before a sample can be selected, the population must be identified. Researchers begin by identifying the characteristics they want participants or elements to have or contain.

3.3.2 Sampling

A sample is a subset of population selected to participate in the study, which is a fraction of the whole, selected to participate in the research project (Cox, 2019). For this study, purposive and snowball sampling were used. It is crucial however, to remember that sampling size in qualitative research involves collecting detailed information about each site or subject under study in addition to investigating a small number of them (Alase, 2017). Purposive sampling therefore involves identifying individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Kalu, 2019).

As highlighted above, data was solicited from in-depth and semi-structured interviews conducted with five print media experts who provided a general perspective on the impact of digital on print and possible sustainable strategies that may save the demise

of this industry. In addition, six representatives of the selected newspapers were interviewed, the six representatives were purposively sampled due to knowledge and expertise, the participants were editors and head reporters. The representatives of the newspapers were six, each representing each publication, the researcher viewed the sampled size valid due to the nature of the questions. The media experts were purposively selected because of their proximity, knowledge and understanding of the print media. The representatives of the print publications were selected solely because they represent the newspapers under study to give a more specific insight about their publications.

Snowball sampling was used to select readers of these newspapers. According to Leighton, Kardong-Edgren, Schneidereith, and Foisy-Doll (2021), the technique is used to identify study participants that the researcher knows and it relies on referrals. Snowball was used because the researcher only knows fewer groups that represent the large population therefore the data collection relied on referrals. The method was appropriate as the researcher's sample built up and became larger as the study continued. The quality of a piece of research stands not only by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by suitability of the sampling tactic (Velardo & Elliott, 2021). Sampling plays a vital role in research. As a researcher, issues of sampling were thought of early in the planning stages of this study. Sampling is a process of selecting a group of individuals to participate in a research (Velardo & Elliott, 2021). Sampling guides researchers to choose properly, the restricted set of individuals from which actual information can be drawn. Sampling aims to save time and to obtain consistent and unbiased information on the population status in terms of whatever is being researched.

Snowball sampling was used to sample the readers of the selected publications. Snowball sampling is one of the most popular methods of sampling in qualitative research, central to which are the characteristics of networking and referral. The researchers usually start with a small number of initial contacts (seeds), who fit the research criteria and are invited to become participants within the research. The agreeable participants are then asked to recommend other contacts who fit the research

criteria and who potentially might also be willing participants, who then in turn recommend other potential participants and so on. Researchers, therefore, use their social networks to establish initial links, with sampling momentum developing from these, capturing an increasing chain of participants. The target for reader participants were 25 and in snowball sampling, the sampling usually finishes once either a target sample size or saturation point has been reached. In this case, the geographical areas of the participants were not considered and it was not deliberate. The size of the sampled readers was not chosen per newspaper but the researcher was only identifying readers of the selected newspapers. The industry experts and the editors and head reporters of the six newspapers were sampled through the purposive sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling method. The selection and use of this sampling technique were informed by the fact that the management was deemed fit and suitable to provide the relevant information that the researcher needed. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2006), Wimmer and Dominick (2013), purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling whereby units to be observed are sampled based on a researcher's privilege about their relevance and importance thereof. The media messages were used to strengthen and support the study.

3.3.3 Data collection

Brown, Kaiser, and Allison (2018) define data collection as the process of gathering the desired information carefully with the least possible distortion so that the analysis may provide answers that are credible and stand to logic. For this study, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the newspaper representatives and the readers of the print newspapers. The method was chosen for its openness and it allowed the researcher and the respondents to divert when an idea was to be perused in more detail. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and give the researcher the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate or to follow a new line of inquiry introduced by what the interviewee is saying, the informants also have the freedom to express their views in their terms (Espedal, 2022).

On the other hand, online semi-structured interviews were held with media experts as it was the most convenient approach for them. The method was chosen because it provided a lighter and open arena for discussion and interaction which then allowed the participants to feel free to express their ideas and opinions. Online interviews were recommended for their convenience, participants were interviewed from the comfort of their own homes, reducing the need for travel and associated costs. Online interviews are often quicker to set up than in-person interviews, reducing scheduling conflicts and the time it takes to arrange interviews. Moisis (2020) further added that online interviews can be scheduled to accommodate different time zones, making it easier for participants from anywhere to participate.

Appointments were arranged and the discussions were guided, monitored and recorded by the researcher to establish their strategies and plans to sustain the traditional print newspapers. Media messages as part of data collection were taken from a radio podcast that the researcher came across as they were collecting from media messages and deemed it as important, the podcast was titled: "SA FM's mediated conversation: the future of print".

3.3.3.1 Advantages of face-to-face semi-structured interviews

According to Hatch and Barclay-McLaughlin (2014), a semi-structured interview is a more flexible type of structured interview that provides balance to the pre-planned questions of a structured method. Open-ended questions were used in this research to enable respondents to include more information, such as their feelings about the subject matter, their attitude and their understanding of the subject (Al Balushi, 2016)). In using open-ended questions participants were able to explain if they did not understand the question or if they did not have an opinion on the subject matter (Hatch & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2014). According to Al Balushi, (2016), open-ended questions have the capability of yielding more information and unique insight for the researcher as respondents may find them less threatening than scaled questions.

Karatsareas (2022) opines that semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structure and flexibility. While they have a predefined set of questions or topics, interviewers can adapt and probe further based on the respondent's responses. This

flexibility allows for a deeper exploration of subjects that may arise during the interview. Semi-structured interviews are well-suited for exploring complex topics or gaining an in-depth understanding of a respondent's perspective. The open-ended nature of some questions enables participants to express themselves. Karatsareas (2022) further clarifies that because interviewers can follow up on responses and ask for clarifications, semi-structured interviews often yield rich and detailed data. This can be particularly valuable in qualitative research where a nuanced understanding of a topic is required.

Kakilla (2021) elaborated that semi-structured interviews can be customized for individual respondents or adjusted based on the participant's background, experiences or expertise. This personalisation allows for a more relevant and engaging conversation. Participants are allowed to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences in their own words. This can further lead to the discovery of insights and perspectives that might not have been uncovered through structured questionnaires or surveys. De Villiers, Farooq and Molinari (2022) contend that because semi-structured interviews involve a degree of open-ended conversation, they can help build rapport between the interviewer and the respondent. This can lead to more honest and insightful responses. Thelwall and Nevill (2021) added that researchers can refine and adapt their interview questions as they gain more insights from earlier interviews. This iterative approach can lead to more focused and relevant questions as the study progresses.

3.3.3.2 Advantages of online interviews

Braun, Clarke, Boulton, Davey, and McEvoy (2021) explained that online interviews were recommended for their convenience, participants were interviewed from the comfort of their own homes, reducing the need for travel and associated costs. Online interviews are often quicker to set up than in-person interviews, reducing scheduling conflicts and the time it takes to arrange interviews. Moises (2020) concurs that online interviews can be scheduled to accommodate different time zones, making it easier for participants from anywhere to participate. Online interviews were recommended for their convenience, participants were interviewed from the comfort of their own homes, reducing the need for travel and associated costs. Online interviews are often quicker to set up than in-person interviews, reducing scheduling conflicts and the time it takes to

arrange interviews. Moisis (2020) further added that online interviews can be scheduled to accommodate different time zones, making it easier for participants from anywhere to participate.

Online interviews were easily recorded to be used for reference during later stages. While online interviews offer many advantages, it is important to recognise that they also come with some challenges, such as potential technical issues, a lack of personal connection, and the need for candidates and interviewers to adapt to the virtual format. The researcher needs to ensure that their online interview processes are well-planned and inclusive to make the most of these advantages while mitigating potential drawbacks.

3.3.4 Data analysis

In analysing the qualitative data, thematic content analysis was adopted as a method of data analysis.

This is an important step in the research process because the analysis and interpretation of this data will contribute significantly towards the basis of the findings and conclusions. May and perry (2014) comments that the purpose of the data analysis is for the researcher to inspect the empirical information cautiously to reach a conclusion based on rationalising and simplifying the density in the data. The recorded interviews were transcribed and together with notes taken during interviews were carefully analysed using thematic analysis. The goal of thematic analysis is to identify, analyse and describe patterns or themes across the data set (Bruan & Clarke, 2006). Through thematic analysis, the collected data were analysed and interpreted to formulate findings that correlated with the objectives of the study. According to Clarke and Braun (2013:129) “thematic content analysis is a method of analysis for coding or scoring verbal materials to make inferences about characteristics and experiences of persons, social groups, or historical periods.” The primary analytic goal in thematic analysis is to make inferences from messages, analysed in the form of text in written transcripts. Thematic analysis is recommended in qualitative research for its flexibility,

not simply theoretical flexibility, but flexibility in terms of the research question, sampling size and constitution, data collection method, and approaches to meaning generation. Clarke and Braun (2013) further explained that thematic analysis is used to identify patterns within and across data about participants' lived experiences, views and perspectives, and behaviour and practices; 'experiential' research seeks to understand what participants think, feel, and do. The themes were based on the three objectives of the study and the other themes were produced from the data. The interviews were audiotaped with a mobile phone and transcribed by the researcher. The media message audio from the podcast were transcribed and also analysed using thematic content analysis. The data collected were recorded and analysed based on the objectives of this study.

The analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step thematic analysis guidelines and the traditional content analysis approach as suggested by Braun and Clarke, (2019). The choice of using thematic analysis to analyse data for this research was based on its theoretical freedom as a useful and flexible research tool, with capabilities to provide complex but rich and comprehensive data accounts (Braun & Clarke 2006). The flexible nature of the thematic analysis is that it is principally not connected to any theory or any epistemology and it can be useful for a wider range of theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke 2006; Jaspal, 2020).

The steps are outlined below:

a) Familiarisation with the data

In this first phase, the researcher took enough time to study the data in detail, in an attempt to confirm that the data were in line with the aim of the study. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that if the researcher has collected the data through interactive means, one comes to the analysis with some sort of initial analytic interests or thoughts. However, it is significant that the researcher immerses oneself in the depth of the content. This involves repeated reading and listening to the data actively, searching for meanings and patterns. Thus, it was especially important for the researcher to familiarise oneself with the data. The study consisted of three categories of participants and different questions concerning the sustainability of print in this digital era were asked. The face-to-face

interviews were conducted with 25 readers, while the online interviews were conducted with 5 industry experts and 6 editors and head reporters from the publications. All sessions were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The researcher listened to the audio recordings and transcribed them in detail. The process of transcribing data, while it may be perceived as time-consuming, is an exceptional way to start familiarising oneself with the data (Clarke & Braun, 2019). Nonetheless, the themes of the questions asked from the individuals were established from the objectives of the study. Accordingly, the researcher familiarised oneself with the collected data in the recordings, in this case, focusing on the three objectives of the study. However, the study managed to develop some of the themes from the collected data. The appropriate familiarisation of data equipped the researcher with basic principles to generate initial codes.

b) Generating initial codes

According to Peel (2020) and Braun and Clarke (2006), in this phase, the researcher starts to organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way. The refinement of data is not facilitated in a vacuum, and coding reduces data to small pieces of meaning. There is a need for the collected data to pass through checkpoints before one can generate trustworthy findings which can be tested through the use of a present theory. The generation of initial codes is one of the frontiers. Codes help to identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the researcher and refer to the basic segment of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the variable studied (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interviews with the readers helped to establish the initial codes. Although data had introduced codes, the central codes were emanating from the objectives of this study. The generation of these initial codes anchored the search for themes since the researcher had performed thematic analysis.

c) Searching for themes

In this phase, data analysis starts to take shape as the researcher moves from codes to themes. This step involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating

all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The categorised data permitted the researcher to pinpoint the initial codes and some of the codes represent the fundamental perceptions of the themes. By doing this, the researcher is analysing the codes and considering how different codes may combine to form themes. If this stage is done properly, the researcher will end up with a collection of themes, and even sub-themes, and all the extracts of data that have been coded about them (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Peel, 2020). These are a series of checkpoints that the data should pass through before they can produce initial codes and themes, respectively.

The following objectives of this study, known as the guiding themes, were set:

- (i) To interrogate ways in which the print media sector is used to overcome sustainability challenges.
- (ii) To assess the value of newspapers to readers.
- (iii) To ascertain and recommend sustainable job-saving strategies for the newspapers under investigation.

(d) Reviewing themes

During this phase, the researcher reviews, adjusts, and improves the initial themes that have been identified during the previous stage (Peel, 2020). This phase encompasses two levels of reviewing and refining themes. The first level involves reviewing the level of coded data extracts. This means the researcher should read all the collected extracts for each theme and determine whether they form a comprehensible pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second level requires the researcher to determine the validity of individual themes concerning the data set. In this stage, the researcher is required to re-read the entire data for two purposes. The first stage is to ascertain whether the themes work about the data set, and the second stage is to code any additional data within themes that could have been missed during the preceding stage. The main purpose of reviewing themes was to examine the sustainability strategies as suggested through the data collected. The researcher embarked on this process to review and confirm the

existence of the objectives of this study. The stated objectives were not reviewed in isolation but in tandem with the aim of the study, with the understanding that this study should generate new knowledge and contribute to the existing body of knowledge. Thus, it is significant to review and refine the themes. This had to be done to strengthen the thematic approach as the data analysis technique employed in this study. The subsequent step was the definition and labelling of the reviewed themes.

(e) Defining and naming themes

This is the final refinement of the themes and the aim is to identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Squires, 2023). In this phase, the researcher defined and further refined the themes to be presented for analysis. A good thematic analysis will ensure that each theme has a singular focus; themes are related but do not overlap, so they are not repetitive, and themes should directly address the aim and objectives of the study (Clarke & Braun, 2019). The themes of this study were generated through the objectives of the study and the collected data, and they are stated hereunder.

- (i) challenges of print newspaper at this digital era
- (ii) Ways in which the print media sector use to overcome sustainability challenges.
- (ii) The value of newspapers to readers.
- (iii) The newspapers' sustainability strategies.
- (iv) Recommendation of sustainable job-saving strategies for the newspapers.

3.4 ENSURING RIGOR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A study's findings ought to be reliable and truthful. The research's rigor must be followed in a qualitative investigation. Qualitative research emphasises dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability as trustworthiness criteria to assure the rigor of qualitative results (Henry, 2015). Rigor is defined by Tracy (2013), referenced in Kubayi (2013), as the care and diligence with which the research is conducted to satisfy the necessary standard. Four criteria will be proposed to judge the merits of determining

whether the research is genuine, reliable or authoritative” (Hammond & Wellington, 2012).

A qualitative researcher must be self-assured that their data were generated after every precaution has been taken against known distortions, impurities and biases, intentional or accidental and that the generated data does not differ if used by anyone in similar research. Qualitative research should ensure quality like reliability and validity in quantitative research (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006): it must demonstrate integrity, competence, clarity, completeness, and legitimacy of the research process. It ought to meet the criterion of replication by other researchers. Replication refers to “the act of recreating or reproducing an earlier study to see if its results can be repeated,” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Rigour refers to the care and effort with which the research is carried out to meet the required standard (Harrison, Reilly & Creswell, 2020). Rigour requires the researcher to apply due diligence and to practice his craft effectively in terms of time, effort, and thoroughness. “Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility,” (Harrison, et al., 2020:14). The strength of the qualitative approach is its ability to enable understanding and explanation of phenomena in similar settings (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020). Four criteria have been proposed to judge the merits, credibility, authenticity, rigour or trustworthiness of qualitative research, and these are (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020):

- 1) Credibility and authenticity
- (2) Transferability or applicability
- (3) Dependability
- (4) Conformability

Credibility

Credibility looks at how compatible the created realities within the respondents’ minds are with those realities that are accredited to them (Shufutinsky, 2020). Credibility in this research was achieved through persistent observations, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, and member checks.

Transferability

The degree to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents is what is referred to as transferability (ibid.). Transferability for this research was achieved by my being able to provide a detailed, rich description of the settings studied for readers to have sufficient information to be able to judge the applicability of the findings to other settings that they know (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020). The researcher gathered adequate detailed descriptions of data in context and reported them, with adequate details and exactness to permit judgement to be made about transferability by the reader. According to Shufutinsky (2020), dependable research needs to be consistent and accurate.

Dependability

The dependability of this research was achieved especially in the manner I conceptualised this study. I clearly presented how I collected data for both interviews and content analysis, how participants and content for observation were selected and analysed as well as interpreting the findings and reporting results.

Confirmability

Williams and Kimmons (2022) define confirmability as the degree to which the findings of the enquiry are not any of the researcher's biases but the product of the focus of the enquiry. The confirmability of this research is that all the findings were based on participants' narratives other than my own. In analysing data for this research, I explained and justified how coding was done and how themes emanated as well as explaining them.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Moreover, before collecting data for this study, the researcher sought research approval from the research and ethics committees of the University of Limpopo. This study observed all critical phases of research ethics as outlined by the University. The Research and Ethics Committee approved the study, ethical clearance is attached at

the end of the thesis as an appendix. Ethical standards attempt to strike a balance between supporting freedom of inquiry on the other hand and protecting the welfare of participants on the other. In other words, researchers have the right to search for truth and knowledge, but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals in society. For this research, all the ethical principles required when conducting research were followed. It is a requirement for both researchers and their participants to be knowledgeable about their expectations, as well as the reasons why and when. When a consent form is signed the researcher and participants by then should be aware of the purpose of the study, how the research data will be used, and the limitations of the data collection (Newman, Guta & Black, 2021).

3.5.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Participants have a right to know what the research is about, how it will affect them, the risks and benefits of participation, and the fact that they have the right to decline to participate or to discontinue their participation at any time during the process if they choose to do so. The research participants were informed about the nature of the study and the main aim of embarking in the study. The researcher also explained to the participants that their participation was voluntarily and that they could withdraw if they wanted to do so. Thus, participants were given Consent Letters which they completed before participating in the study.

3.5.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher ensured that the confidentiality and privacy of the participants were protected by asking the respondents not to reveal their identities or names during the research process. It is significant to ensure that the participants' identifying information is known only to the researcher and is not publicly associated with their responses (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2021; Suri, 2020). Since the study employed interviews to collect data, the privacy of the participants was respected at all times because the names of the participants were not disclosed but code letters (e.g. Respondent A1), were used to identify the participants during the data collection and interpretation processes.

3.5.3 Deception

According to Babbie (2020), researchers should respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people taking part in research and take care to not harm in the research process. In their research, they have a special obligation to protect the rights, welfare, and dignity of research respondents throughout the study. The researcher should be sensitive to cultural values and role differences in groups of people with distinctive characteristics. Researchers should at all times strive for honesty in all communications and honesty in reporting data, results, methods and procedures, and publication status. Under no circumstances should the researcher fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent data, nor deceive respondents (Babbie, 2020). The researcher adhered to the aforementioned concepts when he carried out the research. The researcher did not lie or deceive respondents or manipulate data in any way. The researcher ensured that the respondents were fully aware of the research rationale and its aims and objectives. The true nature of the study was explained honestly, and any risks were explained. The respondents were informed that there was no material benefit for participating in the study.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter gave a broad perspective of the study by presenting the research methodology used in this study. It explained the research design, the rationale for the research, the population and the sample that was included in the study. It also clarified the data collection and analysis procedures. The interview tools used to collect the information were named and described. The chapter further explained issues related to rigor of the research. Ethical considerations were also discussed. The following chapter (4) presents the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 4

THE ANALYSIS OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. This chapter gives relevant theories to the study and demonstrates their relevance and elaborates on how they guided the study. Without theoretical knowledge, one can be methodologically expedient at getting data, but will not be able to use it to answer the questions at hand and relate findings to the questions of the field, thus theory makes it easier for one to interpret findings. This research therefore was guided by the Media-morphosis and niche theories of the media. Through the use of media-morphosis theory, the study sought to find out if indeed the emergence of a new media should not result in the demise of an existing one because the latter may adapt and so coexist with the new medium for enhanced performance and better customer service. Drawing from Domminick and Rothenbuhler's (1984) niche theory of mass media, a medium's ability to compete and live with another medium depends on how it uses its limited resources. The below section further elucidates the theoretical underpinning of the study and focuses on the objectives of the study to assess the substance of the data. The theoretical framework is the cornerstone of this analysis based on the two theories.

The chapter gives detailed analysis of the theoretical framework, the assumptions and assertions of the theories are tested against the findings of this research. The findings of the study are derived from the objectives of the research which are, namely, (a.) to identify the newspapers' strategies for sustainability; (b) to interrogate ways in which the print media sector use to overcome sustainability challenges that might be encountered; (c) to assess the value of print newspapers to readers.

4.1.1 Mediamorphosis theory

Mohammed (2021) defines mediamorphosis as the transformation of the communication media, which is typically prompted by the complex interaction of perceived demands, political, economic and social pressures, as well as new social and technological developments. The theory aids in comprehending the interconnectedness

of technology, media and communication. The theory of mediamorphosis offers a framework for comprehending the possible impact of developments in the digital era on the newspaper industry in various social circumstances.

The idea, according to Benson (2022), explains why the emergence of new media should not result in the demise of an existing one because the latter may adapt and so coexist with the new medium for enhanced performance and better customer service. The "digital metamorphosis," or mediamorphosis theory, describes and predicts modifications in the digital environment and its culture. According to Deepak, Rodrigues and Rani (2020), "new media" is produced to modernise and enhance traditional media in an atmosphere where technology is always evolving. Revolusi (2022) coined the word "mediamorphosis" to describe how the digital world has evolved. The term refers to the processes of evolution and adaption of strategies by existing media and in this context; traditional media should constantly adjust and figure out how to survive, even as new forms of media appear.

The mediamorphosis theory maintains that any strategies of new media can assist to improve on traditional media, such as printed newspapers, rather than causing their demise. From this reasoning, print media should not disappear because of the digital age because it has its benefits over digital media and has its functions. New media is a result of old media, however, old media should never go away, instead, it develops into something that people may find equally appealing to own or use. Mohammed (2021) maintained that new media do not develop unexpectedly and independently but rather gradually as a result of the transformation of traditional media.

According to this notion, the traditional modes of communication must adapt to the appearance of a new medium, otherwise, they may cease existing. The theory provides six key mediamorphosis concepts that put the industry's transformational processes in perspective. These demonstrate how print newspapers can remain and endure in the digital age despite the introduction of a new medium, a belief that traditional media can find ways to adapt and succeed.

The five principles behind the theory as stated by fiddler (2003) are:

- Coexistence and variations of media forms
- Metamorphosis of old media forms to new media forms
- Transmission of prevailing qualities in media
- Subsistence of media forms
- Opportunity and needs for implementing new media

In the following discussion, the discoveries of this study are tested against the assumptions of this theory.

(a) Coexistence and variation of media forms principle

The study discovered that all media forms coexist with one another and coevolve, influence and develop over time into their current forms. The new digital form of newspaper developed from print or traditional newspapers. The respondents from the publications mentioned that the print version does not have to die completely but can coexist with new media. The newspapers have adapted to the digital era to remain relevant and reach wider audiences. While the importance of print newspapers has diminished, there is still a market for physical newspapers, especially among older readers. However, the industry continues to print physical copies alongside their digital offerings.

(b) metamorphosis of old media

Simply said, the term "metamorphosis" refers to the gradual transformation of an existing medium into new ones. The print media hence remains crucial because a new medium reacts to the older ones and in the process comes up with innovative ideas that assist it to adapt, grow stronger and survive. The digital newspapers and other forms of new media did not arise spontaneously and independently, they emerged gradually from the metamorphosis of old media and when newer forms of communication media emerge, the older forms of media usually do not die they tend to adapt and evolve continuously. The future of traditional newspapers was predicted as dying a long time ago dating as far as 2002, but here we are in 2023, the print newspapers are still in existence, this proves that the old media can exist with the new media to support one

another. From the findings, it was elaborated that the digital media sometimes rely on print for content and vice versa, at the same time catering for all target market in different versions. The Newspapers featured on this study have transitioned from print to digital formats. Many traditional publications now have online versions, often with multimedia elements like videos and interactive graphics, this indicates the metamorphosis occurrence.

(c) transmission of dominant qualities

Revolusi (2022) states that 'the transmission of dominant qualities from previous types of media' occurs when newer forms of media take over those traits. The new media then notices these characteristics and spreads them. For instance, newspapers have long-placed stories and headlines in their printed versions. In a similar vein, the new media have also created websites that include articles, headlines and videos on specific subjects of discussion. The idea that media forms must adapt and change to survive in a changing environment, as opposed to dying out, holds that all media outlets and media organisations must do the same. As part of this process, new media improves existing media and borrows features for survival.

Nonetheless, the transformations have not only changed the way print newspapers are consumed but have also disrupted traditional business models and challenged the sustainability of legacy media outlets. The transition from old to new media forms continues to reshape the media industry and how information is produced, distributed and consumed in the digital age.

(d) Opportunity and needs for implementing new media

According to 'the opportunity and needs for adopting new media principle,' there is a market potential that incorporates social, political, economic and other elements rather than new media's technological advantages and how readily people can adapt to using them. In explaining the sixth principle, 'delayed adoption,' new technologies are said to always take longer than anticipated to become commercially successful. The adoption

of different information and communication technologies in newspaper operations results in change, according to Law, Leung and Chan (2019).

The theory has helped in discussing the role that the digital media has played in assisting newspapers studied to survive, to handle the challenges, and how to remain sustainable in the digital era. The income that is generated from digital newspapers supports and sustains the print version. According to Mohammed (2021), new media evolve from pre-existing forms rather than developing independently. As a result, to build a successful media landscape, both new and old media must coexist rather than one destroying the other. The theory assisted the researcher in analysing how publications survive in this digital era and proved that the digital era is not a threat but another survival strategy of the industry.

4.1.2 The Niche theory of the media

In order to describe the sustainability of print media in this digital era, the researcher chose to use the niche theory of the media as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory highlighted how media organisations often target specific demographic groups or interest areas to attract and retain their audience, rather than attempting to appeal to a broad and generalised audience.

According to the niche theory of mass media, a medium's ability to compete and live with another medium depends on how it uses its limited resources (Humphreys, Karnowski & Von Pape, 2018).

Thus, to explain the rivalry between the media industries, Domminick and Rothenbuhler (2006) created the niche theory. Typically, a niche is described as how a population makes use of its resources. Because a population frequently makes use of multiple resources, a niche has multiple dimensions. A population is a collection of comparable organisations with shared traits. Print newspapers are one population in this scenario, and digital media, such as online platforms for information access, are another population. Both a generalist and a specialised medium are used for the conversation. A generalist medium has a wider scope, which increases audience size. The generalist is better able to maintain its viability if the environment changes in ways that influence the

resources it utilises, according to Dimmick and Rothenbuhler's research, although the specialist medium might be better at utilising its resource base. Their ability to adapt to shifting settings has a major impact on how well they can use the resources that are available to them.

The three elements of the idea are niche superiority, niche breadth, and niche overlaps.

Niche superiority:

In the media industry, for print newspapers to succeed in a competitive environment, they need to find their niche superiority, the respondent from the *City Press* mentioned that for the newspaper to compete, they should always strive to bring something unique or special that sets it apart from the others. This competition can lead to the creation of niche content and tailored offerings to appeal to specific audience segments. The findings also proved that newspapers have a long history of journalistic integrity and editorial standards. Readers often trust established newspapers for accurate, well-researched reporting. This credibility is valuable in an era where misinformation and fake news are prevalent online. Print versions typically offer in-depth analysis and investigative journalism on complex issues. They have the resources to support long-form journalism, which allows for comprehensive coverage and deeper insights into important topics. The superiority of the printed newspapers lies on that fact that there are limited distractions when reading a physical newspaper, there are no pop-up ads, notifications or other digital distractions. The reader respondent revealed that this led to a more focused and immersive reading experience.

Niche breadth:

The scope of a niche encompasses both the volume and scope of resource use by a population. A population is a specialised population if it exclusively uses a small number of resource categories because it fills a specific niche. Specialists are skilled in making optimal use of resources, but they struggle to adapt to significant environmental changes to stay alive. Print newspapers are a specialised media that must ensure sustainability and survival in the face of the digital era's numerous features. As a result,

the newspaper struggles for life with limited resources. According to the findings of the study, the readership and circulation have been affected, the newspaper depends on it for survival. The use of the internet, according to Taipale, Oinas, and Karhinen (2021), has cut down on the amount of time people spend on traditional media because it occupies the time that people used to spend reading print newspapers and using digital media.

Niche overlaps:

While competitive superiority is used to determine how much one population is superior to another population in terms of their ability to utilise resources, niche overlap assesses the extent to which two populations use the same resources (Puthiyakat & Goswami, 2021). As a result, if two populations' niche overlap is substantial, the superior population is likely to displace the inferior. The power and strength of digital media outweighs print newspaper, some readers have moved from print to digital media. In this case, Niche overlaps occur when a print newspaper targets a specific niche or interest group within its readership while still covering general news and topics. These niche overlaps can be a strategic way to engage a dedicated audience while maintaining a broad readership base. The sharing of resources or other elements, whether entirely or partially is referred to as niche overlap (consumers, space, funds, and so on). The publications that were interviewed all offer digitalised content, which means the print version also gets support from the digital version. Niche overlaps in this case prove that the media may coexist in each environment, it is a key notion in the media. Additionally, a higher degree of overlap suggests greater competition. If print media has tactics that can ensure sustainability, it is likely to survive and cohabit with other media. The best medium with sufficient resources and abilities is likely to survive even when competition occurs. For the industry to have a digital site was a sustainability move, which did not have to face out the print version.

According to Scherr and Wang (2021), every media outlet in the sector relies on finite resources, just like an organism does. As a result, there will inevitably be a fierce battle for survival among the media sector's competitors for the same resources, the resources are the readers and the print industry need to tap into the strategies they can

use to increase the circulation and readership to remain relevant and sustainable. The media sector is a place where rivalry and harmony coexist. The theory analysed how print media and digital media inevitably develop a competitive relationship and coexist. The theory assisted in data collection by seeking answers to questions such as, is the print media fit to survive? And what are the strategies that are put in place?

4.2 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter discussed how the two selected theories aligns with the study. The theories of mediamorphosis and niche offer insightful viewpoints for comprehending the viability of print in the digital era. Mediamorphosis serves as a reminder that, within an integrated communication ecology, media do not vanish but rather change and adapt. Therefore, print will continue to play a part as long as it develops in line with audience preferences and digital technologies. Furthermore, niche theory shows that in the face of competition for audiences, advertising, and relevance, survival hinges on recognising and preserving distinctive qualities. The following chapter presents and analyse data.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study from the data collected. It is divided into 4 sections and each section analysed a selected theme in line with the research objectives of this study. Section 1 is the introductory part which elaborates the demographic information of the participants. The other three sections analysed the selected theme as aligned with the research objectives of the study. Section 2 looked at the position and value of the newspapers to the readers. It examines the reasons behind the hardcopy preferences of readers and concludes by discussing their value and benefits.

Section 3 provides the views and recommendations of sustainability strategies of newspapers from the industry expert's point of view and analysis. It also identifies and recommends long-term job-saving strategies, as well as developing themes and challenges that require further clarification from industry experts.

Section 4 explains the last two themes of the study; notably, the sustainability problems that the publications analysed are confronted with, and further interrogates solutions they employ to solve these challenges. It examines the future of print newspapers and the threat that digital media poses to print from the perspective of editors and newspaper officials.

The conclusions are based on information acquired from semi-structured interviews with readers of the seven chosen newspapers, print media industry experts, and publication officials. The results are presented based on the following study objectives: namely:

- To assess the value of printed newspapers to readers
- To ascertain and recommend sustainability and job-saving strategies for the selected print newspapers.
- To interrogate strategies that the print media sector uses to overcome sustainability challenges.

SECTION 1

5.2 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

5.2.1 Readers' Demographics

Part (I) of the interview guide solicited information about participants' demographic characteristics. The following attributes of the respondents were sought:

- Age;
- Gender
- Geographical area

I: Age group

Twenty-25 readers from the selected newspapers took part in the face-to-face semi-structured interviews, the number was reached through snowball sampling. Based on the interview guide that was used to collect data, the participant's age group is presented as follows: Out of 25 participants, 0 (0%) were between the ages of 15-19 years old. One (4%) was between the age of 20-29, 3 (12%) were between the age of 30-39, 4 (16%) were between the age of 40-49 years old, 11 (44%) were between the ages of 50-59 years old. The last age group were of the age group of 60+, which is 06 (25%). The ages of the participants were not deliberate, the method used was referral and the ages indicate that newspapers are most read by the elderly group.

For better analysis and interpretation, the participants were grouped in the table 5.1 below:

II: Age group of participants in table format

Participants	Age group	No of participants
A1-A11	50-59	11
B1-B4	40-49	4

C1-C6	60+	6
D1-D3	30-39	3
E1	20-29	1
F	15-19	0
TOTAL		25

III: Gender

There is no gender parity in the context of the participants in this study. The majority of the reader participants in this study were males 15 (60%) while the 9 (36%) participants were females and 1 (4%) did not specify.

IV: Location

This sentiment is anchored by a high percentage of 60% (15) of rural dwellers and over 24% (6) of those who reside in semi-urban areas. 16% (04) of the participants are the inhabitants of urban areas.

Fifteen participants from Unit A reside in rural areas, 06 from semi-urban, and only 04 were from urban areas. In Unit B, six respondents come from rural areas and one apiece from semi-urban and urban dwellings, respectively. Of the total of 11 participants in Unit C, seven of them reside in rural areas, three from semi-urban and one from urban abodes.

V. Time spent reading newspaper?

The readers were asked about how often they read newspapers, 11 (44%) indicated that they read newspapers daily, 7 (28%) participants indicated that they read the newspaper weekly, 4 (16%) read newspapers monthly, and only 3 (12%) rarely indicated that “sometimes” which means that they rarely read newspapers.

SECTION 2

5.3 VALUE OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS: READERS' PERSPECTIVES

5.3.1 Objective 1: To assess the value of print newspapers to readers

To address the first objective of this study, the study integrated themes that emerged from the data collection.

Data were sourced from the interviews with the readers of the print newspaper.

Responses and Emerging Themes

❖ Themes 1: Trust and mistrust

Readers who participated were asked to identify reasons for their preference for print newspapers over digital media. Trust, credibility, and quality were mentioned as key values of the print newspapers. Their views are expressed below:

Respondent (A1) had this to say: “well, I read newspapers because they can be trusted unlike social media where people publish fake news. With print newspapers the stories are credible and they pass certain stages before they can be published.

In the same breath respondent (B2) by saying: I love print, and paper is more credible. I may be old fashioned but now the internet is full of fake news so one needs to know how to identify poor quality of reporting and fake news, and yes, the newspaper that I read is also available online but I still do not prefer it online. I am a person who likes to focus when reading and avoid disturbance so a gadget or accessing my news from the internet will distract me. Again, people are so talented they can actually fake a newspaper for one to think that it is the normal ones we know and are used to so hey I do not trust internet, with something else but not with my news.

“Similarly, Respondent (C3) reflected: “I do not trust internet, I just feel like the information there has been manipulated somehow, and I know that nowadays the newspapers that we read are also available online but I just prefer my paper, and the way stories are placed online are not how I want them. Sometimes you select a story

then it takes time to load, so for me print is convenient and it goes through stages of approval before it can actually be published.”

In responding to how the readers value print newspapers in this digital era and their reasons behind reading print newspapers preference over digital content, the responses highlighted trust, credibility, and quality as key factors. The participants indicated that they value newspapers for their credibility, and they state that newspapers can be trusted or believed than internet news or content, however, the respondents also indicated that newspapers can be accessed on the internet, but online one is not structured as they would prefer it. They also mentioned that digital platforms can be very distracting, and one could end up not finishing reading throughout.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged that newspapers are valuable to them and in different ways. The structure, layout, and quality of printed newspapers were deemed as consistent and organised to make it easy for readers to navigate through the content. They conveyed their views as follows:

“For me it is Print newspapers all the way, printed newspapers are structured in a logical and organised manner. Actually the headlines help me to quickly locate the content that I am interested in, such as local news, international news, sports, advertisements, the content is not haphazardly arranged because what I have notice with the one that is online compared to the physical one, it is so easy to lose track of what you are reading and you can easily ignore other stories” (Respondent C4).

Similarly, respondent (D3) echoed the above views by saying: *“I prefer printed because the layout guide readers' attention. The way newspaper place headlines, subheadings, and images lead the eye from one story to the next. Important stories are given larger headlines and prominent placement. In this case Editors play a crucial role in selecting and arranging the most important stories of the day. The front page typically features the top headlines, providing readers with a curated selection of news that is considered most significant and it is education for someone who is also doing journalism they can use newspapers to improve their skills and see how they write or design the paper”.*

The interviewees stated that their preference for print newspapers stemmed from their upbringing in families who valued newspapers; they valued and admired print media more than the digital world. This indicates that they value print newspapers because it connects them with their roots and brings families together. Some also indicate that the transfer of such love for paper was passed on to their children which then helped them to learn how to read. With that said, one may submit that, print newspapers are beneficial since they can be passed down from one family member to the next. Readers note that newspapers bring families together and they are educational. Thus, they stand above the digital version, they argued. Additionally, for some participants reading newspapers inspired them even to choose a career path that they are passionate about.

Lastly, participants have shown to appreciate the value of print newspapers for various reasons. One of these is the preference for the layout of printed newspapers even amidst the proliferation of digital news media. This may be because the print newspaper layout is determined by the daily's design team, which can present content effectively and compellingly. While print newspapers continue to be appreciated for these qualities, digital news media has also evolved to incorporate some of these principles in its layout and design, tailoring them to the digital format. This is to say, different readers may have varying preferences for print or digital based on their needs and habits.

❖ **Emerging Theme 2: Familial and Educational**

The term familial speaks of a usual family practice or routine. Their responses and a brief paragraph that summarises their submissions are captured below.

For Respondent (B1), the family background played a critical role in valuing newspaper. *I had to adapt and eventually fell in love with reading paper, both parents read print newspapers and my father taught me the importance of staying up to date with current affairs and what is happening in the world. This also made me to love journalism and follow on how they report their news, which is different from how news is reported online.*

Similarly, Respondent (A1) noted that the preference of print over online media is because online is bombarded with a lot of news so at this point one can never know what is fake and what is genuine. On the same breadth, Respondent(A2) submitted: *"it*

is really a thing that runs in the family, from my grandfather to my father, they read newspapers a lot. When they became pensioners, it became worse so somehow it got transferred to me and even my kids. They also started learning how to read, so the newspapers serve an educational purpose in my household, I even ended up subscribing so now it is very convenient for me”.

Respondents(A7) and (E1) also advanced parental influence as the main cause for the love of print newspapers.

“It started 10 years ago, my mother used them to cover fat-cakes, she used to sell them, so I use to take some of the newspapers and read so I develop the love to read, which came from my mother, she did not just buy newspapers to use them for her business but she also read. print newspapers are user friendly, you can easily finish reading the whole paper without any interruption” (Respondent A7). “For me it is only for two reasons, the first one is that my father somehow forced me into it until I actually liked it. He said he was trying to keep me away from the internet and it actually helped because now I write opinion letters to editors and I find newspapers very convenient. The second reason is that I am looking into doing journalism as a career next year so I am positive that by then I will be having in depth knowledge and skills in terms of writing” (Respondent, E1).

Participants further added that printed newspapers bring educational value for both students and lecturers in the field of journalism. They indicated that the tangibility of Printed newspapers provides a physical, experience that students and lecturers can hold and interact with. They also mentioned that the tactile experience can be valuable for teaching and learning. Some of the respondents’ views are presented below:

“Well as a media studies lecturer teaching writing for the media as one of the modules in media, it somehow binds me to actually love printed newspapers. I will not deny that I do read internet news but for educational purpose and the benefit of my students I use printed newspapers a lot in class. With newspapers, we get to discuss various aspects of journalism, such as layout, design, and typography. I still consider print design and layout as important skills for aspiring journalists, graphic designers, and media

professionals. I believe that using printed newspapers helps students develop these skills” (Respondent A10).

Respondent (D1) further noted:

“For me, even though I prefer internet content because it is very convenient. I get to access it any time anywhere, I am a fan of printed newspapers. I became fond of these newspapers when I was doing my final year in media studies. I have always wanted to be a journalist, and I have realised that for me to develop the skills I need to feel, touch and experience it. Printed newspapers had actually helped me to understand a section in my studies that teaches about designing for the paper. My skills developed there so I am a regular buyer and reader and I will always value print not only because I am a student in media but print is historical. I do not think I can shift from it and forget about it because of digital era. I focus on both and still acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses”.

While digital media has become increasingly popular, printed newspapers continue to cater to the preferences and needs of various readers, offering a unique and tangible reading experience. Participants expressed their views that the value of printed newspapers is not only about the content they provide but also about the medium itself and the role it plays in people's lives. However, with this being said, some participants had a different view about the value of newspapers, and they have expressed their views as follows:

“Well, I am not saying that printed newspapers have no life but with the rise of digital media, such as online news websites, social media, and mobile apps, this has made it more convenient for readers to access news and information online. Many people find digital sources more accessible, up-to-date, and interactive, which can weaken their interest in print newspapers. I do read print but I do not find it as interactive as digital” (Respondent C5).

In addition to the above views, respondent (D2) submitted: *“I use to prefer to print a lot but during COVID 19, it was extremely hard to access the paper so I ended up shifting to digital media. I enjoyed it a lot because it provides real-time news updates unlike*

Print newspapers which have a fixed publication schedule. I am one person who seek the latest information and I find print newspapers less appealing due to their inherent time lag, but I still find print newspapers as educational, it is easy to use when you need to help children read”.

❖ **Theme 3: Affordability and Convenience**

Furthermore, it emerged that participants valued print newspapers because they were cheap and less inconvenient like reading a newspaper online. Their responses are captured below:

“For me newspapers are very convenient because I have been reading newspapers for a long time and the time I started, internet was not popular compared to now so I ended up opting for print. To make life even better I have subscribed to the paper that I am reading, so with the subscription, I pay monthly to receive the paper weekly and delivered on my door. This is very convenient because I get to receive the paper even when I do not have money but because I will be receiving content that I have already paid for in advance. In contrary the internet or digital gadgets, demand that one should always have data bundles to access content” (Respondent C1).

“That questions to me is about age, the older you grow, you get to focus less on screens such as laptops, cell phones or other gadgets, your eyes becomes sensitive to screen but you end up opting for paper where you maybe have to wear glasses and read nicely, but at the same breath I found newspapers to be cheaper. I am a retired teacher, I do not have much to do but to read a newspaper which keeps me busy, I do not see myself buying data just to access news, which would be extremely expensive for me. so print newspaper is the way to go” (Respondent C2).

“I come from a rural area, let me tell you that even today, internet is a problem, some part of the community have access to internet buy the network is very poor so I gave up on internet because I struggled a lot when I wanted to connect, then I decided to focus on newspapers, when it comes to a physical paper, the access it very good, the paper does not need to load so that I can get to the next story but I just page through, I usually

buy from a local supermarket around the area and at a cheaper price and because I am a regular, the shop owner sometimes gives the paper to me for free so it is a bargain” (Respondent A6).

“Do I have a choice? Look around you can see that this is a poor community, we cannot afford those digital gadgets to access digitalised content, well some can but we do not see the value of internet here, it is possible that one can spend the whole day without making or receive calls because of network so even the children around here don’t even have time for gadgets we wouldn’t even afford to buy data so newspapers to many around here has become wat we use to entertain ourselves or use to remain informed about what is happening in the world. But internet is fast you do not have to carry the newspapers around you, one can simply use your phone but internet requires money that we use to buy bread. Sometimes we even get the newspapers for free around here” (Respondent A11).

Participants stated different opinions when expressing their preference for print newspapers in this digital era, the above four respondents mentioned issues relating to affordability and convenience in terms of subscriptions but under the same expressions, internet access is a problem for people who are staying in rural areas. Respondent number A11 mentioned that in the area that he is coming from, they have gadgets that they are not using because they do not have much internet access. Pertaining the value of print newspapers to readers some other participants expressed the affordability of newspapers in terms of advertising and that it is convenient or reader-friendly as there are no distractions.

Respondent A3, stated that *“besides that newspapers being cheap, they are a convenient way for people to notice advertisement without any distractions. As a business man, I check newspaper advertisements a lot and I have realised that they have a good way of placing advertisements, I usually advertise my business on newspapers and it is unbelievably cheap when compared to other platforms excluding radio. I sometimes read news online, but the pop ups that are there can be very annoying, you will end up subscribing wrong things because the internet bombard you with lots of adverts and some content are just a click away from subscribing so I have*

realised that newspapers are good for advertising and it is very unlikely that a person who is reading the newspaper can close it without noticing the advertisement unlike when you are reading online, data can simply ends while you are busy reading or you lose track of the site you were accessing so print is convenient and yes it comes with disadvantaged and in terms of advertising it reaches few number of people but it is convenient”.

“Reading a physical paper helps me to stay focused, it is less distracting compared to using digital platforms to access news. When a person sees you reading a paper they cannot easily interrupt because it would be clear that I do not want to be disturbed. Again, a call can come in while you are reading news and then your attention focuses on something else, digital platforms can be disappointing, the battery can go flat while you are enjoying your content and you might not go back to what you were supposed to read” (Respondent A4).

“I know that I am old fashioned right, but I don’t like using a phone to read because of many interruptions that comes with it, like when I am reading and the next thing adverts pops up and with online newspapers, it is not about data only but when you access the news you still have to pay and usually online newspapers somehow you are forced to subscribe so with print newspapers, no one can force me to go and buy the paper, I buy whenever I want to” (Respondent A5).

The participants highlighted that online newspapers/online news are often filled with advertisements, pop-up windows, and other distractions that can disrupt the reading experience. These distractions can make it challenging to focus on the content. Some also indicated that reading on digital screens for extended periods can lead to eye strain and discomfort. The participants below had related experiences to share:

Respondent A8 added *“I am not a social media person, so it makes me despite accessing news from internet, I do not think the news there is genuine, I am a current affairs person I like staying updated so in doing that I prefer paper. Well some might say that online news is very convenient and fast but how credible it is, these days, people can easily imitate anything so they might even claim to be Sowetan even when they are*

not so thanks, I am fine without the drama of having to make sure that I always have data.”

“Why do I love newspapers, okay, uhm the community that I come from encourages reading, and I am part of a community centre that focuses on teaching children how to read and write. They have lot of books and newspapers, they do not encourage reading from gadgets, so being there has made me love reading a lot and we ended up subscribing to two publications and they deliver newspapers to us weekly. I believe that we have to encourage people to read so at the centre it is the house ‘feeling that if we encourage them to use internet to access content it will be distractive to them and they will end up doing what they are not supposed to do while at the centre, and we also want to kill this saying “if you want to hide something to a black person hide it inside a book” so we still value newspapers a lot and they serve an educational purpose at the centre” (Respondent B4).

❖ Theme 4: Print newspapers are reusable

Participants were of the view that printed newspapers are not typically designed for extensive reuse, there are ways to make them more sustainable and to repurpose them creatively to reduce waste and environmental impact. They mentioned that not only do they read to be informed, educated or entertained but they use the newspapers for other purposes. the respondents have expressed the value of print newspapers in this way:

“For me it’s two things, I read newspapers because they help me a lot, as a business woman, every time when I am done reading the paper I keep it for business use, such as covering my products when I sell to my clients, but I don’t buy them for that no, I use old ones and it is very convenient for me because they are cheaper” (Respondent B3).

“Printed newspapers serve lot of purposes, they are cheap, I get to kill two birds with one stone, I am saying this because I get to use it for my business, I am self-employed and I paint and build houses, so most of homes that I go to, they don’t have newspapers, so when I paint for them I get to cover their windows using newspapers so

that the paint cannot get on to the windows, and I have also seen someone using them to clean windows, I do not see a point of buying a newspaper just to re-use it for something else, but it is nice to buy and read then reuse it, so there are lot of things that newspapers help with, u can even design clothes from newspapers for someone like me who is always working I usually use my break time to read the newspaper because if I were to use my phone and internet for news, It would definitely take me off my work because the internet can really be distractive.” (Respondent C6)

Respondent A9 added that *“I like collecting and having an archive of my own, I have a collection that dates back from 1991, I just have this idea in my head that one day they might come in handy and another thing the historical events from the collection could be very educational and helpful to my children and their children, I value written events a lot and I have been analysing how this newspapers report and I have noticed a change and transformation over the years” (Respondent A9).*

According to the views and responses from the participants, newspapers serve different purposes to the user. Printed newspapers are typically not designed to be reusable in the traditional sense. They are meant to be disposable, one-time-use items for reading news and information, however, some of the participants mentioned that they recycle or reuse newspapers. The researcher closed a session with this cohort by asking them to suggest ways that the newspapers may use to remain sustainable and relevant.

5.3.2 Recommended Sustainable Strategies

Participants were asked to suggest methods in which print media can stay sustainable and relevant. Below are their responses, some are captured verbatim whilst others are paraphrased.

Participants submitted that newspaper industries should look into how they report news; they should study their readers to be able to deliver according to their preferences. They further indicated that the industry should encourage subscriptions, readers should not only go to supermarkets and purchase the newspapers, but they can also be encouraged to subscribe to receive the newspapers at their convenience. Newspaper subscriptions work by providing readers with regular and often daily access to a newspaper's content in exchange for a fee which offers various subscription options,

including print, digital, or a combination of both. Subscribers can select the format that suits their needs. Participants stated that print publications that have not yet transformed to digital content should consider doing so because the revenue that will be generated through digital platforms can sustain the print section. Suggestions are concisely captured below:

- *Knowledge of readers increases advertising revenues*

Respondent (A1) noted that *“newspapers should study their readers more to find out how they prefer the paper and what suggestions they have to enable the industry to better deliver according to expectations and in that way, they can keep their readers”*. This may take a two-pronged strategy to solicit this information, through surveys distributed to these readers, and through opinion pieces from the readers themselves. These may assist in determining the interests of the readers as well as the attract more advertising revenue. Respondent (A8) further augmented that this will attract more advertisers because the advertisers are there for their target market, which is the readers, so they are more likely to invest in a newspaper that demonstrates a deep understanding of its readership. By knowing their readers, publications can offer targeted advertising opportunities, which can increase revenue for newspapers.

- *Incentives to encourage subscription*

Another sustainability strategy that was suggested by the readers is subscriptions which they indicated that it offers a convenient way to access news content and support journalism. They indicated that the newspaper industries should have packages or deals that nonsubscribers cannot have; this is to keep the readers subscribed. The participants further added that if more subscriptions can be encouraged it could sustain the print. The participants added the following views:

“Maybe newspapers may have promotions by saying the first 100 subscribers get free data for a week, this can really encourage people to subscribe, the newspapers should be innovative and find ways to do that” (Respondent A10).

“The newspaper that I subscribed to, makes me feel like some executive there because they usually send me specials and promotions. I do not even think of unsubscribing. I

remember the reason I subscribed was that when I tried to access news online I would run out of data and miss content so I ended up going to local store to either purchase or buy data but it was inconveniencing me because I did not always have money lying around, so after subscribing and paying monthly I am always secured and informed, you know I wish this industry can somehow use me to tell people about subscription and the benefits that it comes with” (Respondent D3).

“Well there is a method of subscription that newspapers are already using but they can find ways to encourage more subscribers because subscribers are often more loyal to a newspaper, as they have made a financial commitment. This is loyalty and it can lead to long-term relationships with readers, making them less likely to switch to a different publication, but at the sometime these publications should find ways to keep their loyal subscribers sometimes offer them discounts. Subscriptions offer a consistent income source for print newspapers. Unlike advertising revenue, which can fluctuate based on market conditions, subscriptions provide a more reliable stream of income” (Respondent C4).

- *Building rapport with advertisers*

Some of the participants raised the view that forming partnerships with advertising businesses can indeed grow and sustain the newspaper industry. One of the participants added that forming and sustaining relationships with advertising businesses is a key strategy for newspapers to generate revenue and ensure their financial sustainability, the publications should be able to keep their existing advertisers and attract new advertisers and have agreement. The participants indicated their suggestions as follows:

- *Competitive strategies*

To ensure the sustainability of printed newspapers in this digital era, some of the participants suggested that the newspaper industries should produce competition strategy to attract more readers. They indicated that competitions create excitement, engagement, and a sense of community, encouraging both existing and potential readers to interact with the newspaper. Some of the participants suggested that the newspapers can introduce loyalty programs where subscribers are automatically

entered into regular competitions and are of the view that this could be used as rewarding current readers and encourages new subscriptions.

5.4 SUMMARY OF SECTION 2

Section 2 addressed the analysis and interpretation of data collected through face-to-face interviews with the readers of the selected national newspapers. Data, in this section, were analysed through thematic analysis. Themes were identified in relation to the objectives of the study, while extracts drawn from the data were identified and also discussed as themes. Among the study objectives attained is the analysis of suggested sustainability strategies that can be used by the printed newspaper industry.

The following section interrogates the second objective of this study; namely, to Ascertain and recommend sustainable job-saving strategies for printed newspapers, it presents and analyse data from industry experts.

SECTION 3

5.5 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: INDUSTRY EXPERTS PERSPECTIVE

This section presents and interprets the data collected from industry professionals through virtual interviews using Microsoft Teams. It presents the perspectives and probable recommendations for printed newspaper sustainability strategies in the digital era, as viewed and analysed by industry experts.

It also identifies and recommends sustainable job-saving initiatives, emerging themes, and challenges that required clarification from industry experts. Thematic analysis was used to extract the data and give it a meaning. Five industry professionals were interviewed virtually. The sub-headings and themes offered in this section contribute to achieving the following study objective.

- To ascertain and recommend sustainability and job saving strategies for the selected print newspapers.

5.5.1 Participant's profile

Five industry experts participated in the study. The virtual interviews lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes. The demographic information that was collected required participants to possess requisite knowledge and experience within the domain of print newspaper. The other demographical data were not taken into consideration because it did not bear any significance in the study. Subsequently, traits that distinguished the respondents were then considered.

- Occupation
- Number of years in industry

A. Occupation and years in the industry

The participants' occupations and years in industry are shown table 5.2 below. The identities of the media experts have been withheld for ethical reasons.

Participants	Occupation	Years in industry
A	Former Chief Editor/Radio presenter	29
B	Media and journalism Lecturer	31
C	Newspaper Chief Editor	10
D	Media Creative Director	7
E	Media specialist and consultant	19

It is critical to highlight the length of time these experts have spent in the industry. The following table represents the lifespan of their careers in the media industry. The data presented above indicates that 1 (20%) of the participants have less than 10 years in the media industry, and 4 (80%) of the participants have more than 10-20 years of experience in the industry, this also indicates that they have the background and expertise in the field.

The next sub-section summarises the themes identified concerning the objectives of the study and data gathered from interviews. It begins by delivering the interview questions, participant replies, and analysis.

5.5.2 The state of print media in this digital era

❖ Theme 1: Decline readership, circulation and distribution

When asked about the present situation of printed newspapers, the participants stated unequivocally that digital media is evolving daily, while print newspapers have suffered major setbacks. The newspaper industry has faced challenges as digital media has grown in popularity and customers' preferences have shifted. They stated that particularly when COVID-19 struck, readership, circulation, and distribution fell, which had a significant impact on the print media business since some media outlets did not recover, and some were forced to close or merge to keep their heads above the waters.

The industry experts expressed their views as follows:

Responded A, retorted: "I'm old school and I prefer items that I can touch. Over the last 5 to 10 years, copies have reduced, circulation has declined, advertising revenue has decreased and newspapers are under threat. Nevertheless, the internet is full of fake news that is unreliable, which means you will not know what to trust or believe."

Respondent B further reflected that, *"the new media brought a lot of challenges in the print media sector whereby a large number of users have shifted from print to digital. The outbreak of COVID 19 made things very worse, some companies did not get back they were hit hard and those that bounced back has lost some sales"*. Although some newspapers have shut down because of decreases in sales, he does think that they should cease to exist, but they should find ways to remain sustainable and relevant.

Both Respondent C, D and E highlighted that the print media industry has faced several challenges due to the continuous rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the digital age. For respondent C: *"the 4IR, is characterised by among others, technologies like artificial intelligence, big data, the Internet of Things (IoT) as well as automation.*

This has subsequently transformed the way information is consumed and distributed. Print newspaper circulation had been declining for many years due to the increasing popularity of online news sources. Many readers were turning to digital platforms to access news content”.

Similarly, respondent D felt that, with the rise of the internet and technology, people can easily access information. He submits that as the print media circulation has declined, there has been a loss of jobs, and this affected not only journalists and editors but also the production and distribution aspect of the industry. However, respondent D raised concerns about the accuracy and objectivity of online news sources. For Respondent D, the rise of the digital age heralded the closure of many media outlets. As a result, many outlets had to adapt and innovate to survive while others had to merge with other major publications to survive. Equally so, others converted to the internet platform while maintaining their print offerings.

The participants highlighted that that the rise of the digital era has indeed caused a decline in the readership of print newspapers. They also noted that readers are increasingly turning to digital platforms such as websites, social media, and news apps for their daily news consumption. The convenience, accessibility, and immediacy of digital news sources have led to a decreased interest in traditional print newspapers.

The proliferation of online news sources has intensified competition for readership. They further indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic was a contributing factor, in whereby the country had implemented lockdowns and movement restrictions to curb the spread of the virus and these restrictions affected the distribution networks of print newspapers, leading to delays or disruptions in delivery which caused the industry to lose their targets.

5.5.3 Predicting the future of the print newspaper

❖ Theme 2: Print has a future

When asked to predict the future of printed newspapers ten years from now, the participants stated that they believed newspapers will still print, based on the current

digital era, the participants indicated that newspapers will still be in print and will always find new ways to operate given the rise in online demand. They further articulated their opinions as follows:

Respondent A opined that “Yes, it has a future, as much as circulation has been going down the past years till now, it does not mean it should stop existing because the death of print has been predicted long time ago but even today it is still active. I for one believe that it has a future but they need to work hard to keep its space in the market.”

Respondent B, concurred with respondent A, by adding that “according to my observance the industry has been trying to survive against all odds, its future was predicted as dead long time ago but here we are today surrounded by digital technology whereby you can simply and conveniently search and find anything on the internet, the industry yes has dropped in terms of sales but there is a market that they need to keep serving and as a journalism lecturer, the programme need to see the print industries surviving for long and continuously delivering its content to the readers in preference of the paper”.

Respondent C added that the future of print media is uncertain but may depend on how well they can continue to adapt in the digital era. The view from respondent C was supported by respondent E who articulated, “There are many community newspapers and regional newspapers that have closed shop, some have been bought by the national publications, this indicate that they struggled to remain sustainable, however even the national big papers have declined in terms of readership. For example, we can also look at the outbreak of COVID 19, during the lockdown that is when printed newspapers took a very big knock, the advertising revenue declined, so this ever evolving technology has also affected how people consume news so it is more of survival of the fittest, does the paper have enough resources to sustain itself in challenging situation?”.

However, respondent D, on their opinion mentioned that the existence of paper will be based on the level of demand, they concurred with the previous respondents to say that

the print will still be in existence in the next ten years. They added *“however at a low production and distribution rate, they will still appeal to certain niche market where there is a strong demand of the physical paper.”*

The experts in the industry believe that while print newspapers are facing significant challenges, they still have a future, especially if they adapt to changing consumer preferences, innovate their business models, and capitalise on their unique strengths and value propositions. The participants added that, despite the rise of digital media, there is still a segment of the population that prefers reading print newspapers. Some readers enjoy the tactile experience of holding a physical newspaper, and they trust the credibility and quality of reporting associated with established print publications.

It is notable that the industry has suffered amid digital era, but the national newspapers studied have proven to adapt in the digital era. This also indicates that they will always have market that they are serving, market that prefers printed newspapers or both, so the strategies that the newspapers are employing, they should continue and improve on them.

❖ **Theme 3: coexistence of print and digital era**

The participants were asked if they think printed media should shut down completely and only focus on online news content. The participants indicated that printed media has been the very first informant before technology, and that should not be undermined but embraced and sustained for generations and generations to come. They expressed the view that as long as it is still existing, there will always be a market for it. Their views were expressed as follows:

Respondent A was of the view that printed newspapers do not have to shut down, rather they should coexist with online format because the market is different and the medium still need to cater for both online and print, they further added *“all newspapers should strive to both have online and hard copy because they are likely to support each other, this means that when online edition succeed, printed edition will remain sustainable”*.

In addition, both respondents B and E shared the same sentiment that the industry does not have to shut down and focus on online edition only, but it is evident that most elderly people rely on printed newspapers to keep them updated about current affairs, both platforms should co-exist, the respondents further argued that both platforms have different market to serve, in addition, there are those readers that are not privileged with better internet access, readers coming from areas with poor living conditions and lack of electricity.

Furthermore, respondent D added *“No need because print comes a long way back in history, so the history of print and how news was told, so the history and the transformation connects on to where they come from so the print really needs to survive if it did not strand a chance it wouldn’t be alive now, so it still has a purpose that it is serving out there. Having a presence in both print and online formats strengthens the overall brand identity of a news organization. A strong brand presence can attract a more diverse audience and build trust among different reader demographics.”*

In contrary, Respondent C expressed that *“Not really, but they could save a lot of costs that comes with printing distribution, paper production and go digital maybe can produce little paper print only few newspaper, sometimes I think the media outlets that are printing paper and in denial, maybe it is time they focus on digital and excel there, we really should look at where the income is.”*

The participants concur that the print media industry is undergoing a significant transformation in response to the rise of digital media. However, industry experts argue that print and digital media can coexist and even support one another, rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive. Print newspapers offer unique advantages, such as tactile engagement, credibility, and a loyal readership base. These qualities continue to appeal to certain demographics, particularly older readers who value the tangible experience of holding a newspaper.

They further added that print newspapers often provide in-depth analysis, investigative reporting, and local coverage that may not be easily replicated in the digital sphere. On the other hand, digital media platforms offer immediacy, interactivity, and accessibility, attracting younger audiences and those seeking up-to-the-minute news updates. The

experts support the view that by embracing a multi-platform approach, these print organisations can leverage the strengths of both print and digital media to reach diverse audiences and adapt to evolving consumer preferences. Rather than abandoning print altogether, it is evident that the industry is exploring hybrid models that integrate print and digital elements, fostering synergy between the two mediums and ensuring the sustainability of print journalism in the digital age.

5.5.4 Recommended sustainable strategies from the expert's point of view

❖ Theme 4: Delivering according to reader's preference

The participants were asked to recommend the survival strategies that the newspaper industry can use to remain relevant and sustainable in the digital era. The participants mentioned the newspaper industry should continuously strive to meet the standards and expectations of their readers and partners. They expressed their views as follows:

Respondent A retorted: *“The industry should balance with the times, move with the times, and stay relevant. They should find ways to know what their readers prefer and how to respond to those preferences; there is power in giving your readers the opportunity to talk to talk back, maybe through editorial letters as what is being done already, or even through a suggestion slot or box; knowing how the readers want to see the content will make them feel valuable and always remain loyal.”*

Respondent C further added that *“the newspaper industry should also explore niche or specialised topics that have a dedicated audience.”* The respondent mentioned that print newspapers can make use of data analytics to understand reader preferences and tailor content accordingly. He concluded by adding the view that the publications cannot work in isolation; they should form collaboration with other media outlets, organisations, or businesses to share resources, which can help expand reach and build relationships.

Respondent E also shared the same view that print publications should focus on high-quality content, in-depth journalism that provides value and unique perspectives, and produce something unique that the digital stream cannot do or cannot do better.

The participants recommended the print media sector should take into cognisance the critical importance of tailoring content to meet the preferences and needs of readers to

ensure the sustainability of the industry. Furthermore, recognising the diverse interests and consumption habits of audiences, experts advocate for a reader-centric approach that prioritises delivering content in formats and styles preferred by readers. It is of vital importance to research to understand readers' demographics, interests, and consumption patterns as they change regularly with time.

The industry experts under these themes concluded by highlighting that when the print gains insights into readers' preferences, they can create content that resonates with their target audience, thereby increasing engagement and loyalty. Moreover, the experts stress the need for flexibility and adaptability in response to changing reader preferences and market dynamics. They argue that printing these can assist in enhancing its relevance and sustainability in an increasingly competitive media landscape.

❖ **Theme 5: Encourage subscription and advertising**

In addition to the recommendation for sustainability, the respondent also added that the printed newspapers should work hard to encourage more subscribers and advertisers; they elaborated in this manner:

Respondents B and D recommended that: For print to survive and remain sustainable, they should encourage readers who are unsubscribed to subscribe and have papers delivered to them at their convenience. Respondent B further added that the print industry should conduct research and study their market and deliver quality content and open channels for feedback from readers.

Respondent D concurred and expressed the view: *“For the benefit of encouraging more advertisers and subscribers, the print publication can host events that will be able to generate or raise funds, and from some of those events, they will find potential advertisers.”* He further added, *“Understanding the changing demographics of your readers and catering to their preferences is important because readers do not remain constant but they change according to time”*.

According to the suggestions made by the industry experts regarding sustainability, the study has discovered that there are possible and positive strategies that print media can use to remain sustainable and grow their readership and circulation figures. The participants suggested that subscriptions should be encouraged; the newspapers can still use existing subscribed readers to win unsubscribed readers. They also recommended that reader engagement is important; the newspapers should continuously talk to their readers to make sure that they do not miss what the readers want. With the online edition, readers are able to comment on stories fast, and then with printed newspapers, readers communicate with the newspapers through letters. The participants pointed out that when newspapers are delivered to readers, there can also be a message inserted to them with how they can send comments besides using opinion letters. They further added that partnerships and collaborations with organisations could be of an advantage, so more of it should be encouraged. In highlighting the recommendations that the industry experts presented, another one was forming alliances with other newspapers. Some newspapers do not have good relationships with other newspaper companies, but if they were to form an alliance and share the challenges and strategies that work for them, these can actually help them remain sustainable.

❖ **Theme 6: Upskilling of staff as job-saving strategy**

The participants added the recommendations that can be used by these print publications. According to the respondents, they mentioned that the newspaper industry is facing numerous challenges with the rise of digital platforms and online news sources that have disrupted the traditional newspaper business mode. The participants indicated that many people now consume news through digital channels, impacting print circulation and advertising revenue. The participants were asked to recommend strategies that the newspaper industry can use to reduce job cuts and retrenching of staff. These were the recommendations made by the industry experts:

Respondent A retorted: *“I believe that print will always remain valuable; it comes a long way; however, with the rise of digital technology and the easy access of news, these have caused a significant change in the way people consume news. In noting the digital*

era, print also has advantages that online do not have, which includes precise targeting, so cutting or retrenching is not always the solution; however, they can still train and upskill their journalists to be more advanced; most of the journalists have been in the industry for the longest time and they only know print, so they can still be trained to be more advanced in technology in order to be employable or remain relevant." The participant went on to say that the organisations should implement comprehensive training programs that focus on digital skills, including online content creation, social media management, and digital marketing. Respondent C added that the industry should embrace and use technology to its advantage. Technology should be seen as an effective strategy that can help traditional journalists adapt to the digital environment but still maintain both editions.

Similarly, Respondent B felt that the digital era has come with a lot of opportunities that need a journalist, reporter, or editor to be skilful to adapt survive, and make it. He further voiced out that many organisations are retrenching staff, and it is often seen as a cost-cutting measure to address financial pressures. However, it is crucial for news organisations to balance cost-cutting with maintaining journalistic quality and integrity because sometimes they could be letting go of good staff. He further suggested that they can still restructure their staff and cut on hours or duties; if the staff were coming in every day, some can still work from home if they have resources.

To add to sustainability strategies, Respondent D had a view different from the previous respondents: *"From what I have noted, most newspaper industries have not implemented income-generating strategies such as loyalty programs. They should introduce loyalty programs and view it as a creative and potentially effective strategy to generate income and enhance reader engagement"*. Respondent D further added that the loyalty programs can be designed to reward and retain existing subscribers while also attracting new readers.

5.6 SA FM's MEDIATED CONVERSATION: THE FUTURE OF PRINT (PODCAST 17th JUNE 2024)

This section outlines the discussions of SA FM's Mediated Conversation on the future of print media amid the looming closure of 4 Media24's newspapers, namely: *City Press*,

Rapport, Beeld, and Daily Sun. These discussions were held with the media gurus thus on the 17th of June 2024, thus confirming both the relevance and topicality of this study. The panel was comprised of Professor Anton Harber, Executive Director, Campaign for Free Expression. Reggie Moalusi, SANEF Executive Director, and Nomshado Lubisi Nkosinkulu, Media Monitoring Africa Communications Manager. Critical to note is that only the views of Harber and Moalusi were captured, as they found apposite resonance with the overarching aim and objectives of this study.

Their views are captured below:

Responding to question of extinction of the possible closure of Media24's City Press, Rapport, Beeld and Daily Sun, Harber submitted:

"Print newspapers have been in decline over some time and have lost readers and audiences due to the impact of the Internet. So, they have lost an audience and advertising on the Internet. So, there has been a decline over 20 years. And so, it is not a surprise, although it is a shock because it is now a critical turning point in the future of our industry. I think it has been clear for some time that newspapers would cease to exist in print over time as the Internet was so much cheaper as a way to distribute and avoid the cost of prints. It is accelerated, and things are moving ahead now faster than we expected."

Equally Moalusi remarked:

It is a tough call whether you are an editor for the to see a print edition closing and a print edition that has a long-standing history. I mean, if you look at the history of City Press, if you look at how Daily Sun started, and the reality better is that yes, the print titles will be closing. So, if you speak to one or a few editors, they will tell you that their KPI's have even changed. They have changed to say it is digital first, and that is what you need to prioritise as an editor. Newspapers over the years have been declining; we are all talking digital. However, digital has not come to a point where it can really cover in terms of the revenue that it gets. The most expensive overhead would be salaries and assessment of organisational needs; we will not be happy to see journalists losing jobs.

Reggie's views resonated well with the views of the experts and industry workers, particularly on retrenchment, with few submitting that the move to the digital era has caused enormous changes in the media industry, which have had a severe impact on print media organisations. These include retrenchments and staff downsizing. This is to suggest that with the rise of digital platforms, printing and distribution employment are at risk. These participants also noted that the print industry was impacted not only by the digital era but also by COVID-19 and the unstable economy, which resulted in significant changes in the industry. Most companies had to resort to staff retrenchment, salary cuts, remote work, and upskilling to adapt to the digital changes.

In responding to the question of how editors and printing companies embrace this new era, Harber reflected:

The switch to digital has been underway for some time, so that is not new. The move to digital first has been the pattern for some years, so editors have been trying to move their readers to online and to get them to subscribe online rather than the print product. The printing industry will lose a large amount of its print work. And that is inevitable. Certainly, newspapers will be winding down because there will be other print closures in the coming months. And journalists have been changing the way they work for some years to adapt to the demands of the Internet rather than print. So, this is all underway, and it has opened the way for new products, new innovation, and new approaches, not from the traditional media but from new digital outlets or digital-only outlets. So, one has to keep in mind that it also opens up new and different possibilities, and that shift, that adjustment, has been reshaping journalism for at least a decade now.

The above SA FM's Mediated Conversation and analysis on the future of print media further harnessed the views of the other five (5) print media experts the research interviewed. The same provided a general perspective on the impact of digital on print and possible sustainable strategies that may save the demise of this industry.

From the expert's point of view, print newspapers have been facing a rapid decline. The continuous evolution of digital might have threatened its existence and functioning, but the print industry has a target market that requires newspapers to meet their needs and

expectations. If they can employ more sustainability strategies, they can remain sustainable. The participants mentioned that upskilling of their staff is important for them to remain relevant in the market. The discussions that were made by the participants indicate that print newspapers have a future; that is the reason they have remained sustainable for so long, but some strategies can be put in place to regain the circulation and readership of the past 10 years to now.

5.7 SUMMARY OF SECTION 3

The section provided an analysis of objective two, from the industry expert's point of view, which was to ascertain and recommend sustainability and job-saving strategies for the selected print newspapers. To address the objective, they started by commenting on the current state of the print media industry. The participants highlighted that the rise of the digital era has caused a decline in the readership of print newspapers. They also noted that readers are increasingly turning to digital platforms such as websites, social media, and news apps for their daily news consumption. The convenience, accessibility, and immediacy of digital news sources have led to a decreased interest in traditional print newspapers.

The proliferation of online news sources has intensified competition for readership. They further indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic was a contributing factor, in which the country had implemented lockdowns and movement restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, and these restrictions affected the distribution networks of print newspapers, leading to delays or disruptions in delivery, which caused the industry to lose its targets.

The experts in the industry believe that while print newspapers are facing significant challenges, they still have a future, especially if they adapt to changing consumer preferences, innovate their business models, and capitalise on their unique strengths and value propositions. The participants concur that the print media industry is undergoing a significant transformation in response to the rise of digital media. However, the industry experts argue that print and digital media can coexist and even support one another, rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive. Print newspapers

offer unique advantages, such as tactile engagement, credibility, and a loyal readership base. These qualities continue to appeal to certain demographics, particularly older readers who value the tangible experience of holding a newspaper.

In terms of sustainability strategies, the experts are of the view that the industry should embrace technology and use it as an advantage to reach diverse audiences and adapt to evolving consumer preferences. Rather than abandoning print altogether, it is evident that the industry is exploring hybrid models that integrate print and digital elements, fostering synergy between the two mediums and ensuring the sustainability of print journalism in the digital age.

The participants further recommended that the print media sector should take into cognisance the critical importance of tailoring content to meet the preferences and needs of readers to ensure the sustainability of the industry. According to the suggestions made by the industry experts regarding sustainability, the study has discovered that there are possible and positive strategies that print media can use to remain sustainable and grow their readership and circulation figures. The participants suggested that subscriptions should be encouraged; the newspapers can still use existing subscribed readers to win unsubscribed readers.

They also recommended that reader engagement is important; the newspapers should continuously take to their readers to make sure that they do not miss what the readers want. With the online edition, readers are able to comment on stories fast, and then with printed newspapers, readers communicate with the newspapers through letters. The participants pointed out that when newspapers are delivered to readers, there can also be a message inserted to them with how they can send comments besides using opinion letters. They further added that partnerships and collaborations with organisations could be of an advantage, so more of it should be encouraged. In highlighting the recommendations that the industry experts presented, another one was forming alliances with other newspapers. Some newspapers do not have good relationships with other newspaper companies, but if they were to form an alliance and share the challenges and strategies that work for them, these can actually help them remain sustainable.

If the print industry can employ the recommended strategies, they are likely to remain sustainable and save jobs or find a better way of working with the staff they have. In conclusion, the participants mentioned that upskilling of their staff is important for them to remain relevant in the market. The discussions that were made by the participants indicate that print newspapers actually have a future and can remain sustainable.

SECTION 4

5.8 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM NEWSPAPER REPRESENTATIVES

This section presents and interprets the data collected from the representatives of the selected national newspapers studied through face-to-face interviews. The study is not quantitative but it was relevant to give few statistics of how the selected newspapers are performing at this digital era. The representatives consisted of chief editors/editors and head reporters. The section presents the challenges, the state, and the sustainability strategies of the publications. Six representatives were interviewed. The sub-headings and themes presented in this section contribute to the achievement of the following study objective:

- To interrogate strategies in which the print media sector use to overcome sustainability challenges.

The presentation gives a brief analysis of the circulation of print newspapers and the digital consumption in South Africa. It further presents and examines the impact of the digital era on the print media industry. The researcher noted the importance of giving the background of the selected newspapers and a brief analysis of digital consumption to be able to produce a thorough analysis of the data.

Table 5.3 Circulation figures of the selected newspapers from 2011-2021, which is a period of ten years

The table below provides an overview of the change in the circulation of South African newspapers over the last ten years.

Daily Newspapers			
Newspaper	2011	2021	Change
Daily Sun	381,127	40,164	-89%
The Star	144,113	27,417	-81%
Son	105,486	20,588	-80%
Sowetan	120,207	29,252	-76%
Beeld	74,105	22,160	-70%
The Citizen	70,112	27,492	-61%
Business Day	36,087	15,297	-58%
Die Burger	61,669	29,800	-52%

Weekend Newspapers			
Newspapers	2011	2021	Change
Saturday Star	103,767	9,120	-91%
City Press	149,586	20,920	-86%
Sunday World	150,925	30,100	-80%
Mail & Guardian	48,016	10,265	-79%
Sunday Times	463,156	116,012	-75%
Sunday Tribune	85,131	22,005	-74%
Rapport	241,286	72,184	-70%

The Table above illustrated the circulation figures of the newspapers for a period of ten years, from 2011-2021 as released by the Audit Bureau of Circulations South Africa.

5.8.2 Circulation figures of the selected print newspapers

The circulation figures of the selected newspapers over ten years, 2011-2021 indicates that in 2011, the figures were higher compared to 2021, with *The Star* newspaper at 144.113, *Sowetan* at 120.207, *The Citizen* at 70.112, *City Press* at, 149.586, *Sunday World* at 150.925 and *Mail & Guardian* at 48.016. Looking at 2021 figures, there was a significant decline in circulation, with *the Star* newspaper at 270.417, *Sowetan* at 29.252, *The Citizen* at 27.492, *City Press* at, 20.920, *Sunday World* at 30.100 and *Mail & Guardian* at 10.265. the statistics indicate that the consumption or demand of print newspapers has been declining as digital consumption increased.

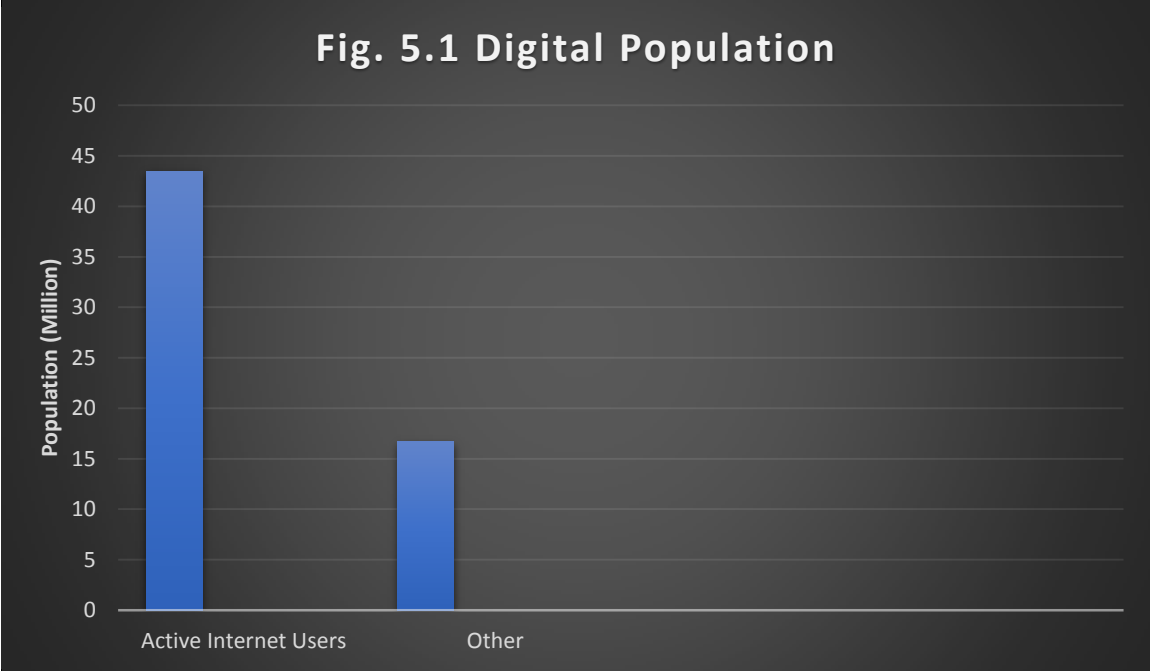
Table 5.4

Selected print newspaper	Circulation figures
The star	24.078
Sowetan	25.801
The citizen	24.558
City press	14.853
Sunday world	19.995
Mail & Guardian	8.163

Table 5.4 indicates figures for 2023, which elaborates on a massive decline from 12 years ago and now. The patterns of consumers are changing; this is due to the digital era and the demand for the internet; it also indicates that the majority of South Africans make use of the internet for news consumption; however, the circulation of print newspapers might have declined or is declining; the figures also indicate that it is in consumption and it should stay sustainable to serve those few people that prefer print newspapers.

5.8.3 Digital media consumption in South Africa as of January 2023

According to the statistics provided by Simon Kemp, 2023 DATAREPORTAL, South Africa had a population of 60.14 million as of January 2023. Figure 4.3.3 below illustrates the digital population in SA as of January 2023. The graph below illustrates that out of 60.14 million South Africans, 43.48 people are active internet users; the focus is on the number of people using the internet.



5.8.4 Lack of internet access

In another interpretation, it is of paramount importance to note that as much as the world is migrating to digital platforms, there are areas in South Africa with no internet access. A report by Epraim Modise, 2023, Data Portal’s Digital 2023: South Africa report, indicates that more than a quarter (28%) of the country’s population still does not have access to the internet. At the start of 2023, South Africa had 43.48 million internet users, an internet penetration rate of 72%. Social media users stood at 25.80 million people, or 42.9% of the total population, which stood at 60 million.

The number of internet users in the country increased by 357,000 (0.8% percent) compared to the same period in 2022. With thus been highlighted, it is important to note the need for print newspapers in South Africa.

5.8.5 The impact of digital migration on the South African print media industry

The decline in newspaper readership and the migration online is not new, but the pandemic has accelerated it. Many die-hard print fans stopped buying newspapers when the pandemic hit and looked for up-to-the-minute news online. The sluggish economy also impacted advertising revenue as companies looked for the most

affordable ways to reach users. With print publications' declining readership and the higher return on investment online advertising offers, marketing budgets flowing to magazines and newspapers plummeted. It forced many South African magazines to close down, and newspapers are now struggling to make ends meet. Although inevitable, the migration from print to online severely impacted the media industry.

Cheaper and more effective online advertising is great for companies looking to reach readers, but media companies are paying the price for this change. Money that would have previously gone to newspapers is now going to Google and Facebook, and only a small part goes to online publishers. There is, therefore, less money to invest in journalism, especially investigative journalism, which is expensive and resource-intensive.

Many people in the newspaper business chain, including editors, designers, printers, newspaper sellers, and delivery people, are losing their jobs. The good news is that online publications have started to offer subscription services to fund their endeavours. Netwerk24 increased its paywall subscription by 13% over the last year to 80,900, while News24 signed up 41,000 subscribers since it implemented a paywall in August 2020.

5.8.6 Profile of the selected newspaper's officials

For the purpose of the study, the newspaper representatives were selected to provide valuable insights into the challenges and sustainability strategies they are employing to adapt to changing media landscapes. It has therefore allowed better understanding and first-hand understanding of the dynamics at play in the newspaper industry during this digital era.

I. The position occupied by each respondent in the media companies

Table 5.5: Position held by Respondent representing the selected newspapers		
Participant	Publication industry	Position
A	The star	Editor print edition

B	Sowetan	Editor
C	The citizen	Head reporter Print
D	City press	Editor print and digital editions
E	Sunday world	Acting editor, Digital
F	Mail & Guardian	Chief editor digital and print content

The following sub-section presents the themes identified about the study objective, which was:

5.8.7 Interrogating strategies in which the print media sector use to overcome sustainability challenges

❖ Theme1: Decline in circulation of newspapers

The participants were asked to give their views on the current state of the newspaper, so they mentioned that the circulation, distribution, and readership have declined. They also mentioned that the digital era has affected print a lot, but it is not the only factor; other contributing factors include the behavioural patterns of the readers, the economy, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused the newspapers to lose readers and advertisers, and they were unable to win some of them back. The participants expressed their views in this way:

Respondent B expressed that the current state of the print is a concern compared to 1- to 20 years back when the paper used to make a lot of money. He further explained, *“If you can check the circulation figures from as far back as 10 years ago, you will see that we were making triple, or rather double, what we are making now. Similarly, respondents C and D mentioned that the circulation is definitely in decline due to the readers shifting from print to online; however, they acknowledged that there is a future for print. Respondent D added, “Traditional newspaper sales have been taking a knock over the years, and we know how the economy has also been struggling; buying newspapers is becoming less of a priority for most people right now. They are mostly concerned about buying food for their families and forth.”*

On a different perspective in terms of advertising, Respondent E retorted, *“In terms of advertising revenue, the paper is making money; however, different from the past ten years, the paper was making a lot of money, about billions of Rands from advertising revenue, but now it is half of that amount. At this current state, advertising has dropped, which also results in staff retrenching. These are some of the consequences of the digital age that has visited the newspaper space. So, the only solution is either you adapt or perish. But even that adaptation cannot save jobs; it can only sustain you in terms of business so that you do not collapse entirely; you will be making less money but survive through adaptation and slowly transitioning into the digital age, which I believe the next five years will wipe out print newspapers.”*

Similarly, respondent F agrees that the newspaper is not doing well compared to the past ten years; however, in a different view explained that the paper is still making money. He expatiated, *“We still have a profitable situation; we are not losing, we are not sinking from a commercial perspective, and the paper product is still making money. There are legacy reasons, in the sense that a lot of advertisers still prefer print for promoting their products. When they want to advertise, they turn to print products because it still has a perception of a higher value than a digital product. Even though our digital product is many times larger than the print product from an audience’s perspective, the paper is still going well enough that we are continuing with it. We still distribute a lot around the country.”*

Respondent A concurred with respondents B, C, and E that circulation has declined, but argued “. She further added, *“We are living in an era of digital media, but there is still a market for newspapers. When I started in the media industry, there was a quote that said, “The print newspapers are a dying breed,” and this was in 2002. Over 20 years later, newspapers are still relevant. The respondent added that it is undeniable that most people are shifting to online platforms, but the advantage of a newspaper is that one can find an in-depth analysis of a news story. She concluded by saying that as much as the newspaper circulation has dropped, there is still a print market.*

In summary, the respondents mentioned that the current state of the print newspaper industry indicates a decline in circulation. They further highlighted that the rise and

demand of digital news platforms has caused a shake in the print industry, in which most young audiences are shifting to online content. One of the participants acknowledged that the digital era has affected the print industry; however, it is not the only factor that has put the newspapers in the state that they are in now; other factors such as the economy and load shedding are causing a huge impact for the print newspapers. With that being said, the state of the print newspaper in this digital era is worrying.

❖ **Theme 2: Preference for print in digital era**

When asked to elaborate on reasons for printing in the digital era, respondents highlighted their reason, but the majority indicated that there is a demand for tangible newspapers. This is how the respondents conveyed their comments:

All respondents from A-F indicated that some readers prefer printed newspapers over digital and some that prefer both. However, the preference is due to different reasons. Respondents B, C, and F mentioned that their research revealed that the older demographics, in particular, are more accustomed to reading print newspapers and resist transitioning to digital platforms. In addition, respondent F asserted, *“Financially and commercially speaking, the Mail & Guardian is still a profitable print publication.”*

Respondent D further added, *“Print is also loved by advertisers, which in turn generates income. Most of our advertisers mentioned that printed newspapers have a long-standing reputation for credibility and trustworthiness.”*

Moreover, Respondent A stated that print is going through a tough economic time where there is a high rate of unemployment in South Africa; the newspapers are distributed to areas that are poverty-stricken with lots of informal settlements. The respondent went on to mention that most of their readers in informal settlements cannot afford basic foodstuffs and they depend on social grants and print media has proven to be affordable to those people.

Similarly, Respondent E retorted, *“Not everyone has access to digital devices or the internet. In certain regions that we are distributing, there is a significant portion of the population without reliable internet access or digital literacy skills. Most people in such*

areas cannot use technology and they lack smart phones, and some do not see any need for smartphones because they will not be able to access the internet; it is either the network is poor or they do not have money to buy data at all; hence, we are printing newspapers to ensure that information reaches a broader audience”.

According to the respondents, there remains a notable cohort of individuals who express a distinct preference for print newspapers over their digital sources of news. Despite the increasing prevalence of digital media consumption, particularly among younger generations, there appears to be an elderly demographic that continues to value the tactile experience and familiarity offered by traditional print publications. This sentiment highlights the enduring appeal of physical newspapers, therefore suggesting that print newspapers should not cease but remain sustainable to serve that market.

❖ Theme 3: Drop in advertising revenue as the main source of income

It is evident that in this digital era, the print media industry is faced with challenges. The participants were asked to highlight the challenges that are faced by this print industry. The participants highlighted this:

Respondents A, B, and C highlighted that the newspapers mostly rely on advertising to generate income for sustainability. In this digital era, there is a rise in the shift from print to digital platforms, which has caused advertising revenue to drop. To add to the challenges, respondent B mentioned that when COVID-19 hit the country, the majority of the media industry took a knock, and the revenue dropped.

Respondent E added, *“The challenge that we are faced with right now is a decline in revenue, distribution, circulation, and readership. The paper has lost readers, and the circulation of print newspapers has been declining every year, but the digital newspaper is gaining readers; this means that people are gradually shifting from print interest to digital interest. As a newspaper industry, we are faced with the pressure of having to work towards maintaining trust and credibility in an era where misinformation is spreading rapidly”.*

Furthermore, respondent F highlighted that there is a challenge in keeping the costs for distributing the printed product down, while at the same time, there is a need for making a profit.

It is important to note that previously some of the respondents highlighted that advertisers prefer advertising in printed newspapers; it is evident that with the rise of the internet, social media, and digital advertising platforms, advertisers are increasingly allocating their budgets towards online channels. Readership patterns have changed significantly over the years, with more people consuming news and information online rather than through traditional print newspapers. As a result, advertisers are following their target audience to digital platforms where they spend the majority of their time.

The participants also highlighted that the main source of income is advertising, where newspapers sell ad space to businesses and organisations looking to reach their audience. They also mentioned that they offer subscription packages to readers who want regular access to their content for a fee, either for physical copies delivered to their doorstep or for digital access to the newspaper's online content. Respondent F expressed, "Subscription revenue is crucial for newspapers, as it provides a steady stream of income." In addition, respondent D stated that some readers prefer to purchase newspapers on a per-issue basis rather than subscribing, and these sales contribute to the newspaper's overall income.

❖ **Emerging Theme 4: Retrenchment**

In addition to the challenges faced by the print industry, the participants expressed that it is hard to say that the jobs of the printing staff are safe given the rise of digital platforms. They explained that it is quite challenging in this digital era; the industry is either retrenching or cutting down salaries. They expressed their sentiments in this way:

Respondent A stated that the industry is retrenching people, and the economy is another contributing factor to the difficulties that the newspaper houses are facing. The respondent added that the revenue that comes into the organisation is less than what the newspaper is spending on salaries every month, and at the end of the day, the company needs to remain sustainable. The respondent alluded, *"What is currently happening now in our company is that we are letting people go, and it is sad to see*

people go—skilled people for that matter. People who have experience, people who know, but unfortunately it has to be done.”

Respondent D explained that the company had to let many people go when the COVID-19 pandemic broke. The respondent further added that those working in print have to sell stories online, to blend the two together in order to keep the paper and paper, find investors online, and further introduce paywalls. With paywalls, one is required to pay before they can actually read the story, and that is how the company tries to keep their jobs.

Furthermore, Respondent B stated, *“It is without a doubt that the transition to the digital era has indeed brought about significant changes in the media industry, impacting traditional print media companies. There has been retrenchment and downsizing of staff since 2019, and the company had to let many people go. The fourth industry revolution has brought about many challenges. I mean, if there are machines that can perform certain tasks, instead of four people, you will need one to operate that machine. It is sad to see people go, but for us to remain sustainable, it is something that has to be done.”*

“In response to financial challenges, we had implemented cost-cutting measures to maintain profitability. This resulted in reducing staff and consolidating departments; most of our staff are working from home; this has reduced the travelling expenses and unnecessary use of office equipment, and it has been profitable a lot. This also goes for staff; they should always try by all means to remain employable; some have their own media companies, and we are proud of that; it is a good thing; we do not see it as a competition but growth”, Respondent E alluded.”

The print was not only affected by the digital era but also by COVID-19 and the unstable economy, which has caused a tremendous change in the industry. Most companies had to resort to retrenchment of staff, cutting down on salaries, working remotely, and upskilling staff to adapt to digital changes.

❖ Theme 5: Coexistence of print and digital newspapers

The participants were asked to give a prediction of the future of print newspapers in five to ten years to come. They proved the theory of mediamorphosis, which emphasises that both media can exist without diminishing the other. The respondents highlighted that most printing industries have gone digital and they are having both online and printed newspapers, in which they further concurred that having both platforms is sustainable. They expressed their views in this way:

In presenting the responses provided, all the respondents, A to F, predicted that printed newspapers will still be in existence for many years to come. They went on to say that there will always be a market for print. Respondent A raised the view that for print to continue existing, the printing industries should always stay in touch with their markets.

In addition to the prediction, Respondent D retorted, *“As much as the readership or circulation has declined, people believe in print more than online news platforms; newspapers carry a sense of credibility, where it is more trusted or more believable than online news platforms. Print newspapers prioritise quality journalism, fact-checking, and in-depth reporting, and that helps build and maintain trust with the audience. This is an era of misinformation; social media can speculate and spread fake news about a celebrity’s death, but the minute people turn on newspapers, whether online or print, if they do not find that story, they know that it is fake news. Credible sources of news are essential, and newspapers have the potential to fulfil this role; it will always have space within the digital era.”*

Moreover, respondent F added that print newspapers serve as historical records. Respondent F claimed that there is a sentimental value that newspapers hold and that many newspapers are archived in libraries and digital repositories. He explained that the historical significance of newspapers can contribute to their continued relevance and value. However, he pointed out that it is essential to acknowledge that the future of newspapers is not guaranteed, and success depends on the ability of newspapers to adapt, innovate, and meet the changing needs of their audience. Respondent C concurred with Respondent F saying that the print industry is likely to continue evolving

and that newspapers that embrace digital transformation, maintain journalistic integrity, and diversify revenue streams have a better chance of navigating the challenges and finding a sustainable future. Participant C boldly said that there is a future for print newspapers.

The respondents hold the view that both print newspapers and digital formats should coexist harmoniously within the media landscape. Recognising the distinct preferences and habits of various demographics, they emphasise the importance of maintaining diversity in media consumption options. While acknowledging the undeniable shift towards digital platforms in recent years, they advocate for the preservation of print newspapers as an essential component of media plurality. By fostering coexistence rather than competition between print and digital formats, the respondents believe that the media industry can better serve the diverse needs and preferences of its audience, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity across different platforms.

❖ **Emerging theme 6: Embrace the digital era**

In predicting the future of print, some of the respondents mentioned that print can remain sustainable and coexist with digital platforms if print companies embrace the digital era. They explained:

“The best way to achieve sustainability in years to come is to embrace the digital era. We should use it as an advantage to better the paper and to gain more subscriptions. We have digital papers, so it is best to use that as an advantage already. It is not only about print publication but both; when one is doing very well, the other does not have to suffer or be neglected; rather, embrace both. There is something that we do not do that I have seen most non-media companies doing: fundraising through events. We should organise events, conferences, or webinars to create additional revenue streams through ticket sales, sponsorships, or partnerships, and sometimes we have to find ways on how to attract subscribers or companies that can advertise with us”.

Similarly, respondents C and D added that print companies should always embrace and have a digital solution; they explained that journalism has been in a shrinking space for some time and it is always going to be difficult to keep a job as a journalist or reporter, and respondent E agreed with respondents C and D with a view that the trick is to

embrace the tools that might be a threat to your job, thus embracing artificial intelligence and equipping yourself with such skills. The digital era should not be seen as a threat but rather be embraced and used as an opportunity that can better the industry. Journalism is still valued, and its standard should be maintained. As times are shifting and changing, print staff should also upskill themselves to fit in the digital era. The respondents hold a strong belief that print newspapers should embrace digital technologies and leverage them to their advantage. They argue that rather than resisting digital advancements, print publications should adapt and integrate digital elements into their offerings. By doing so, print newspapers can enhance their reach, engagement, and relevance in an increasingly digital-centric environment. This approach allows traditional print media to tap into the vast potential of digital platforms for content distribution, audience interaction, and revenue generation. Moreover, by embracing digital innovation, print newspapers can evolve their business models and create new opportunities for growth and sustainability without having to kill print altogether.

5.9 SUMMARY OF SECTION 3

In conclusion, the officials of the selected print newspapers acknowledged that there is a decline in the circulation of print newspapers in this digital era. They hold the view that print will continue to exist since there is a market that prefers print and they hold the view that, that market will always be there. While acknowledging the undeniable decline of print newspapers in the face of the digital era, it is imperative to recognise that their demise is not inevitable. Despite the challenges posed by shifting consumer preferences and technological advancements, print newspapers possess enduring value and significance. They continue to serve as vital sources of credible journalism, community engagement, and public discourse. As such, while print newspapers may experience a decrease in circulation and advertising revenue, their intrinsic role in society ensures their persistence.

In addition, print newspapers must adopt innovative strategies to ensure their survival and sustainability in the digital age. This entails embracing digital technologies to enhance their content delivery, audience engagement, and revenue generation. By

diversifying their revenue streams through subscription models and advertising. Furthermore, print newspapers can mitigate financial pressures and secure a more stable future. By embracing change, fostering innovation, and staying true to their journalistic mission, print newspapers can navigate the challenges of the digital era and continue to thrive as vital pillars of the media industry.

5.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter addressed the analysis and interpretation of data collected through interviews. The chapter was divided into three sections; data was sourced from the categories of respondents, namely: readers, industry experts, and newspaper representatives. Themes were identified about the objectives of the study, while extracts drawn from the data were identified and also discussed as themes. Data in this chapter were analysed through thematic analysis. The chapter concludes with a podcast of a mediated conversation with media gurus that confirms the shutdown of some print companies in South Africa due to the digital era.

CHAPTER 6

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study attempted to examine the sustainability of print newspapers in this digital era. The researcher employed scientific methods to present reliable findings that are required to add to the current body of knowledge. This chapter, therefore, summarises the results of the study and discourse of the objectives; it also presents the theoretical analysis of the findings.

The findings encapsulate the results of this study as analysed and interpreted in Chapter 5. Findings are summarised underneath:

6.2.THE VALUE OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS TO READERS

6.2.1. Credibility and quality

The findings revealed that the readers value print newspapers for their credibility and quality; newspapers can be more trusted than just reading any news from the internet; they are seen as credible sources of news. The quality of how news is reported indicates journalism skills; it was also revealed that newspapers are reader-friendly and are not distractive, unlike reading news from online newspapers or any online platforms whereby one will be distracted by pop-up advertisements. For much older demographics, the print newspaper is viewed as a trusted source of news, as they believe that online can be manipulated or deliver fake news for newspapers to come and correct.

6.2.2 Familial

The findings revealed that the readers value print newspapers for familial reasons, which elaborates that the preference and passion for newspapers is something that runs in the family; it has been a practice that has been from generation to generation. The findings revealed that for readers to shift from print to digital completely would be a betrayal of a family tradition. The print newspaper has the advantage of being easily passed on from one person to the next, so the findings further revealed that sharing the paper as a family can bring families together. The tradition that is practiced by such families has given them the advantage that the older ones teach their children to read newspapers from an early age. It was further established that the practice or routine connects families even when they are a distance away from each other.

6.2.3 Affordability and convenience

The study results established that most readers find newspapers to be reliably cheaper than accessing news on digital platforms. With digital platforms, one needs to maintain the device, one needs to have internet access, and one needs to always have data and an exceptionally good connection, so with newspapers, the findings indicated that the readers only have to spend a few cents to get a paper. The study further revealed that the subscriptions that are offered by print newspapers are cheaper, and it allows most of them to receive the newspaper at their convenience even when they do not have

money at that time simply because they are subscribed. The convenience of it allows the readers to receive the paper at their convenient spot of delivery. The study revealed that print is a good advantage for those staying in rural areas because they struggled with the internet, and given their poor living conditions, they would not afford the standard of having smartphones and data to access news online, but going to Spaza shops is cheaper and more convenient for them. The study further revealed that for those in rural areas, there are times when they are given the newspapers for free, and that helps a lot because the money that they were supposed to buy the newspaper can be used for food.

Another reason for the value of newspapers in terms of affordability is that the study found that most advertisers prefer print newspapers as they are cheaper compared to digital formats. Advertising in newspapers costs the advertisers less, and it was also revealed that advertisers can target their audience way better. While advertising in print helps sustain newspapers, it also benefits companies to save on advertising, so it is a win-win for both.

6.2.4 Recycling benefit

It is quite interesting for the study to discover that not only can newspapers keep the readers informed, but they can be recycled and reused for other purposes after reading. The study discovered that some businesswomen and men value printing newspapers for their ability to be used for other tasks, such as covering food and other items when selling to customers. Some of the readers value the paper for its ability to help them with domestic chores at home, so it was revealed that not only do the newspapers keep them informed, but they also get double the benefit. The findings of the study indicated that print newspapers can be helpful in many ways; they can be collected and kept for them to be recycled and produce paper. The recycling process involves collecting used newspapers, breaking them down into pulp and then using that pulp to create new paper products. By choosing to recycle newspapers, individuals and communities can play a role in reducing the demand for fresh raw materials, such as trees and decreasing the environmental impact associated with paper production.

6.2.5 Better layout and content

The study discovered that newspapers are valued for their layout, the information on newspapers is well organised and structured, it is easy for the reader to locate stories by reading the headings, and the findings also indicate that the readers can easily follow the story and can choose to skip some because of the ability and skills that are used in presenting the stories in an organised and logical manner and according to their level of importance. The findings further revealed that the layout allows readers to cut out and save articles that they preferred best. It was revealed that the bold and prominent headlines catch the reader's attention and convey the main points of an article. It is important to note that the effective combination of the elements used in designing newspapers ensures that newspapers not only convey information accurately but also engage and retain the interest of their readers through thoughtful design.

6.2.6 Educational and upskills an individual

The study findings revealed that some of the respondents, who are also journalism lecturers, find tangible newspapers very convenient to use during lessons. Newspapers serve as an educational tool; they give the student a clear picture of the layout. Newspapers provide tangible, real-world examples of journalistic writing, reporting, and editing. Students can analyse articles to understand different writing styles, interview techniques, and news presentations. One of the respondents indicated that print newspapers allow them to upgrade their skills in terms of writing for journalism because they can easily collect articles and follow the style of their favourite reporters' writes. The study findings also indicated that the layout and design of newspapers offer practical examples of how visual elements contribute to storytelling. Students can learn about the importance of graphics, photos, and page design in conveying information effectively. It further highlighted that newspapers can be used as a good tool to teach children to read; they can easily follow on than reading online where there are distractions such as pop-up messages. News articles often present information clearly and concisely, helping students develop reading comprehension skills. Students can practice summarising key points, identifying main ideas, and extracting relevant information.

However, it is important to note that some of the respondents do not use newspapers for educational purposes, but they still perceive them as educational and were of the view that paper has a good advantage of helping people to read better.

6.3 CURRENT STATE OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS

6.3.1 Decline circulation and readership

The study revealed that it is evident that the circulation of print newspapers has gone down drastically due to the rise in the digital era. The new media has brought challenges in the print media landscape; there is a shift of consumer preference from traditional media to digital media. The study also discovered that the majority of people find it easy to get news from the internet; you can access news on the go. The findings further revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic did not do justice at all; the pandemic had a significant impact on the newspaper industry, affecting both print and digital publications. The media experts explained that with widespread lockdowns, businesses faced economic challenges, leading to a decline in advertising budgets. As a result, many newspapers experienced a substantial drop in print advertising revenue, which is traditionally a crucial source of income for them. It is without doubt that the lockdowns and restrictions on movement affected physical distribution channels, leading to a decline in print newspaper circulation. One of the respondents mentioned that that is where the shift took place for many consumers; many people shifted to digital news consumption during this period, accelerating an existing trend toward online platforms. Therefore, the study further revealed that with declining revenues, many newspapers faced financial strain. Some had to implement cost-cutting measures, including layoffs and salary reductions, impacting the workforce within the industry.

6.4 PREDICTION ON THE FUTURE OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS

6.4.1 Coexistence of print in the digital era

The findings of the study discovered that as much as there is a decline in the print media industry, there is a future; print newspapers can exist given the rise in the digital era. The study also highlighted that the print industry needs to keep up and continue excelling to remain relevant and sustainable in the digital era. To note what was

discovered, one of the participants, however, indicated the future of print newspapers is questionable and posed a rhetorical question that asked if the print is fit enough to sustain for longer. In terms of prediction of the future of newspapers, the study revealed that instead of print newspapers dying or feeling pressure from online sources, they should embrace digital platforms and take it as an advantage to increase sales, advertising revenues, and subscriptions that can sustain print or the industry as a whole. The study revealed that most print newspapers have gone digital; they have both online and print publications, which is a good option for sustainability. newspapers cannot die completely, but both can exist and function at the same time. The findings further revealed that the future of print has been predicted as none existing a long time ago, but now in this current digital era, newspapers are there, therefore there is a future in print ten years from now, in 2023.

There is a strategy that was used by one of the studied newspapers, which is to merge smaller newspapers with bigger publications, and the respondent mentioned that it was one of the best decisions they ever had to make.

6.5 CHALLENGES FACED BY THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

6.5.1 Circulation decline

According to the statistics presented in Figure 4.6, the circulation figures of the selected newspapers indicate a decline for a period of ten years from 2015 to 2022. It is evident that the print has not been doing well, and there is a high number of internet users. The study discovered that not only was the newspaper industry affected by the digital era, but they were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and other economic factors. The participants indicated that the economy is a factor whereby food, petrol, and other essentials are expensive, so buying newspapers became less of a priority for some. The COVID-19 lockdown prevented newspapers from being distributed or circulated, and it caused readers to forget about print and focus on online news platforms. The study further revealed that some shops stopped buying copies of newspapers because they are not selling in their area, so this has affected the circulation figures.

6.5.2 Decline in Print Readership

The study confirmed that there is a decline in print readership; the rise of online news platforms has contributed a lot to the decline in print readership. Most readers who used to read newspapers are no longer reading their news from print but from online sources. The study further revealed that as times change, the reader is changing as well, so their preferences might not stay the same. Given some of the reasons certain readers prefer paper over online, such as familial or nostalgia, the growth and development of the readers can cause such reasons to change.

6.5.3 Drop in advertising revenue

The study findings revealed that the newspaper industry is faced with an advertising revenue drop; the newspapers generate income through advertising and other means, but through advertising. There has been a decline in advertising revenue for print, whereby companies are shifting to platforms such as social media. Advertisers are increasingly allocating their budgets to digital platforms. This shift that is done by companies is driven by the desire to reach a larger and more targeted audience in the digital space. Digital platforms offer highly targeted advertising solutions and a vast audience, drawing advertisers away from traditional newspapers. The decline in advertising revenue causes a decline in income. The study elaborates that for most newspapers, the lockdown restrictions affected the industry a lot, and it is where print lost most audiences.

6.5.4 Pressure from online platforms

The study revealed that newspapers are struggling from online pressure; newspapers, both print and online, have to work tirelessly to maintain the standard that has been keeping people on print. The shift to online news consumption has disrupted traditional print newspaper models. Newspapers must adapt to new digital formats and platforms to remain relevant and always strive towards maintaining standards with the existence of the digital era. Some of the newspaper industries see digital platforms as competition that they should beat, so this increases pressure on newspapers.

6.5.5 Production and distribution costs

It was discovered from the study findings that the costs associated with printing and distributing physical newspapers, including paper, ink, and delivery, can be high. As circulation decreases, the costs become more challenging to manage. Some of the newspapers opted to produce fewer copies than usual. The study further revealed that some of the retail outlets reduced the number of copies because the newspapers stay longer at the shops without being bought, which therefore indicates that consumers are not buying paper as they used to.

6.5.6 Changing consumer habits

It is important to note the change in consumer preferences; the findings suggest that the majority of consumers have shifted towards digital news consumption, impacting the demand for print newspapers. It also revealed that most younger generations, in particular, are more inclined to access news through digital devices, and when advertisers want to reach young people, they go to social media platforms because they know that is where their target market is, hence the decline in advertising revenue. Some of the participants indicated that it is not easy to persuade people to stay on print given the rise in the digital era. The world is moving so fast, and every time something new is introduced in the market, consumers forget about the old and turn to the new. This is an example of a change in habits of consumers.

6.5.7 Economic downturns

The research also found that the economy has a great impact on the newspaper industry. During economic downturns, businesses often cut advertising budgets, affecting print newspapers' ability to generate revenue. This factor affects not only advertising revenues but copy sales as well. When the economy is unstable, businesses and people also have to watch how they spend their money or rather redirect their budget to something else. The study further revealed that sometimes the newspapers are forced into keeping the price of the copy the same because readers might not purchase, but at the same time the industry has to manage throughout the production costs with increased costs.

6.6 STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

6.6.1 Delivering Preferred Content

The study revealed that for newspapers to remain sustainable and exist for ten years to come, they need to produce credible content. The participants indicated that it is important for the industry to know their readers and try by all means to deliver according to their expectations. When the newspapers deliver according to readers' preferences, it allows for a more personalised experience. Readers are more likely to engage with content that aligns with their interests, increasing overall satisfaction. The findings recommended that delivering content that readers find relevant and interesting can help newspapers to potentially attract and retain a larger audience and an increased readership. It should be noted that striking a balance between delivering content based on preferences and maintaining a diverse range of news is crucial.

The study found out that the print industry will continue printing because of the readers that prefer paper over digital content. The newspapers will not completely print newspapers; however, they will continue printing to serve those preferences. The print will always have a market; some companies prefer advertising on newspapers to other platforms, or rather on more than one platform. The study further revealed that most older demographics prefer print, and it would be an injustice for print to die and be left with online newspapers or other digitals, even though it meant printing fewer copies just to serve those fewer people.

6.6.2 Encouraging subscriptions and advertising

The study has discovered that for newspapers to be sustainable, subscriptions should be encouraged by all means, and there should be strategies made to attract advertisers and make them stay. For subscribers to encourage new subscribers, the newspapers should offer high-quality, exclusive, and relevant content that readers cannot easily find elsewhere. The study further revealed that the industry should build strong relationships with the companies advertising with them so that they can also be able to refer other companies. One respondent highlighted that knowing readers' preferences enables newspapers to provide targeted advertisements, which can be more effective for advertisers and less intrusive for readers.

6.6.3 Collaboration and Partnerships

The findings suggested that these newspapers should collaborate with other newspapers or media outlets to share resources and reduce some of the costs. Most recommended that working in isolation does not always help, but if the industry can also partner with local businesses or environmental organisations, they can establish more sustainability initiatives. When newspapers come together with other industries and share the challenges they come across and how they deal with those challenges, it could help to sustain the industry.

6.6.4 Uphold and maintain credibility standards

The study established that when newspapers prioritise thorough fact-checking processes to ensure the accuracy of information before publication, they maintain the standards that have made people always stay and prefer newspapers over other sources of news. This means establishing a culture that values accuracy and holds journalists accountable for factual errors. It has been revealed by the study that newspapers are the most credible sources of news that adhere to a strong code of ethics that includes principles like fairness, impartiality, and accountability.

6.7 JOB SAVING STRATEGIES

6.7.1 Upskilling of print staff

The respondents recommended that the print newspaper should train staff to be more skilled in terms of digital devices. The study established that the digital era is here and it should be embraced because, when embraced, it can help sustain print. The more newspapers strengthen both their online and paper formats, the more newspapers will be sustainable from both angles. The study further revealed that when newspapers have more income from subscriptions and advertising or sales, they are likely to keep more staff, so this also indicated that the staff need to push more subscribers and advertisers as well as push more sales.

6.8 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

6.8.1 The mediamorphosis theory

The mediamorphosis theory maintains that any strategies of new media can assist in improving traditional media, such as printed newspapers, rather than causing their demise. From this reasoning, print media should not disappear because of the digital age because it has its benefits over digital media and has its functions. New media is a result of old media; however, old media should never go away; instead, it develops into something that people may find equally appealing to own or use. Mohammed (2021) maintained that new media do not develop unexpectedly and independently but rather gradually as a result of the transformation of traditional media.

Mohamed presented the five principles behind the theory:

- Coexistence and variations of media forms

According to the findings of the study, print media and digital media can coexist; most of the respondents highlighted that as much as circulation or readership is declining, they do not see any reason print should stop existing, but rather they see sustainability in the existence of both platforms.

- Metamorphosis of old media forms to new media forms

The findings revealed that all the selected newspapers have a new form of media in which print newspapers have established a significant online presence by creating digital versions of their publications. They often maintain websites and mobile applications to reach a wider audience beyond their traditional print readership. It was also highlighted that digital newspapers go beyond the traditional text-based format by incorporating multimedia elements such as images, videos, interactive graphics, and audio. This enhances the overall reader experience and caters to the preferences of digital audiences. The metamorphosis of print newspapers to digital is an ongoing process, and media organisations continue to navigate this evolution to remain relevant in a rapidly changing media landscape.

- Transmission of prevailing qualities in media

The findings of the study revealed that when newspapers often transmit prevailing qualities by focusing on specific themes or topics that are currently popular or relevant, they gain subscribers, and it assists them in staying relevant and sustainable. This includes prevailing narrative styles and storytelling techniques that are communicated across media platforms. This involves approaches to storytelling, the use of visual elements, and narrative structures, and the adoption of storytelling trends that resonate with audiences.

- Subsistence of media forms

The study found that the survival of media forms often depends on their ability to adapt to emerging technologies. Print newspapers have faced challenges with the rise of digital media. The ability to embrace new technologies, such as online publishing and social media, is critical for subsistence.

- Opportunity and needs for implementing new media

Implementing new media for print not only assists the industry but has developed the staff working in print; most were able to start their own news agencies after they had been retrenched. Implementing new media presents a range of opportunities for enhanced communication, engagement, and innovation while also addressing the evolving needs of a digital society.

In conclusion, the mediamorphosis theory has proved that the two media, print and digital, can coexist.

6.8.2 Niche theory of the media

This theory highlighted how media organisations often target specific demographic groups or interest areas to attract and retain their audience rather than attempting to appeal to a broad and generalised audience. This theory helps in achieving the main aim of this study, which speaks of sustainability. The elements of niche theory and how they can be used as sustainability strategy

6.8.2.1 Niche superiority

Niche superiority in newspapers refers to the strategic advantage that comes from adopting a niche-focused approach. When print adopts a niche-focused approach, it identifies the area of power and the most effective strategy that can attract more readers and more companies to advertise with them. Superiority is about using the strongest link that makes print stand out from other media outlets. When newspapers have found their greatest area of strength, they have the potential to build a loyal readership base because they cater to a specific audience segment. Readers who identify strongly with the niche content are more likely to become regular subscribers, contributing to long-term sustainability.

In a crowded media landscape, where there is an abundance of information available through various channels, adopting a niche strategy helps print newspapers stand out. It provides a unique selling proposition that can attract a specific audience that may be underserved by broader publications.

6.8.2.2 Niche breadth

Niche breadth refers to the range or diversity of topics, themes, or audience characteristics that a particular media outlet covers or targets. A media outlet with a broad niche covers a wide range of subjects or appeals to a diverse audience, while a media outlet with a narrow niche focuses on a specific area or caters to a more specialised audience. When print has identified where their readers are, they adopt a niche approach that helps them to better understand the specific preferences, interests, and needs of their target audience. This allows them to create content that resonates more effectively with readers. Achieving niche breadth allows newspapers to tailor their content to the specific interests and preferences of their audience. This customisation allows for a more focused and relevant reading experience, increasing the likelihood of reader satisfaction.

6.8.2.3 Niche overlaps

Occur when two or more media outlets share similarities in their content focus or target audience. These overlaps can be partial or complete, and they highlight areas of

competition or similarities in the content offered by different media sources. This is achieved when newspapers do not kill print because of digital sources of information but use it to an advantage to cater for all audiences. Niche overlaps in newspapers can attract advertisers looking to reach a particular demographic or market segment because the newspapers would have identified the exact target groups. Advertisers are often willing to pay a premium to place their ads in media outlets that have a well-defined and engaged audience, contributing to increased advertising revenue. The niche theory explains emphasis that while mass-market newspapers may struggle with declining readership, niche newspapers can maintain their viability by serving a dedicated audience. This can provide a more stable foundation for the publication's long-term success.

Therefore, the niche theory of the media highlights that it is important for print newspapers to carefully research and define their niche, ensuring that it aligns with market demands and has the potential for sustained growth. Successful implementation requires a clear understanding of the target audience and a commitment to delivering high-quality, relevant content.

6.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The findings suggest that journalists should also be trained on ethical reporting practices and regularly review and update ethical guidelines. By prioritising credibility and embracing these strategies, newspapers can strengthen their relationship with readers, differentiate themselves from less reliable sources and remain influential.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter follows on the previous two chapters that presented, analysed, interpreted and discussed the research findings. It provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations for further research in this area. The study set out to interrogate the sustainability of print newspapers in this digital age. It further elucidates the contribution of the study and also provides significant strategies that can be used by print industries to remain sustainable and relevant over centuries. This chapter starts by revisiting the objectives of the study by giving a brief summary of the findings.

7.2 REVISITING THE OBJECTIVES

The first objective of the study highlighted the value of print newspapers, it noted the challenges that digital news platforms have posed for print newspaper users. The second objective of this study discusses the state of print newspapers amid the digital era from the industry experts' point of view. It further gives brief discussions on the possible strategies that can be used by the print to remain sustainable. It also points out the challenges that the newspapers are facing and recommends sustainability strategies that can help save jobs for the people working in the print sector.

Objective 3 of this study and briefly explains the performance of the print newspapers. It goes on to highlight the challenges faced by the print publication, of which most are due to the digital transformation of news and how people receive news. It expounds on the sustainability strategies that are in place and explains their effectiveness. It concludes by discussing the prediction of the future of print newspapers.

The interpretation and analysis presented here are in line with the main findings discussed in Chapter 5 and 6. More importantly, the interpretation and analysis of the findings are guided by the aim and objectives of the study.

7.2.1 Objective 1: To assess the value of printed newspapers to readers

This study's objective was to assess the print newspapers' value to their readers. This evaluation attempted to ascertain the causes of the sustained inclination towards print newspapers despite the widespread availability of digital news sources. The study shed light on reader habits, perceived advantages, and the distinctive qualities of print media to understand why print newspapers are still relevant and appealing in today's media environment. The study objective was to evaluate print newspapers' worth to readers in the digital age. A portion of readers still find value in print newspapers even in the face of the widespread availability of digital news sources. The study also shed some light in identifying the elements influencing this continued importance.

The study looked at readers' habits and preferences first. It sought to determine the reasons behind some readers' continued preference for print newspapers over digital ones. Considerations were made for elements including tangibility, readability, and the ritualistic quality of reading a printed newspaper. The objective also revealed the advantages people thought print newspapers had. It looked into how, in comparison to digital formats, print media may provide a distinct, more in-depth news experience. This covered advantages such as the perceived trustworthiness of print media, the absence of digital distractions, and in-depth reporting.

The study delved into the unique attributes of print newspapers as described by the readers. The readers revealed that print newspapers are valued for their elements such as layout, design, and the curated nature of print content, which might appeal to readers seeking a more structured and comprehensive news source. These attributes potentially enhance reader engagement and satisfaction. Furthermore, the study sought to shed light on the media environment as a whole. The study's result showed that print newspapers still have value because they provide a distinctive, reliable, and interesting news experience, even in the face of the trend towards digital media.

The results showed that readers value print newspapers for familial reasons, which further explains that a family's liking and passion for newspapers is a generation-to-

generation practice. According to the research findings, readers who entirely switch from print to digital will be betraying a family tradition. Because print newspapers are convenient for people to share, the results also showed that reading the newspaper together as a family can strengthen family bonds. These families have an advantage over the older ones because of their habit of teaching their kids to read newspapers at a young age. It has also been shown that routines and practices help families stay connected, even if they live far apart. The study reveals that newspapers may be recycled and used again for several purposes after reading, in addition to providing readers with information. According to the study, some businesspeople and men value print newspapers since they may be utilised for various purposes, such as covering food and other products when making sales to customers. It was discovered that some readers appreciate the newspaper's ability to assist them with household tasks, in addition to being informed.

The study's conclusions showed that print newspapers can be useful in a variety of ways. They can be gathered and stored so that they can be recycled and used to make paper. Gathering used newspapers, crushing them into pulp, and using that pulp to make new paper goods are all parts of the recycling process. People and communities can help lessen the need for new raw resources, like trees, and lessen the environmental effect of paper manufacture by deciding to recycle their newspapers. The investigation revealed distinctive qualities of print newspapers that add to their enduring appeal. The readers preferences were also based on the tactile sensation of holding a real newspaper, the news's organised and carefully chosen presentation, and print media's general perceived dependability and credibility. The readers did not only point out the value, but they also highlighted the challenges that print newspapers are facing in the digital age. Examining problems including declining readership and competition from internet news sources.

7.2.2 Objective 2: To ascertain and recommend sustainability and job-saving strategies for the selected print newspapers

Objective number two was to determine and suggest job-saving and sustainable measures for print publications from the standpoint of industry experts. This required comprehending the difficulties print newspapers are facing in the digital era and producing workable solutions to guarantee their sustainability and job security.

7.2.2.1 State of print

According to the findings, it is clear that the advent of the digital era has led to a sharp decline in the circulation of print publications. Consumer preferences are shifting away from traditional media and towards digital media, which has created issues for the print media landscape. The study also found that most individuals find it simple to obtain news online and that it is possible to do so while on the go.

The results also showed that the COVID-19 pandemic did not do the newspaper business any justice despite having a major influence on print and digital outlets alike. According to the media specialists, businesses experienced financial difficulties as a result of the widespread lockdowns, which resulted in a decrease in advertising budgets. This led to a significant decline in print advertising revenue for many newspapers, which is typically a vital source of funding for them. Without a doubt, the movement restrictions and lockdowns had an impact on physical distribution channels, which decreased the circulation of print newspapers.

According to one of the respondents, this was the time when a lot of consumers made the switch to digital news consumption, which accelerated the trend towards online platforms at the time. As a result, the study also showed that many newspapers were having financial difficulties due to falling revenues. Some had to reduce costs by implementing layoffs and compensation reductions, which affected the industry's personnel. Since consumer behaviour has shifted to online news sources, print newspapers have been under tremendous pressure to adapt and evolve. The study gathered expert insights to develop strategies that can help print newspapers navigate these challenges. The experts also highlighted that print newspapers have been facing significant challenges due to the rapid rise of digital media, which has resulted in declining readership and revenues.

Based on the industry expert's in-depth knowledge, they emphasised that print newspapers face a number of significant challenges, such as declining advertising revenue, weakening readership, and excessive printing and distribution expenses. They stressed that for newspapers to maintain and increase their audience, they must diversify their sources of income, make use of digital media, and make investments in superior investigative reporting.

7.2.2.2 Pressure from print

The traditional print newspaper industry has been influenced by the emergence of digital news sources. Customers now have fast access to a wide variety of news sources at their fingertips thanks to the internet and the widespread use of smartphones. Because consumers increasingly value the ease and instant gratification of digital news, print newspaper circulation has decreased as a result of this transition. Digital platforms also provide interactive elements that improve user experience and maintain audience engagement, like social network integration, videos, and real-time updates.

Digital news platforms have transformed not only consumer tastes but also the production and distribution of news. Digital platforms, as opposed to print newspapers, have the capacity to post material continuously, guaranteeing that readers may get breaking news as it occurs. The incessant flow of data has intensified anticipations for prompt reporting and exerted pressure on print publications, which follow a more rigorous publication schedule. Furthermore, digital platforms frequently use data analytics to customise information to the tastes of specific readers, offering a more individualised news experience that print media finds difficult to match.

This change has significant financial implications. Previously the backbone of print newspapers, advertising money has moved to digital platforms where tailored ads provide better returns for sponsors. A considerable drop in ad revenue for print newspapers has resulted in personnel reductions, budget cuts, and in certain circumstances, the demise of long-running magazines. The rivalry is still quite strong, even though some print newspapers have adjusted by creating their own digital editions and subscription services. For traditional newspapers to remain relevant in an

increasingly digital world, they must strike a balance between investing in digital transformation and keeping a profitable print edition.

The experts further highlighted that it is particularly important to uphold journalistic ethics and emplace high-calibre reporting. They pointed out that establishing reader confidence is essential to long-term viability. Crucial tactics included encouraging partnerships with other media organisations and utilising social media to reach a larger audience. According to the study's findings, print newspapers face several significant obstacles, but there are workable solutions that can help maintain their viability and jobs. Print newspapers may adjust to the shifting media landscape and keep providing their readers with high-quality journalism by embracing digital innovation, diversifying their content, and emphasising community involvement. The suggestions made by the experts in the field give publications a road map for navigating the change and creating a sustainable future.

The experts concluded by adding that print newspaper officials should look into innovative advertising options like sponsored content and native advertising in addition to digital campaigns, as these might present more profitable prospects than traditional advertisements. Furthermore, a devoted reading base can be developed by enhancing community involvement through local news and activities, which will promote a sense of trust and connection. Newspaper representatives may build a more robust business model that supports employment preservation and guarantees the long-term viability of their publications by concentrating on these strategies.

Thus, to ensure the sustainability of print newspapers, industry experts recommended that diversifying sources of income is essential. Print newspapers ought to look at a variety of revenue streams outside of standard advertising. This can involve creating premium digital subscriptions, organising invite-only gatherings, and providing specialty periodicals or in-depth investigative investigations, among other types of specialised content. Newspapers may reach a wider audience and establish more reliable revenue sources by developing value-added services and goods.

The experts further added that it is imperative to embrace digital transformation. Moreover, to support their print editions, print publications should make investments in

reliable digital platforms. This entails developing mobile apps and user-friendly websites that provide a smooth reading experience. Newspapers may expand their reader base and foster real-time interaction by utilising digital marketing tools such as social media. Additionally, by putting data analytics to use, newspapers may better target their advertising and content by gaining insights into the interests and behaviours of their readers. Print newspapers can compete in the digital sphere by keeping up with technical developments.

The experts concluded by adding that long-term sustainability depends on concentrating on high-quality journalism and developing solid community ties. To set themselves apart from the superficial content provided on some digital platforms, print newspapers should prioritise in-depth analysis, investigative reporting, and strict editorial standards. Loyalty and support can also be increased by forging stronger connections with the neighbourhood through collaborations, sponsorships, and locally relevant content. Fostering a feeling of community and improving reader retention can be achieved by involving readers through interactive elements like forums and reader comments. Print newspapers may remain relevant and reliable information providers by emphasising quality and community involvement.

7.2.3 Objective 3: To interrogate strategies that the print media sector use to overcome sustainability challenges

The study's last objective was aimed at interrogating the strategies employed by print newspapers to overcome sustainability challenges, drawing insights from the perspectives of newspaper officials. This required knowing the precise steps that the industry took to guarantee the longevity of its publications and adjust to the changing media landscape.

The newspaper's representatives confirmed that the digital revolution has fundamentally altered the way people consume news, posing serious difficulties for print publications. The decline in print interest, the reduction in advertising revenue, and the rise in

production expenses have compelled the creation of creative approaches to ensure viability.

The findings of the study, as highlighted by the studied print newspaper officials, stated that even though many print newspapers are having difficulty, they can still survive if the proper tactics are implemented. Significant challenges confronting the industry include declining readership, a decline in advertising revenue, and heightened competition from digital media. Some of the officials confirmed that these difficulties have resulted in long-running newspapers being consolidated, downsized, and, in some cases, closed. Despite these challenges, print newspapers are resilient because of their capacity to develop and adapt, producing fresh ideas for drawing in readers and making money.

They further revealed that diversification is one of the keys to print publications' long-term viability. To offset the effects of falling print ad sales, newspapers are looking into other sources of income increasingly. This entails building strong digital subscriptions, producing first-rate content for devoted readers, and providing niche markets with specialised publications. Some of the officials mentioned that the print newspapers are also utilising new revenue streams by organising events, providing advisory services, and collaborating with nearby companies and associations. These varied income strategies lessen reliance on any one source of income and offer financial security.

The findings also revealed that a significant element supporting print newspapers' longevity is their dedication to high-caliber reporting and community involvement. The respondent from Mail & Guardian mentioned that their print newspaper is still respected for their in-depth reporting, investigative journalism, and editorial integrity even in the face of the growth of digital news. By emphasising these advantages, publications can win readers' loyalty and trust. They added that newspapers can develop strong bonds and support by actively participating in local communities through events, sponsorships, and locally relevant content. This community-focused strategy contributes to the newspaper's long-term viability by strengthening its position as a crucial information source and fostering reader loyalty and a sense of belonging.

The interviews held with the print newspaper's officials showed that there are certain approaches that the publications are using to address sustainability issues. Digital

transformation has received a lot of attention, and many newspapers have improved their online presence by creating websites and mobile applications. All of the publication studies also use digital platforms, which then help sustain the print platform; however, they also mentioned that print should be able to stand on its own.

Print newspapers are attempting to stay relevant and profitable by embracing digital platforms, diversifying their content and investigating new revenue models. The perspectives provided by newspaper officials emphasise the significance of flexibility and creativity in guaranteeing the survival of print journalism. The strategies showcased in this study provide a path for other newspapers showing similar challenges.

The issues editors have in maintaining the survival of print newspapers are complex and driven by the way the media environment is shifting towards digital platforms. The biggest issue is the sharp fall in print readership as more people turn to internet news sources. Due to this change, advertising revenues, which had historically been a significant source of funding for print newspapers, have drastically dropped. Along with growing expenses for paper, printing, and distribution, it is getting harder to stay profitable.

The newspaper officials have pointed out that a deliberate shift to digital platforms is necessary to address these issues. Crucial actions include creating user-friendly mobile applications, social media marketing, and user-friendly websites to draw in and keep readers. But going digital also comes with its set of difficulties, such as the constant need for technological advancements, content adaptation for online platforms, and efficient methods of generating revenue from digital content. To establish and maintain reader trust in print, they stress the significance of upholding journalistic integrity and producing high-quality reporting.

7.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study of print newspapers' sustainability in the digital era makes a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of media studies. By examining important changes in the media environment, this study sheds light on how traditional print media have either successfully or unsuccessfully transitioned to the digital era.

Scholars can gain a better understanding of the evolution of media forms and how these changes affect the consumption and transmission of information by looking at trends, difficulties, and innovations.

It also contributes to broader theories of media evolution by offering historical context for the emergence of new media forms and their replacement or coexistence with older ones. This can help build new theories regarding the coexistence of media platforms. By examining how print media organisations are incorporating digital tactics to stay afloat, the study can advance our understanding of hybrid media models that incorporate both digital and print elements.

The researcher examined the sustainability challenges of print media in the digital era. The results of the study discovered that the print industry took a knock at this ever-evolving digital news platform; however, they are trying to survive and remain sustainable given the challenges in the decline of readership, circulation, and distribution. The study has contributed by providing a comprehensive analysis of the current dynamics within the print media industry, examining how digital advancements impact traditional print newspapers. By identifying and discussing challenges faced by print media in the digital era, the study contributes valuable insights into the specific hurdles that print newspapers encounter amid changing technological landscapes and economies.

The study also explored various strategies adopted by print newspapers to survive and thrive in the digital era. This includes innovations in content delivery, new subscription models, advertising and partnership encouragement models, and audience engagement. Contributing to our understanding of the economic sustainability of print newspapers in the digital age, the study explored revenue models, advertising trends, and financial challenges faced by the print industry. By examining audience preferences and behaviour in consuming news and information, the study could shed light on how digitalisation influences the way people access and interact with media content. Contributing to education in journalism and media studies, the study might offer insights into how academic institutions can adapt their curricula to prepare students for the evolving media landscape.

In contribution to the body of knowledge, the newspaper industry can increase its target audience through education by partnering with the Department of Education to offer educational sections such as core subjects.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Taking into consideration the overall results of the current study, the following recommendations are made:

❖ Subscription Models and Paywalls

Some of the studied selected newspapers have not yet adopted this strategy, but they can implement or refine subscription models and paywalls for digital content. Newspapers can offer premium content, exclusive features, and personalised experiences to incentivise readers to subscribe. This means content that the reader cannot get elsewhere but in that particular newspaper only; implementing this strategy can increase sustainability.

❖ Collaboration and Partnerships

The study also recommends that for the print to remain sustainable, they should collaborate with other media organisations, technology companies, or educational institutions to share resources, technologies, and expertise. Partnerships can enhance content quality, distribution channels, and technological capabilities. It has been proven without a doubt that partnerships and collaboration work; to give an example, the merging of Pretoria News and the Star was seen as beneficial to the organisation.

❖ Community Outreach and Events

The findings have supported the strategy of engaging with the readers; the industry should organise events, webinars, and community outreach programs to connect with readers and build a sense of belonging. Sometimes the readers would like to meet their favourite reporters, journalists, or editors; live events can create additional revenue streams and strengthen the relationship between the newspaper and its audience.

❖ Government and Policy Advocacy

The study also recommends that the newspaper industry should advocate for policies that support the sustainability of print media in the digital era. This could include discussions on fair competition, copyright protection, and financial support for journalism; such policies can definitely contribute to the sustainability of newspapers.

❖ **Ethical Journalism Standards**

Newspapers are known for credibility and reliability; therefore, it is important to uphold high ethical standards in journalism to maintain credibility and trust. The industry should always adhere to journalistic principles, which is crucial for sustaining reader loyalty in the digital landscape where the internet is full of fake news.

The recommendations will not only assist national newspapers, but community newspapers will also benefit from these recommendations.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study recommends that future research be conducted to track changes in the sustainability of print newspapers over an extended period. This could provide insights into the evolution of strategies, industry dynamics, and the impact of technological advancements. Further research should also be conducted as a comparative analysis to investigate the sustainability challenges and strategies of print newspapers in different regions, considering cultural, economic, and regulatory variations. Lastly, for recommendation on future research, a study can be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of collaborations and alliances between print newspapers, digital platforms, and other media entities. This study could seek to explore how partnerships contribute to sustainability through shared resources and expertise.

7.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Drawing from the findings of the study, conceptual frameworks, and the literature reviewed, Chapter 7 recommends ways that the print industry can use for sustainability and how to survive and operate in a digitally competitive environment. It also gave a brief contribution of the study to the field of media studies and provided pathways that future researchers may explore to further investigate the sustainability of print media in a digital environment.

7.7 CONCLUSION REMARKS

In conclusion, the study examined the sustainability challenges that are experienced by print newspapers and the approaches that have been employed to sustain themselves in the digital age. The study has shed light on the complicated dynamics shaping the media landscape. The exploration of this topic has revealed several key insights that underscore the challenges and opportunities faced by print newspapers amid the digital revolution.

According to Data Portal's Digital South Africa report for 2023 presented by Kemp, more than a quarter of the country's population still does not have access to the internet; this indicates the need for print to remain sustainable and relevant (Kemp, 2023). It is also clear that the print industry has been impacted by the emergence of digital technology. The viability of print newspapers is severely threatened by the drop in print circulation and advertising revenue. But the data also shows how resilient print media can be, with creative thinking and digital integration being key components of adaptability.

Print newspapers need to reposition themselves strategically to cater to the evolving demands of a digitally sophisticated readership, as audiences are shifting increasingly to online platforms for news consumption. Technological advancements like virtual reality, augmented reality, and interactive content provide fascinating chances to improve the experience of reading print newspapers. According to the research, embracing these innovations may encourage readers to become more engaged again and may even draw in new audiences.

The study contributes to the ongoing discourse about print media sustainability by giving readers a more complex perspective of the difficulties that are faced by print newspapers and insightful information that can be used to make wise decisions in the digital era. The sustainability of print remains a tricky puzzle as the media landscape changes, and the findings add a piece to this ever-changing and complex story. Drawing from the theoretical recommendations, newspaper representatives have been advised to leverage on their dynamic capabilities to achieve long-term competitiveness and sustainability in this digital-turbulent era.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF THE STUDY	SUSTAINABILITY OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A STUDY OF SELECTED NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS
NAME OF RESEARCHER	MABASA EL
STUDENT NUMBER	201014568
QUALIFICATION	DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MEDIA STUDIES

I, the undersigned confirms that:

The information and purpose of the research have been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. The use of audio recording has been explained to me and I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

Participant number/ Name (optional): _____

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This research is for study purposes, towards the completion of a PhD degree. The information provided will help in arriving at how the print media survive in this digital era.

Confidentiality: you are not required to provide personal details as a respondent.

Questions:

Face to face and Online interview guide (Media experts)

1. What is your take on the sustainability of print media at this digital era?
2. Do you think print media (newspapers) will still be in existence in the next 10 years? Elaborate further.
3. What are your recommendations for print media survival?

Face to face interviews (Readers)

1. How long have you been reading printed newspapers?
2. With the digital era in place, why are you still reading print?
3. Would you consider migrating from reading print newspaper to digitalised content?
4. What are your suggestions for the print media?

Face to face interviews with the official representative of the publications under study

1. What difficulties is the publication industry facing due to the enormous increase in demand for digital content?
2. What are future projections and expectations?
3. How was the industry affected by the coronavirus pandemic and what has been learnt?
4. How do you stay motivated in the face of fierce competition from digitalized publications and content?
5. Is there a plan for surviving? Is it still in place?
6. Given that the world is moving increasingly toward digital content, is there any justification for continuing with printed publications?
7. How has the drop in readership affected advertising?
8. What makes printed newspapers better?
9. Would you think of switching to reading digital newspapers instead of printed ones and why?

APPENDIX C: TREC Ethical Clearance Certificate



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 29 November 2022

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/629/2022: PG

PROJECT:

Title: The sustainability of print media in the digital era: A Study of selected South African National newspapers.
Researcher: EL Mabasa
Supervisor: Dr BD Seadira
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Languages and Communication Studies
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy in Media studies

PROF D MAPOSA
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number **REC-0310111-031**

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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UNIT C, MANKWENG
066 222 8829
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APPENDIX D: Letter from the Editor

To certify that: This editing certificate verifies that this Research was professionally edited for Engetani Lucia Mabasa.

Thus, it is meant to acknowledge that I, Dr E.J Malatji, a professional Editor under a registered company, RightMove Multimedia, have meticulously edited the manuscript from the University of Limpopo. Title: "SUSTAINABILITY OF PRINT MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A STUDY OF SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSPAPERS."

Dr E.J Malatji

APPENDIX E: Turnitin Report

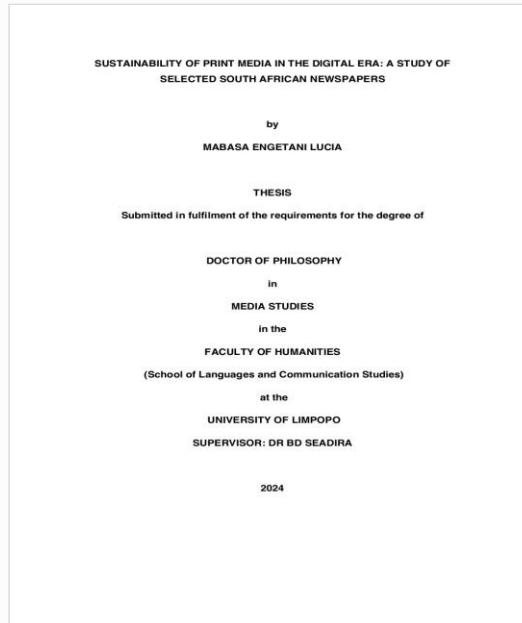


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