Public Media and Public Expectation of Service Delivery - Convergence or Divergence?

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ABSTRACT

Most people in Zambia expect a lot of quality content from the public media which is funded from taxpayers' money. The sole objective of this research is to examine the public interest vis-a-vis public expectation of best public media practice in Zambia in the light of the many obstacles they face such as the state ownership and control of the major newspapers and broadcasting stations. The air waves and media space are controlled by a state monopoly outfit which sells the broadband to other private users such as the cell phone and internet service providers. The state monopoly itself competes with the private providers, such that there is little space for the private providers to operate freely as there is conflict of interest. There is a public perception of public media capture, bias, abuse, misinformation, and perceived state censorship and manipulation of news items. This paper examines the role of the public media in Zambia and tries to unearth some of the challenges facing public media practitioners, and proffers some solutions. This paper uses the methodology of primary and secondary research to examine how social media is filling the information gap in terms of content and variety and in the process creating some positive and negative externalities of entertainment and education on the one hand, and misinformation and political instability on the other hand. The paper further examines the decomposition of public media content in the various news coverage items, and explains why the pattern is the way it is. Finally, the research ends with some recommendations on the way forward towards the creation of a more vibrant, creative, and independent public media which is efficient, effective, user-friendly, responsible and responsive to public expectations, in line with modern trends in western countries.

Keywords: radio, print media, TV, electronic media, social media, information gap, content gap, press freedom, censorship, freedom of information, parallel media, gullibility, credulity, convergence

Introduction and background

The media in Zambia is principally owned by government as the declaration of the one-party state in 1972 led to massive nationalization of enterprises including radio, newspapers, telecommunication, transport, and newspapers. However, in 1991 a new government took over in Zambia and a multi-party regime was put in place. The emergence of multi-party democracy or plural democracy led to the deregulation and privatisation of the state-owned enterprises. Strangely enough, the new government did not see the need to privatise some of the state-owned enterprises, notably the state media outfits, ostensibly, to entrench themselves in power for their own selfish needs.

The media in Zambia is therefore and somehow muzzled and stymied by un-repealed, unreformed, or un-enacted laws such as the Public Order Act, Freedom of Information Act, and Bill of Rights, among others. Compared to other African countries, the public media in Zambia is still shackled and it is struggling with a raft of problems including heavy government censorship, bureaucratic licensing controls, Ministerial directives and interventions, threats and arrests from the government security agencies, the weak economic performance of the country, and also the carrying of a historical baggage from its totalitarian past.

The Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) has outmoded machines, poorly trained staff, lack of quality content in their programmes, poorly trained or lowly qualified and motivated staff who are demotivated and who operate under directives from a government-appointed board. It is interesting to note that a country such as South Africa in contrast, has invested a lot in public media institutions and has many university programmes which produce highly trained and qualified media professionals who are creative, professional and efficient. Yet South Africa gained independence in 1994, thirty years after Zambia's independence in 1964. Therefore, there must be something wrong with Zambia's claim to its democratic credentials.

Methodology

This paper uses the methodology of primary and secondary research to examine how social media is filling the information gap in terms of content and variety, and in the process creating media space for positive and negative externalities of entertainment and education on the one hand, and the perceived and alleged misinformation and political instability on the other hand are created by boththe state media and the social media. The social media in Zambia has been very active as an alternative news media as the public media has been perceived as anything but boring, propagandist and full of biased and massaged or manipulated news items in favour of the ruling government. Specifically, the state radio and TV stations under the umbrella of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation have become megaphones of the ruling government.

Most news items focus on the government functionaries, without giving enough media space to independent reporting or coverage of activities of the opposition political parties whose activities are often given media blackout. This paper further examines the decomposition of public media content in the various news coverage items, and explains why the pattern is the way it is. The method of research adopted in this paper is primarily review of existing secondary data both from within and outside Zambia on the issues of convergence and divergence of public media practice. The author carried out some convenient and purposive survey from among his colleagues and it was interesting to note that there were divergences of views among different age groups, positional holders in the hierarchy, and different ethnic groups.

Results

The author carried out a snap survey at his workplace by sending out 30 questionnaires to workmates via email (see Appendix for sample questionnaire). Only 8 of the respondents replied. Apparently due to heavy workloads of lecturing, marking, writing modules, mentoring students, attending meetings, among a host of activities, it is understandable that a poor response rate was a foregone conclusion. Be that as it may, the responses from the 8 respondents yielded some valuable insights worth sharing. Thirty-eight per cent (38%) of the respondents said they did not watch any of the three government TV channels while fifty per cent (50%) of respondents said they preferred watching TV2, the more recent and youth-inclined channel.

Thirteen per cent (13 %) said that they watched the oldest and politically-engineered pro-government channel for administrative convenience. When asked if they thought ZNBC was there for the public interest, only 25% answered in the affirmative. On innovation, thirty-eight per cent (38%) reported that ZNBC was not at all innovative as they lack creativity and they only repeated boring content. All the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that ZNBC has poor calibre of staff. Of the respondents who said they watched ZNBC channel, they all said their main interest was to watch ZNBC news which was often boring and biased towards the ruling government by adopting a lop-sided and non-independent style of reportage. Respondents concluded that ZNBC lacked variety in their programme presentations.

 However, ZNBC staff can be exonerated because they are employees who have to dance to the tune of their paymaster, the government. They are responsible and accountable to the government appointed board of directors and not responsible directly to the public. Many people believe presenters have their scripts written for them by government officials, and those who do not toe the line get their sack.

Sixty-five per cent (65%) of respondents said that they watched ZNBC once in a while. Fifty percent (50%) were calling for privatization of ZNBC to free it from government control and maje it efficient, effective, and economical. Respondents called for improvement in sound, picture, and content quality. Respondents said theyhad stopped reading government

newspapers as they checked newspapers for advertisements or when alerted by someone to check some interesting stories. Of the government media, the Daily Mail Newspaper was adjudged the best in terms of quality of content and news coverage. From the questionnaire results, the following suggestions were forthcoming for improving the state-controlled media:

- Privatize and de-bureaucratize the operations of government media outfits
- Employ highly qualified media personnel and reward them handsomely
- Media professionals should be encouraged and empowered to be creative and also be sent abroad for attachment to well established media houses for exposure
- Media content should be rich, well-packaged, and well-researched
- Promulgate the Freedom of Information Bill (FOI)
- Professionalize the media personnel and ask them to don self-regulation by their professional bodies
- Government censorship of the media should be removed
- ZNBC should sign MOUs with foreign media for exchange programmes and collaborations
- ZNBC should have balanced reportage of local, foreign, and developmental news with rich documentaries
- There should be minimum coverage of political events and more of developmental news
- Purchase modern equipment for ZNBC
- ZNBC Board should be made up of business executives and people from academia

Discussion

Background to Discussion

From about two decades ago in Zambia, many observers including the author of this article have observed the deteriorating quality of reportage and media content in the public media in Zambia, to the extent that many Zambians have now decided not to watch the public television channels of ZNBC TV 1 and TV 2, or listen to the public radio stations which have poor content of news and boring programmes, some of which are repeated several times.

Many observers believe that the public media has become a megaphone of government mantra and an extension of the ruling apparatchiks' political space through populating that space with loyal cadres. Montesquieu in his writings after the French Revolution of 1789, alluded to the doctrine of *triaspolitica* or the three arms of government namely, the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. Thomas Carlyle in 1841 referred to Edmund Burke's famous quote of the media as the Fourth Estate or arm of government as cited in Muzyamba (2009):

There were three Estates in Parliament but in the Reporters Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth more important far than they all.

Edmund Burke

Burke was referring to the media as the Fourth Estate. The media in Africa is ostensibly of more importance now than ever before as they have the onerous duty of conveying development news to the people and they help to bridge the power distance between the government and the people. Besides, the media conveys the feelings of the people to government through phone-in programmes and letters to the press, feature articles in opinion columns, among many other fora.

Observers believe that there is a lot of state interference of the public media and outright violation against media independence and freedom of the press. Nonetheless, the media has itself to blame as some of them resort to unprofessional means such as peddling lies in order to sell their newspapers because they argue that the truth does not sell as hot as lies. Some also side with political parties by championing the cause of their chosen parties, forgetting that as media, they should remain neutral and be the conveyor belt for messages without doctoring or massaging the messages they are carrying. It all boils down to poverty, lack of integrity, and neglect of professional ethics.

According to Rowneen Islam cited in Sikazwe (2003, p. 13), press freedom correlates highly with income as rich countries value correct and truthful information more than those in poor countries. This being the case, some of the media in poor countries resort to telling lies and resorting to theatricals to entertain the public. Zambia is no exception as some private media have resorted to telling blatant lies and the spread of false rumours (kachepa).

This allegation is buttressed by the fact that in the recent past, some incidents in Zambia have involved the suspension of licences of some media houses and a raid on the premises of an independent newspaper by government tax officials and security agents. Specifically, the defunct *Post Newspaper* was closed down for alleged evasion of taxes but ostensibly it was directed to its vitriolic effusions and stream of insults churned out in volumes incessantly against the ruling government.

 Radio licences for three radio stations were suspended. These were ItezhiItezhi Radio, Komboni Radio, and MUVI TV (MISA ZAMBIA, 2016:5) The Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA) in Zambia was supposed to be more robust in sanctioning these media houses for their excesses of behaving unprofessionally but they appear to be a toothless bull dog whose bark is worse than its bite. The IBA is the regulatory authority of the media houses in Zambia. Some observers believe it is a rubber-stamping institution for endorsing government actions.

Islam (cited in Sikazwe, 2003, p.14) avers that media freedom is influenced and affected by culture and expectations of the public. Karl Deutsch (1978) also states that democracy is the making of choices which is influenced by the flow of information from the media. In this

case, the media plays a critical role in informing the public and helping them to make informed political decisions.

The House of Lords Select Committee on Communications (2012) observed:

The media are a public good which helps to support our society. We must ensure the continued survival of both a strong and independent system of broadcasting centred on public service broadcasters and the press. These central pillars of the media in the UK must also be able to take advantage of any convergence with the immerging new media. The older media has a proud history of informing, educating, and entertaining the citizens of the UK. It must not be weakened by the relatively new media. Rather the new media must enhance these core roles. The role of the media in our national culture is not simply a commercial one of producing and selling access to content. Rather it is the provision of materials through which our society can reflect upon itself and encourage a dialogue or conversation within the nation (House of Lords 24 September, 2012)

These observations by the august body of the House of Lords send a powerful message to both the public and private media houses in Zambia to adopt a professional stance in the dissemination of information. The media houses in Zambia, both public and private, have been badly affected by the weak performance of the economy through fall in copper prices, weakening or depreciating kwacha, high levels of inflation (21%) and high interest rates of about 40%.

These factors have negatively affected the accessibility of the media to media resources such as the importation of broadcasting equipment as well as their revenue streams as many firms have cut down on advertisements in the face of the poor economic performance. Kiefer from PANOS Institute of Southern Africa (MISA, 2016, p.10) had called for professionalism among media practitioners in Zambia by asking them to present balanced reportage. The Press Association of Zambia also re-echoed the call for professionalism.

 The public perceived emasculation of the public media by government has made online media space everywhere dense with the proliferation of online gossip media peddling untruths, alarmist statements, insults and all kinds of indecent publications. These include sites such as WhatsApp, Tumfweko, Lusaka Times, and Zambia Watch Dog, among many others, all in the name of plural politics.

One would ask, 'Should plural politics give reign to irresponsible dissemination of falsehoods and concocted fabrications in the name of democracy, freedom of speech, and plural politics? Some of these acts of dissemination of false news online border on treason, libel, sedition, and character assassination. However, on reflection, one would somehow sympathise with the perpetrators by the statements in science which state that water finds its own level or that there is no vacuum in nature. ZNBC is perceived by many in Zambia as biased and pro-government (MISA, 2016, p.16).

Critics of the government state that there is no even playing field for opposition political actors in Zambia under the current dispensation of the ruling Patriotic Front (PF) Party which rode to power in the 2011 presidential polls under the late President Michael Sata, and currently led by his successor, President Edgar Lungu. To these critics, one would answer that a constitutionally-elected president with the reins of power will not sit idle and allow malcontents to usurp its authority as it will use its state instruments of authority to entrench itself and to deal with perceived malcontents who want to rock the boat or to create political tension.

One would pose the question, 'To what extent should the media be independent in a developing country such as Zambia?' or 'Can developing countries which have a high need for rapid development afford the luxury of independent media?' What Africa needs is benevolent dictatorship along the lines of Rwanda (under Paul Kagame), Singapore (under Lee Kuan Yu), and Malaysia (under Dr Mahathir Mohammed). Africa has no time to waste in political wrangles. She also needs strong institutions which are run professionally, in a transparent manner with in-built checks and balances.

According to Sikazwe (2003), the role of the media is to educate, inform, entertain, and sensitize the public on topical issues and collaborate with government in advancing the development agenda. Sikazwe(2003) further posits that freedom of speech is guaranteed by Zambian laws. However, despite this guarantee, the Zambian public should be aware that there are ethical standards to observe, rules and procedures to follow, and duties and obligations for all citizens to perform as part of the grand unwritten social contract or compact whereby the state on its part secures citizens' protection and affords them access to social and public amenities such as public schools and hospitals, public infrastructure, and it creates an enabling environment by offering employment and investment opportunities. The state also intervenes where there are inequalities in the distribution of wealth through taxation, subsidies, and policy guidelines.

In a one-party state, there is convergence of ideas and conformance to state ideals and dictates, to the detriment and subjugation of individual rights. According to Simutanyi*et al.* (2015) there are 30 radio stations in Zambia and 7 TV stations. The list keeps growing by the day. Most of these media houses in Zambia are found along the line of rail and in major towns and cities. As Zambia is a large country with about 756,000 square kilometres of landmass, media coverage is not as widespread as one would expect. There are remote outlying areas without radio or TV coverage.

This makes interactive governance and public participation in decision making difficult for people in rural areas. Interactive media helps collect feedback and reaction of the public to government policies through phone-in radio and TV programmes. In the past, before the advent of the internet, there was divergence in the media as different disparate platforms were used such as the newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations. At present, all media channels

have been digitized and sitting integrated on one platform in cyber space, affording interoperability, integration, and formation of synergies.

The convergence of the media under one canopy of the internet has reduced the cost of production of media content and also reduced the cost of accessibility to consumers. However, the negative fallout is that thousands of blogs, internet sites and alternate media have sprung up to dwarf the traditional brick and mortar media so much so that oversight and gatekeeping functions of regulators have proved a nightmare. Here, one can be reminded of people such as Snowdon and Assange, and others who caused wicked leaks of highly classified state information. Besides, convergence creates costs of keeping information secure from hackers, virus attacks, and technical failures.

There is the risk of firms being sued by clients and customers for damages due to security and confidentiality breaches. Thus, this scenario proves that media convergence has its downside. At the household level on the part of the consuming public, there is a wide divergence between the old and young, women and men, scholars and ordinary workers, rich and poor. These social cleavages cause divergences in the viewing and listening patterns of different types of media consumers.

This is why the content gap in Zambia needs to be addressed by having a variety of novelty shows and programmes to whet the appetite of the consuming public. The state media should be decentralised, operationalized, and freed from the shackles and fetters of government largesse and directives.

In a household survey of 1448 respondent in Zambia and Kenya in 2013, it was found that 88 per cent of the respondents used the radio, 83 per cent used mobile phones, 60 used TVs, 41 per cent relied on newspapers, and 20 per cent used the internet (africasvoices.org)

Radio and TV are gradually giving way to smart phones which are multi-purpose and easy to carry around. Governments can now practise e-governance by engaging the public directly through short-messaging system (sms) via the smart phones which have radios, cameras, music download facilities as well as internet connectivity.Mazyamba (2009) states that community media such as radios help rural dwellers to communicate with government, thus they are empowered to participate in the democratic process at the grassroots.

However, he observes that the media industry in Zambia has many weaknesses and these should be overcome for the industry to become sustainable. He observes that in 1991, the new government of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy liberalized the Zambian airwaves in fulfilment of its pre-election promise. He observes also that the current state-owned media has not changed much to align itself with rapid economic transformation taking place.

The churches and NGOs in Zambia have filled the information and market gaps by settingup many private media to fill the communication gap. However, the liberation of the air waves has created collateral damage as many of the journalists and presenters of news have become unprofessional and indifferent to public expectations of accessing rich viewing and listening experiences (Muzyamba, 2009). Journalists and media practitioners are expected to be neutral in conveying messages to the public yet the unprofessional ones among them take sides, sometimes out of greed, corruption and lack of proper personal values.

This approach to journalism compromises the role of journalists as neutral conveyor belts. It is a sad fact that most journalists and media personnel in Zambia are not well paid so they are vulnerable to bribes by politicians and whoever is willing to pay more for their stories to be carried. In a one-party state, we expect convergence of the media and supremacy of state interest over individual rights. That era of politically-enforced convergence has long gone yet some government operatives cling to some old baggage from the past. The current era is one of technological and market-driven convergence which unlike the former is enduring and sustainable.

In a multi-party dispensation, converge and divergence will co-exist. In line with Adam Smith's views published in 1776 in his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, pursuing individual goals will ultimately lead to beneficial spill-over rewards for the society at large. However, in this day and age, work has become so integrated such that people work in teams with many interdependencies. Thus, pursuing individual selfish goals is controversial as in African cultural settings social networks connect people so much so that it is difficult to follow individual goals. This herd mentality also affects the way the media operates and the way people react to media practitioners.

In Zambia, tribal sentiments are high and these dictates how tribes perceive national issues. Kasoma (1992) cited in Sikazwe (2003) states that freedom of the press is derived from the freedom of speech for individuals which are under Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This is so because individuals do not need licences to talk or to air their views but media houses do need them. Kasoma(1992) opines that media freedom is derived from and rides on the wings of individual freedom. As everywhere else in the world, the government in Zambia is finding it hard to control the content of social media. Even the advanced countries face this challenge despite having the technology to monitor the content of social media.

The zeal of media houses to be the first to publish sensational news makes them vulnerable to half-truths and misinforming the public. The law recognises individual rights to privacy and self-esteem. There is need to draw the thin line between state security interests on the one hand and also the protection of individual rights on the other hand. This poses a dilemma to governments around the world. This dilemma brings to the fore the need to repeal such laws

such as the Public Order Act which infringes on the rights of assembly and freedom of assembly, freedom to one's conscience, and freedom from unlawful arrest and detention.

Theoretical Discussion of national and international trends

Noam (2000) cited in Mansell (2016) states that there are four types of convergence namely delivery technologies convergence, business regulation convergence, vertical convergence of telecommunications, and internet convergence. Noam(2000) further observes that the use of IT has helped to bring about interventions which have reduced poverty, leading to wealth convergence via e-business. Jenkins (2006) cited in Mansell (2016) states that convergence is the flow of media content across a borderless media space. Scolari (2009) also cited in Mansell (2016) notes that convergence has created semiotics and narratology whereby semiotics is defined as the science of using signals and symbols to transmit messages and narratology is the science of narration in well-packaged documentaries which are shared in converged communication space.

Mansell opines the fact that to analyse the various facets of convergence, one has to consider the elements of PESTEL namely political, economic, social, technological, ethical, environmental, and legal. For example, different cultures distribute power differently. In Zambia for instance, patrilineal inheritance is found among the Lozi and the Tonga while the remaining majority of tribes in Zambia subscribe to the matrilineal system. In such a system, there is lack of cultural homogeneity despite having a political unitary state based on the national motto, 'One Zambia, One Nation'. Thus, it is difficult to assume convergence towards national issues.

This is a healthy and welcome development because for every system to be efficient there should be checks and balances. Currently in Zambia, some social media sites are being hosted and operated from other countries, which is not so healthy a development. Despite social, political, and economic divergence in Zambia at the micro level, globally there is a movement towards convergence in terms of unified global norms precipitated by the ICT revolution and the globalisation process spearheaded by the multinational corporations whose brands have become household words across the globe. Thus, a global convergence does not necessarily imply a national convergence.

The nations may be moving anti-clockwise while the global scene is moving in a counter clockwise direction. The recent case of Brexit is a case in point whereby the UK has pulled out of the European Union after 43 years of membership. Divergence and convergence may be opposite sides of the same coin. However, I presume for the system to work well, both forces must be in balance or equilibrium.The House of Lords Select Committee (2012) noted in their compendious report that seasoned journalists explain complex issues expertly to the public to help them make informed decisions (House of Lords, 2012, pp.792-793).

Our media personnel in Zambia and Africa lack this kind of professionalism, expertise and detachment from political wrangles as they engage in stomach-direction media reporting. The House of Lords (2012) also noted that had it not been the tampering effect of the professionalised media in the UK, politicians and lobbyists would have swayed the masses by their charm, charisma, and propaganda.

In sharp contrast in Zambia, some media houses throw dust in the eyes of the media by carrying sensational news items coloured to achieve their parochial, self-serving agendas. There is lack of objectivity and lack of rational and scientific reporting as news items are not presented in a balanced and independently-collaborated manner. This is what MIZA, PANOS and other observers have noted bas being put down to lack of professional training of media personnel as well as some of them being volunteers and amateurs. Muzyamba (2009, p. 4) noted that culture imposes a lot of divergence in the Zambia media landscape among the 73 tribes who differ widely in marriage customs, music, dances, and other cultural observances.

 This divergence spills over to attitudes to national issues. PANOS (2006) cited in Muzyamba (2009) also noted that the divergence in the Zambia media is caused by challenges faced by journalists in poor countries such as poor remuneration, vulnerability to bribery and corruption, lack of broadcasting equipment, lack of in-depth research, and poor calibre of news editing, among others. PANOS also note that the amateur volunteers in the Zambia media seek cheap populism and instant fame by pandering to the whims and caprices of their patrons and sponsors.

Here, it can be recommended that media personnel should be told of their importance as the Fourth Estate and guardians of the truth. Muzyamba (2009, p.6) laments lack of many printing presses in Zambia and also lack of reading culture among Zambians, thus many Zambians, educated and illiterate tend to subsist on rumours and gossip circulating on social media. Currently there are 55 universities in Zambia according to the accreditation body, Higher Education Authority.

It is hoped that with the increase in access to higher education, many Zambians will acquire the love for reading and becoming critical thinkers. It is also hoped that Many educated Zambians will take to writing books and articles in journals to provide quality input to national discourse. There is also need to beef up or boost the publishing industry in Zambia to make books cheap and accessible. If many Zambians acquire the reading culture and they take to buying books, it will reduce the divergence in the media and in diverse aspects of life in Zambia. Increase in reading culture will engender research and turn the country towards convergence.

Mancell posits that issues of privacy, protection of national interest, surveillance of cyber criminals, and taking steps against commercial espionage, among other issues are currently of prime importance in our modern world (2016). He notes that digital technologies have converged through the interoperability of platforms, gadgets and systems by using digital

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rather than analogue signals (Mansell, 2016). According to Mansell (20160 many benefits have come out of this convergence such as data sharing, networking, innovation, increase in market size, among others. It has facilitated e-governance, e-commerce, e-education, and increased speed of transactions.

Mansell noted that despite the benefits there are demerits in terms of upgrading both hardware and software, high cost of hiring specialised labour, and the use of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, there is the very complex problem of regulating the media which becomes customer-centred driven inn terms of customers customizing media content by using their own gadgets. Thus, policy response to policing the media becomes a nightmare. Media leaks such as the ones committed by Assange and Snowden exerts heavy pressure on governments not to be so liberal with media freedom as such leaks can destabilize the political and economic fronts and create panic and chaos.

The media convergence that Mansell writes about applies to the First World countries where they have the means to keep abreast with technological innovation. In Third World countries, there is divergence due to the digital divide between the haves and have-nots. In Africa, Rwanda, South Africa, Kenya and to some extent Ghana and Nigeria are not doing badly in terms of uptake of the digital technologies. The current government in Zambia has launched the SMART Zambia campaign which is hoped to bridge the digital divide and the digital divergence.

This is a commendable and bold move by the government which should be sustained by all stakeholders. Mansell (2016) ironically notes that technological convergence leads to government using policy divergence to deal with the many issues arising in the macro-environment from the technological convergence. These include legal, economic, social, and political issues. Issues of human rights, confidentially, security, ethics, and intellectual property rights become foremost and paramount. Thus, achieving technological or digitalized convergence on the one hand opens up discontinuities and divergences on the other hand mostly in the social sphere.

Currently, only about 20%of Zambia's population has internet access. The poverty level nationally is 60% and 70% in the rural areas. To achieve digital convergence, there is need to reduce the poverty levels by reducing economic divergence in wealth nationally. Even though digitalization of the media in Zambia has opened up political space and increased transparency in governance, the acquired space is either being abused or not being fully utilised to its full potential. Digitalization has potential to minimize corruption and increase networking efficiencies in commerce, education, and all aspects of governance.

Increased technological convergence in Zambia can spawn technopreneurs or online entrepreneurs which can help reduce the high level of youth unemployment currently at about 30% for those youth below 25 years.Mansell (2016) observes that while digital convergence may create synergies and economies of scale for those who can afford it, it may further

increase the digital divide, create information asymmetry and reduce the variety of news content and its novelty. High poverty levels in Zambia have created classes of media consumers who are labelled by this author as:

1. Technologically Marginalised Periphery(TMP)
2. Core Digitalized Urbanites(CDU)
3. Core Marginalized Urbanites(CMU)
4. Rural Minority Digitalized (RMD)
5. Rural Majority Marginalized(RMM)

In the arena of informatics, there are people who are illiterate and information-dependent. These are in the majority in the rural areas and they depend upon the opinions of opinion leaders. These are the TMP, CMU, and RMM. The social stratification can be viewed as Top Notch Society (TNS), Middle Rats Society(MRS), and bottom of the pile Sans Culottes or low-class society Marginalised (SCM). The latter can also be termed Data Excluded Lockouts (DEL).

As educational attainments levels increase, there is a gradual quantum shift of these educational migrants into digital space as consumers, and education becomes a veritable vehicle for upward social mobility as well as a vehicle for poverty eradication. Among the Top-Notch Society, their wealth enables them to have access to many gadgets which afford them interoperability using cloud technology and digital convergence. This leads to Information Access Segregation (IAS) for the less privileged poor people. This author concludes that apart from technological convergence, there are other forms of convergence and divergence such as political convergence, social convergence, market or economic convergence, and media content convergence. Political convergence is usually contrived in a one-party state or in an oppressive state.

Zambia can learn lessons from Australia, one of the most digitized countries in the world. According to the Australian Government Convergence Review Committee(AGCRC) (2012, p.8), media users in Australia decide their own viewing or listening content as they can upload their own content from the traditional media on their varied applications. This has broken down the regulatory framework in Australia. The Committee was tasked to examine operations of the media and advise on its regulation, assess its effectiveness in achieving policy objectives, examine its ownership structure and ownership laws, and appraise media content composition and quality in terms of local and international content (AGCRC, 2012, p.8)

The Committee established guidelines to the effect that individuals and organisations should be able to communicate freely with minimum regulations in the public interest as in their view the media was over-regulated. This sends a message to the Zambian Government also to consider repealing the controversial Public Order Act (POA) and also consider promulgating the Freedom of Information Bill.

Reflecting on the discussion thus far, the author has come to appreciate the importance of convergence in media communication and puts forward these insights.

Media output in terms of quality and variety of content, Q_M can be modelled using a modified Cobb-Douglas production function model $Q = A\ K^a\ L^{1-a}E$, where A as a function of modern technology is discounted by existing obsolete technology, (A_m/A_D), capital provision source which can be government or non-government $(K/G)^a$ is discounted by government input, calibre of labour which is measured by its professionalism, qualification, and incentives, $(L/nP)^{1-a}$ where nP measures non-professional labour which is used to discount the contribution of labour to media output. E measures countrywide ethnicity diversity or convergence.

$Q_{M =} f\ (A, A_D, K, G, L, nP, E)$

Where Q_m represents media content output,

A represents technological innovation,

A_D represents obsoleteness of existing technology,

G represents government funding of the media,

nP represents non-professional labour, and

E represents ethnicity variety

This model can be used to explain the convergence or divergence of media in a country, especially for a developing country such as Zambia. From this model, it can be inferred that all the macro environmental factors are taken care of as A represents the technological aspect in the PEST model, K represents the economic component, G represents the political aspect, and L and E represent the social aspect.

Furthermore, apart from the predominance of technology determining convergence of the models discussed so far, there is the observation that media convergence or divergence in a country will also depend on factors such as how pluralistic the political system is, levels of literacy levels in the country, and the wealth distribution (W) in the country.

$C\alpha D= f\ (W, T, G, Pl, E, A)$

Where W represents wealth,

T represents literacy levels,

G represents government influence,

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Pl represents pluralism,

E represents ethnicity,

E represents ethnicity; and

A represents technology

This discussion ends with diagrammatic representations new insights gained which may lead to paradigm shifts in the operations of the media as regards issues of convergence and divergence. Figure 1 by Lawson Borders (2009) shows that with stupendous acceleration of technological advancement in ICT, all the traditional media of print (newspapers, journals, and magazines), radio, wireless, TV, Cable and Satellite networks have all transformed to digital onto the computers and ancillary gadgets such as smartphones, i-pads, tablets, among others by being hosted on one converged platform whereby Androids, iOS, and One Drive applications have all been made interoperable and conformable for the media consumer. Thus, the traditional media have migrated onto the new platforms and converged. This is convenient for both providers and consumers in terms of cost-sharing, accessibility, building of synergies, among many other benefits. However, for media regulators such as the Independent Broadcasting Authority in Zambia, this creates a nightmare of monitoring media content and regulating the media providers.

Figure 2 is a construct of this author who suggests by the diagram that the worst case scenario for political and social instability is the situation where the country has high ethnic diversity, an oppressive government, and a low technological innovation in the media will create a situation of high media divergence in media content as well as the diversity of media providers which on a positive note can encourage the provision of variety in content but on a negative note, it will encourage the proliferation of parallel and underground media via social media, or the public ignoring the state controlled media in preference for external media such as the bouquet provided by DSTV or GO-TV. There will also be heightened activity of gossip and rumour-mongering in the social media via channels such as Zambia WatchDog, Mast Newspaper, Tumfweko, Lusaka Times, among others. Such a sad situation makes some members of the public develop insatiable appetite for massaged and adulterated news both from government media and from the unorthodox media, heightening the decibels of media cacophony and public credulity gap.
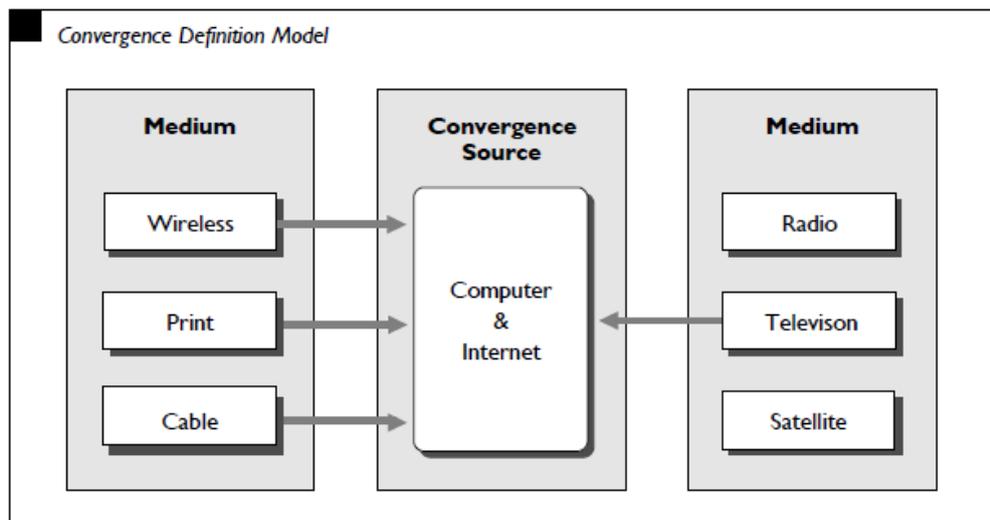
(Source: Lawson-Borders, 2009

http://www.mediajournal.org/index.php/jmm/article/viewFile/10/3

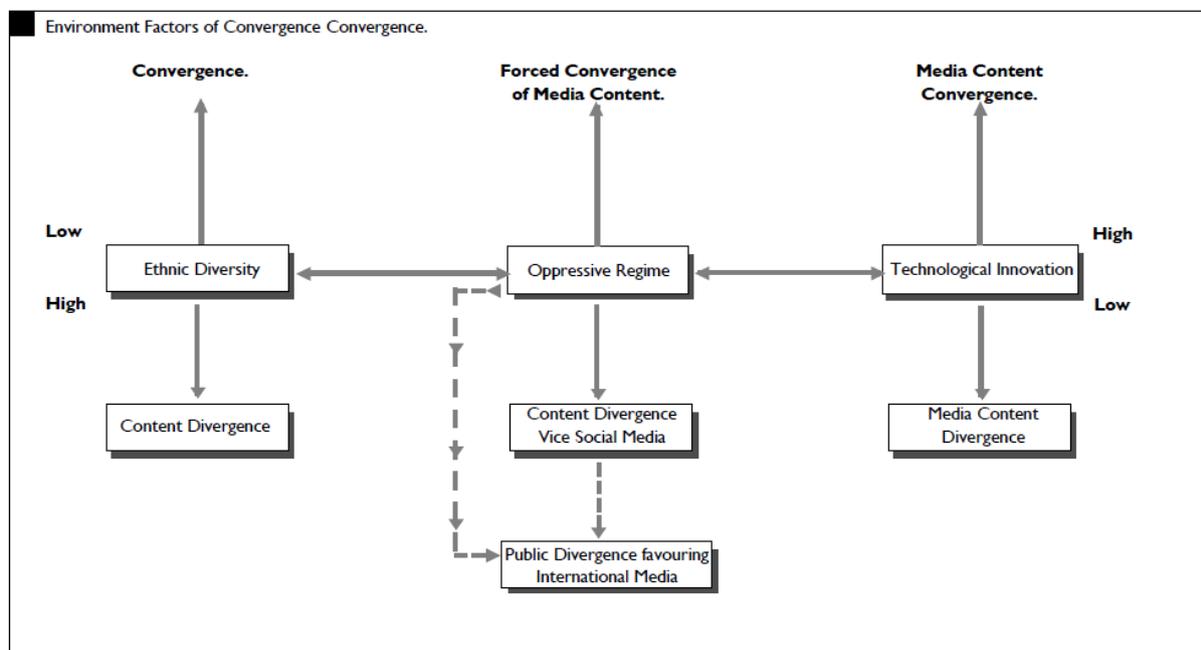**Figure 1**Convergence model from Lawson-Borders

Figure 2- Model of Media Convergence-Divergence in Developing Countries
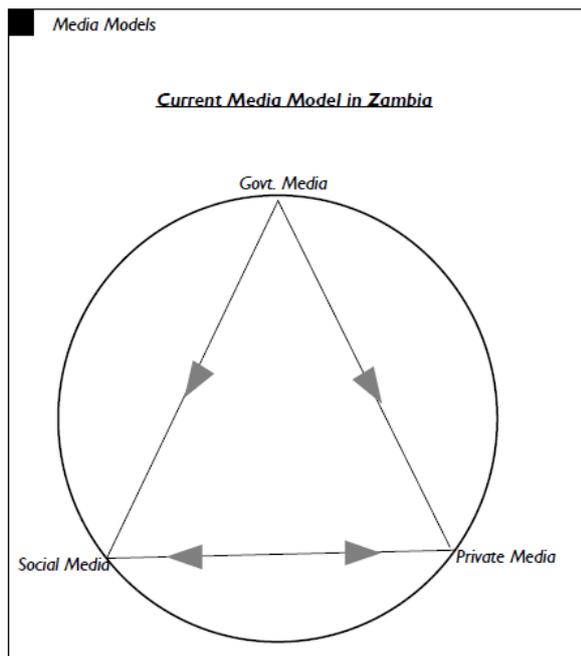
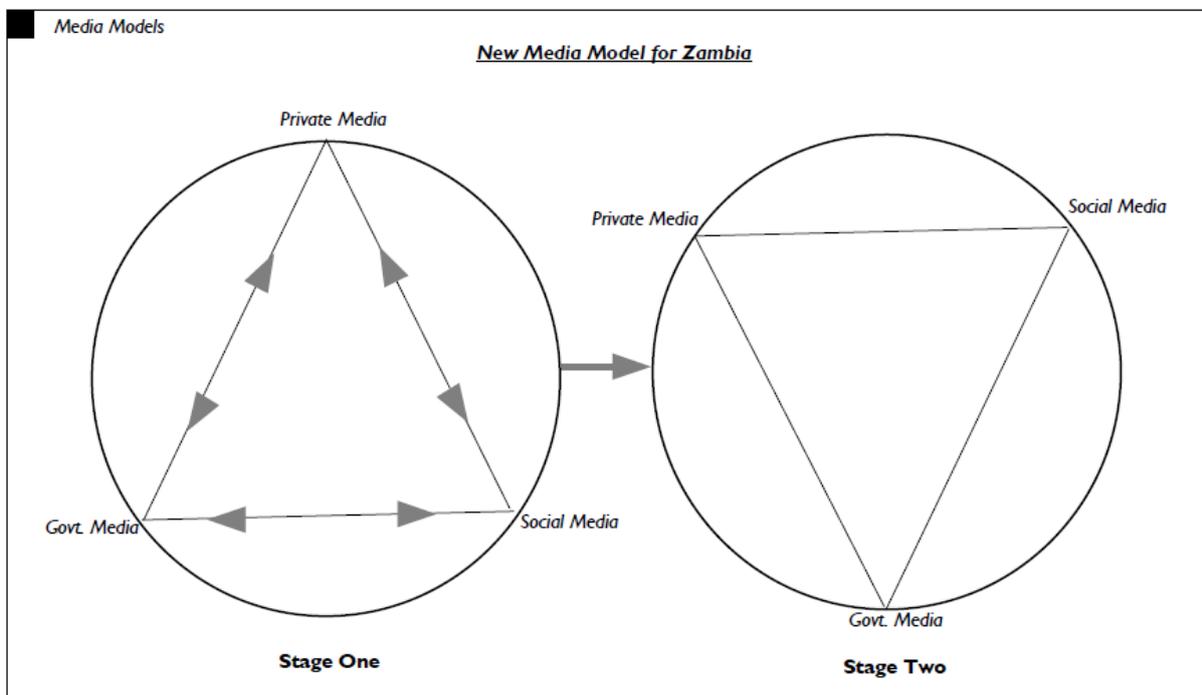**Figure 3 -**Forced Media Convergence under Oppressive Regime

Figure 4 Transformation Stages of Media

Figure 3 depicts the situation currently prevailing in most developing countries whereby the state owned media houses dominate the airwaves and churn out what they are told to broadcast. With time as depicted in Figure 4, the normal position of the pyramid inside the circle is supposed to transform into an inverted pyramid with the media jointly dominated by the private media moguls and the social media networks. Thisis the situation in the developed countries suchas the USA, UK, and Australia, among others. For such a transition to take place there will be need for deregulation ofmedia policies, professionalism of the media, an increase in educational and literacy levels, as well as having majority of the population lifted out of poverty, and being in the middle working class. In Zambia, this can take no less than 50 years to achieve as per the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Zambia's and AU Vision 2065.

Conclusion

It is evident from the discussion so far in this paper that media convergence has been made possible by the vast improvements in IT. However, media divergence still exists for poor countries because of social, economic, political, legal, and bureaucratic reasons. So far as the media is heavily regulated, so much will be the negative effect of having a lot of untruths circulated in the social media. Media divergence in Zambia has been created by many factors among them are operational factors such as lack of proper equipment, poor oversight from the media council, high poverty levels, and lack of professionalism among many other factors. Zambia can borrow from the experience of countries such as the UK, Australia, and the USA in reforming media laws and implementing germane policies which will safeguard intellectual property rights, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom to own property such as establishing media houses. There is need to overhaul the over-regulated ZNBC and the state-owned media houses by privatising them and freeing them from being used as megaphones of government propaganda in Zambia.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1

Media Usage in Africa 2013

Media	% Usage
Radio	88
Mobile	83
TV	60
Newspaper	41
Internet	20

Table 2   Zambian Media

Newspapers	TV and Radio Stations
Zambia Daily Mail	ZNBC 1, 2, and 4
Sunday Mail	ZNBC TV 1 and TV 2
Times of Zambia	ZANIS(Zambia National Information Service
Sunday Times	MTN
Guardian Weekly	VODAPHONE
National Mirror	AIRTEL
Post Newspaper	ZAMTEL
Daily Nation	LIQUID

Table 3

PUBLIC MEDIA AND PUBLIC EXPECTATION OF SERVICE DELIVERY-CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE?

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is distributed to enable the researcher gather data for academic purpose only. Please answer the questions candidly and objectively to the best of your ability. You are free to participate or refrain from participating. Thank you in advance.

1. What is your age group?

a. 20-24

b. 25-29

c. 30-34

d. 35-39

e. 40-44

f. 45-49

g. 50-54

h. 55+

2. What is your gender?   a. Male   b. Female

3. Are you employed?

a. Employed

b. Unemployed

 c. Self-employed

4. How often do you watch ZNBC TV?

 a. Everyday

 b. Once a day

 c. Once in a while

d. Not at all

5. Which ZNBC TV channel do you prefer?

 a. TV 1

 b. TV 2

 c. TV 3

6. Why do you prefer that channel chosen in Question 5?

I stopped watching ZNBC a long time due to poor programming
………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……

7. How do you rate the content of ZNBC TV channels compared to other private and foreign channels?

a. Excellent

b. Very good

c. Good

d. Average

e. Boring

f. Very poor

8. Which is your favourite programme on ZNBC TV?

…NONE……………………………………………………………………………………………
………..………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……….

………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……….

9. How do you find news content of the public media compared to the private and social media?

 a. Spectacular content

 b. Rich content

c. Varied content

d. Boring content

e. Poorly-packaged content

10. How do you find content on ZNBC TV channels?

a. Excellent

b. Very Good

c. Average

d. Unsatisfactory

e. Very poor

11. How do you find content of Daily Mail compared to others?

a. Excellent

b. Average

c. Unsatisfactory

d. Very poor

12. How often do you buy or read the public newspapers such as Daily Mail?

a. Every day

b. Once a while

c. When someone alerts me to check them

d. When checking adverts

13. How do you find ZNBC TV programmes now compared to say 15 years ago?

a. Vast improvement now

b. Standards have fallen

c. Contents lack creativity

d. Calibre of presenters has fallen

e. Social media have upstaged them or made them irrelevant

f. I was too young to know or not there

24

14. Would you recommend privatisation of the public media such as ZNBC?

YES   NO

15. Mention one change you would like to be implemented at ZNBC or in the state-owned newspapers.

They should be independent from political interference to ensure quality programming………

…….

16. Would you conclude that ZNBC delivers quality service to the public?

   YES   NO

17. Which of these media do you think stands out as the best in terms of coverage of news and rich content? (Pick one)

a. Daily Mail

b. Times of Zambia

c. The Mast/Post Newspaper

d. The Nation

e. Tumfweko

f. Zambia Watchdog

g. WhatsApp

18. How do you generally rate the calibre of presenters at ZNBC TV?

a. Excellent

b. Very good

c. Mediocre

d. Poor

e. Unsatisfactory

19. Which of these challenges do you think should be overcome for ZNBC to deliver quality service?

(Rank them from 1 to 5 with 1 being the best and 5 the poorest)

a. Lack of adequate resources and infrastructure

b.   Lack of well trained and motivated personnel

c. Need to remove government control, news censorship and bureaucracy

d. Need to promulgate the Freedom of Information Bill

e. Total independence and professionalism of the media

20. Would you agree that the public media in Zambia serve the public interest?

YES   NO

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation.

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