

**AN INVESTIGATION OF NEWSROOM CONVERGENCE AT THE
MOAFRIKA MEDIA COMPANY IN LESOTHO AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR GATEKEEPING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Journalism and Media Studies

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

Teboho Senthebane

Supervisor: Professor Guy Berger

November 2008

ACKNOWLEDEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help of many people during my study. It is difficult to overstate my gratitude to my supervisor Professor Guy Berger. His knowledge, encouragement, kind assistance and patience cannot be overestimated. The impact he has had will follow me for years to come.

Sincere thanks to Moafrika management and staff who opened their hearts and doors, supplying me with resources I never could have found without them. I also wish to acknowledge NIZA for granting me a thesis bursary.

Finally, I am forever indebted to my parents for their understanding, endless patience and encouragement when it was most required. They bore me, raised me, supported me, taught me, and loved me. To them I dedicate this thesis. My brother and cousins, you have been great!

I wish to thank all my friends for helping me get through the difficult times, and for all the moral support, entertainment, and caring they provided. To those who persuaded me often to turn off the computer and have a drink, a chat, or an ice-cream.

To my daughter Paballo, all I can say is it would take another thesis to express my deep love for you. Your patience, love and encouragement have upheld me, particularly in those many days in which I spent more time with my computer than with you. I promise now it's your turn. It's time to start on that list of things to do "Yes, after your thesis, mummy".

Last but not least to God without whom this work would have been impossible.

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ABSTRACT

This research is based on a case study of MoAfrika, a news organisation that has embraced digitisation to produce and distribute content across three platforms. It draws upon observation and in-depth interviews to show how MoAfrika's embrace of a degree of convergence has led to a fragmentation for journalists whose daily work now include additional responsibilities and pressures of time. While there is an increase in the quantity of news disseminated via radio, newspaper and online, questions arise about the quality of such news produced in a multi-skilled, multiple media news production environment. The result is repurposed stories with little original content and augmented employee workloads without training and compensation.

The study examines these issues drawing on theories of gatekeeping and convergence. The decision to include a news story at MoAfrika depends partly on which medium it fits into most easily. News values, deadlines, organisational norms and national trends are some of the considerations which factored into gatekeepers' decisions. Primary decision-making was made within a group which also considered expense and expertise, and where the Managing Editor made the final call and set the frameworks for how content played across the enterprise's three platforms.

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CHAPTER: 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Informed by gatekeeping theory, this study critically examines the current operation of MoAfrika that produces three media products in one venture. Newsroom convergence refers to the blurring lines between traditionally separate media due to the growing use and influence of digitisation (Quinn, 2005:29). In particular this study investigates whether or not newsroom convergence challenges traditional roles in the newsroom including gatekeeping roles. The study is premised on the hypothesis that convergence complicates the gatekeeping process in the newsroom.

The term media convergence originated in an attempt to give meaning to the phenomenon whereby different media forms come together or exist in synergy with each other. Convergence has been used to describe the blurring of the limits between different media, professional skills and roles (see Gordon 2003; Deuze 2004; Huang et al 2006). Convergence is becoming a global trend as media companies continue to expand their organisations beyond their original core products. Digitisation of media alters existing business models, creates new opportunities for media content creators, and causes shifts in how media consumers access, use and interact with media. This transformation has implications in four areas: the content of communications; the structure of media organisations; the relationships between media organisations and their audiences; and how journalists do their work (McIntosh and Pavlik 2004:21). The latter is the focus of this thesis. In addressing this issue I draw on theorisation of gatekeeping as advanced by Shoemaker and Reese (1991) which looks at news influence at five levels of analysis.

This chapter provides background to the study, highlights the research problem and significance of the study. It also outlines the objectives of the study, methods used to collect data and the thesis structure.

1.2 Background to the study

Lesotho has both state-owned and privately-owned media. There are 16 newspapers owned by the state, churches, political parties and individuals. The 1990s saw a new surge of privately-owned newspapers in Lesotho, all of them based in Maseru. The second half of the 1990s saw a shift from state monopolisation to the opening of the airwaves, realising the establishment of one local television station, the Multi-Choice pay-channels and seven privately-owned radio stations. In Lesotho the draft policy that regulates the media is silent on issues of convergence and cross-ownership (see MISA 2006; Lejakane 1997).

The press's growth and size are inhibited by the country's weakened infrastructure, dependence on South Africa and a mostly rural population with low per-capita incomes which relegate the purchase of newspapers, radios, television and the Internet to being unaffordable luxuries. Prohibitive printing costs, poor technology and unavailability of newsprint make it difficult for Lesotho's small publications. Generally, low investment in this sector has adversely impacted the growth of the printing and publishing industry. Most of the country's printing jobs are being done outside the country.

Lesotho's media landscape is largely analogue and has not explored convergence and the digital route. A study of the use of ICTs in Lesotho newsrooms found that access to new technologies in Lesotho is very limited as a result of poor internet penetration and communication network infrastructure, lack of professional training in using ICT and high cost of using ICT. It also found most newsrooms were connected through a dial-up connection (Berger 2005:73-77).

However, one media house in Lesotho has embraced convergence. The MoAfrika press group, a Maseru-based privately-owned media company registered under CR Communications (Pty) Ltd, has grown to establish the newspaper (*MoAfrika*) in 1990, the radio station (MoAfrika FM) in 1999 and the website (www.moafrika.co.ls) in 2007. The core of the company was its newspaper, but when readership declined in the 1990s, the MoAfrika press group like many other news companies had to refashion its mission. It has turned its company into a multi-platform news producer.

According to the company's website, the weekly has claimed circulation of 5000. MoAfrikaFM broadcasts in eight Lesotho districts and part of South Africa in Sesotho and Sephuthi. Its broadcast format consists of 40% music and 60% talk. The newspaper is in English and Sesotho and the website in English. There is streaming audio only but no video on the website.

I chose to study MoAfrika for several reasons. Moafrika operates three mediums as one venture. This development has stimulated great interest among professionals with whom the writer has been engaged, but also a sense of uncertainty. On the one hand, some have felt that this cross-platform consolidation was inevitable in a highly competitive news business and could herald a new model for newsrooms. Others have been more skeptical and have expressed concern about the impact of convergence on the practice of the news production and journalistic skills. These issues are important to investigate. In addition, MoAfrika is publishing in different languages across platforms. The multilingual nature of MoAfrika raises another convergence challenge for gatekeeping.

1.3 Statement of the problem

These developments affect the organisation of newsrooms and the working practices of journalists in profound ways. Multi-skilling, for instance, is a trend with increasing acceptance in news media, as journalists have to cope with a widening range of responsibilities in order to get their jobs done. Cottle (1999) claims that the increasing demands on journalists create a more pressured working environment which ultimately has a negative impact on journalistic standards.

The digitalisation of contemporary journalism has been shown to be causes for concern, stress and burn-out among journalists, an impact specific to newsroom cultures not to be dismissed (Singer, 1997a, 1997b; Cottle, 1999; Deuze, 2001). Findings in chapter four confirm that newsroom convergence raises questions such as just what and how much one person can be asked to do. Staffing, training and compensation for the additional time and work, which is required for convergence to succeed, are also important issues.

Analysts argue that in a converged newsroom the outcome also has to include questions such as: “Who will cover the story for which medium, what equipment is needed, and what deadlines need to be set?” (Filak and Quinn 2005:27). As the literature suggests and this study’s findings reveal, convergence operations have struggled in trying to meld the different cultural norms and organisational routines of print, online and broadcast journalists (see Finberg 2002; Robins 2000; Silcock and Keith 2006). In the west, many newsrooms, akin to MoAfrika, find themselves struggling to answer questions such as how much time they should devote to creating web content without weakening stories for radio and newspaper (Wenger 2005:40).

Killebrew contends that “reporters, editors and the supervisors charged with making convergence or ‘new media’ journalism a reality are finding a great deal of dissonance in the workplace today” (2003: 43). Although he does not present specific empirical evidence, he hypothesises that convergence will disrupt news operations due to differences in cultures and decision-making procedures.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is gatekeeping theory. In his pioneering study, White (1950) concluded that the gatekeeper’s job is to select what stories readers will read in the paper the next day. Gatekeeper research has been criticised for being “overly simplified”, “individualised and of little utility” (see O’Sullivan 1983; Bass 1969; Brown 1979; Dimmick 1974). One can also point out that rather than only selecting, gatekeeping also involves discarding, producing and packaging, transforming and distributing news media content. The realisation that gatekeeping can also be studied on multiple levels of analysis allows for a richly elaborated concept. As shown by Shoemaker, gatekeeping can be studied on at least five levels: individual, routines of work, organisational, social and institutional, and ideological (1991; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Gatekeeping has privileged journalists and especially editors as the determinants of the flow of information. In the convergence arena, a transformation has occurred in that relationship and challenges the status of gatekeeping.

In keeping with its focus on the gatekeeping role of journalists, this study adopts the sociology of news framework, which documents the influence of many factors, including media routines and professional norms on news media content (see for example, Fishman 1980; Soloski 1989; Tuchman 1978). Gatekeeping has traditionally been a key process when it comes to print and broadcast media and that prominence has made its way to the internet as well. Scholars have suggested that the web challenges the traditional gatekeeping significance of old media as a whole because “anybody” in theory may now become a sender and receiver of news (Kawamoto 2003; Singer 1998). In stand-alone media, editorial managers need to appreciate the strengths of each medium so that their gatekeeping is informed by what reporting resources they allocate to stories. When convergence is added to the mixture, such roles become even more challenging and complicated. Editorial managers must now think about more than what the stories are and how they will be covered for a single outlet, but also determine the practices and various ways to cover the story for print, broadcast and online platforms.

This study will focus on gatekeeping (in the expanded understanding of Shoemaker and Reese, 1991) because it is one of the most salient aspects affected by convergence. Gatekeeping, in multi-platform publishing, challenges decision-making, multi-skilling, workloads and staffing. Convergence also complicates gatekeeping because it can accompany increased content flows that emanate from the audience, not just the professional employees of a media house. Findings reveal that news executives are expanding opportunities for user content but are experiencing problems with incorporating this into professional journalism structures due to concerns about reputation, trust and legal issues (see Deuze 2004, 2005, 2006; Jenkins 2004; Gillmor 2004; Bowman and Willis 2003).

1.5 Objectives of the study

Applying the idea of gatekeeping in newsroom convergence is not a new concept, however, current research is limited. Drawing on Shoemaker and Reese’s theorisation of news influences, this qualitative study examines the following research questions: (1) To what extent does Shoemaker and Reese’s theory apply to converged media? (2) How do editorial managers recognise the best medium for a particular story with

regard to deadlines and new values? (3) How are stories tailored to meet the needs of various media if at all? (4) How are gatekeeping decisions affected by user-generated content if at all?

1.6 Scope and significance of the study

This study is limited to studying gatekeeping implications in newsroom convergence operation at MoAfrika. I focus on gatekeeping because it is one of the most salient aspects affected by convergence. The process of gatekeeping determines what information is provided to the audience from traditional journalistic organisations. Field studies of newsroom dynamics have shed light on the interpersonal, institutional and political dimensions of editorial work (Gans 1979; Schudson 2000; Tuchman 1978). Despite these valuable contributions, research in this area has mostly neglected the newsroom's technological dimension. In a review of research on news work, Schudson concluded "there has been little academic attention to the concrete consequences of technological transformation of news production" (2000:182). A large portion of the research on digitisation processes and media convergence has addressed the relationship between print newspapers and online newspapers (see Sparks, 1996; Boczkowski, 2004). This research, therefore, attempts to fill this gap and make a contribution to knowledge by foregrounding the consequences of technology on newsrooms and the gatekeeping that affects what content emerges from them.

Little research has been conducted in the third world and in Lesotho in particular, on how convergence has changed journalistic traditional practices. I hope that media scholars will find findings of this study a contribution to the existing literature on gatekeeping and newsroom convergence. One major assumption that guided this research was that MoAfrika was the only media company in Lesotho practising some form of convergence at the time of research. As such, MoAfrika was vital to investigate.

1.7 Research methodology

This study is informed by research into gatekeeping theory which stipulates that in a system such as a media organisation, there are gatekeepers who regulate the flow of information, language and knowledge (White 1950 cited in Shoemaker 1991:12). In order to understand how, in a wider context as highlighted by Shoemaker and Reese, gatekeepers decide to treat stories this study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is known for its substantial attention to detail in the research process (Bryman 1988:63).

To achieve this goal, two sources of data: interviews and observation were used to address the research questions. My choice of two sources was motivated by Hansen's argument that "researchers should not only consider which is the most appropriate method for the study of their chosen topic but also what combination of research methods will produce a better and deeper understanding of it" (Hansen et al 1998:1).

Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were utilised to choose the interview subjects. The interview subjects were selected in consideration of their roles in MoAfrika's news organisation, position of authority and involvement in gatekeeping within convergence. I interviewed the Managing Editor, two news editors, reporters and technical personnel. Information from these interviews provided explanatory and descriptive data to the study. Through observations I was able to witness and note things as they happened. Data was collected in a defined news cycle (June, 10-16, 2008).

1.8 Breakdown of chapters

This thesis is presented in six chapters. In the first chapter, I provide background and discuss the context within which this study is conducted, and highlight the research problem and significance of the study. It also outlines the objectives of the study, methods used to collect data and the thesis structure. Chapter two presents a review of literature on gatekeeping and discusses theoretical debates under which this study is premised. Most arguments in the literature are supported by findings in chapter four. In chapter three, the researcher presents a qualitative case study model used to collect data for this study. A discussion of the methods and procedures used is then

presented. This chapter discusses and justifies the research design, a qualitative research method adopted for the study. This is done in line with the objectives and goals of the study. The chapter also discusses the sample used in the study and the unit of analysis.

Chapter four presents the findings which indicate that convergence advocates some degree of multi-skilling, speeds up the production process, creates a journalistic culture clash and has a bearing on gatekeeping. Chapter five discusses these findings and implications of the conducted research. Chapter six concludes the study with a general conclusion of the study's significance, its limitations and suggests recommendations for future research. It presents a summary of the main findings and discusses the main issues arising from the study. It has recommended that the common goal for MoAfrika's convergence operation should be to use the strengths of each media to tell the story in the best way. It also proposed that MoAfrika opens up the news-making process to users, offer staff adequate training for work in a different medium and decide what it does best with the resources it has available among others.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to a review of literature on gatekeeping research in the era of newsroom convergence. It will cover the conceptual basis of gatekeeping and findings from Mr Gates and other gatekeeping studies. It looks at definitional debates of the term convergence, studies conducted on convergence in newsrooms around the world, the theoretical framework underpinning media convergence and the debates around it as a strategy adopted by media companies. This study is guided by gatekeeping theory which stipulates that in a system such as a media organisation, there is gatekeeping to regulate the flow of information, language and knowledge (White 1950). Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchical model of news influences that allows the analysis of gatekeeping in five levels is also presented and discussed. In its simplest conceptualisation, gatekeeping is the process of winnowing down thousands of potential story ideas to the few that are transmitted by the news media. In this study, the focus is on what affects the output content in a convergent operation.

2.2 Origins and dimensions of gatekeeping theory

The gatekeeping concept is one of the oldest and most frequently researched areas in the field of mass communication. This concept is originally attributed to research by psychologist Kurt Lewin (1947) who conceived of news as flowing in a channel containing several gates controlled by gatekeepers, each of whom decides whether a news item would proceed along the channel to eventually reach news audiences. In his 1950's pioneering study, White observed how a wire service editor at a small Midwestern newspaper selected and rejected different news items. At the heart of gatekeeping is the examination of content selection process by mass media editors. At its most basic, gatekeeping simply refers to a regime of control over what content is allowed to emerge from the production process in print and broadcast media; the

controllers of these media, in other words, control the gates through which content is released to their audiences.

Additionally, in most gatekeeping practices there are explicitly defined limitations to what news and information enters into the news production process. Such limitations may stem from journalists' attitudes, from organisational patterns, from routine journalistic practice or from necessities of day-to-day work. Beyond this, specific news organisations may also have house policies to cover or ignore events because of their implications for the organisation's political or commercial agenda. In effect, then, two gates are controlled in the news organisation: one at the input stage through which news and information is allowed into the news production process, and one at the output stage through which news reports emerge into the media. In addition to these two gatekeeping stages, it is further possible to identify a third form of gatekeeping which takes place some time after the publication of the initial news report: gatekeeping as it is applied to audience responses.

Over the past decades, research into gatekeeping has produced a wide body of literature that examined different aspects of this news selection mechanism. Much of this research focuses on the editorial news selection process and the factors that influence newsworthiness. Snider (1967) attempted to replicate White's study in the context of the 1960's. Chang and Lee (1992) found that security and national interest were major factors that influenced the selection of international news in American daily newspapers. Shoemaker et al (2001) found that editors' assessment of legislative bills' newsworthiness was positively related to the amount of bill coverage. Wanta and Roark (1992) found gatekeeping considerations to affect the selection of both wire text and photos and Gieber's (1960) comparison of gatekeeping news selection process in 16 news wires showed them to be highly comparable. Singer (2001) examined the role of gatekeepers on the World Wide Web. The author identified differences in the content selection strategies of gatekeepers between the print and online mediums.

Since its debut, a series of scholars has advanced gatekeeping theory. Shoemaker writes that the basic idea of gatekeeping, that some selectivity in how many news items is presented, has always been apparent (1991:2). However subsequent analyses

of that research contend that the work of those individual gatekeepers is influenced by other gatekeeping forces such as the professional routines of journalists and the influence of the news organisation, thus revealing gatekeeping to be more complex than previously thought. These studies demonstrate that gatekeeping is a process based on forces operating on more than just the individual level of analysis. Therefore, this study uses gatekeeping with Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchical model of news influences (1996).

2.3 Hierarchy of news influences

There exists a significant body of research to demonstrate the many ways in which daily practices in newsrooms have an impact on news content. Through such studies it has been learned, for example, how news content is affected by entrenched social structures (Tuchman 1978), daily deadlines (Shook, Lattimore & Redmond 1996), and resource allocation (Gant & Dimmick 2000; McManus 1990, 1994). The realisation that gatekeeping can be studied on multiple levels of analysis allows for a richly elaborated concept. As shown by Shoemaker and Reese (1996), gatekeeping can be studied on at least five levels: individual, routines of work, organisational, social and institutional (extramedia) and ideological.

The individual level focuses on the factors intrinsic to the journalist such as: attitudes, personal and professional background, values and beliefs. Selections here are personal, influenced by likes and dislikes. At this level of analysis, gatekeeping theory stipulates that professional journalists and editors decide what events to admit through the gates of the media based on particular criteria (Gieber 1956; Shoemaker 1991; McQuail 2000). "Mr Gates" who selected a relatively limited number of stories for publication and rejected the rest, saw to it that "the community shall hear as a fact only those events which the newsman, as the representative of his culture, believes to be true" (White, 1951 cited in Shoemaker 1991:10). White concluded that overall, the editor's decisions were "highly subjective and based on the gatekeeper's own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations" as to what constitutes the news. This level is thought to be important because some researchers argue that personal and political characteristics influence news content (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim and Wrigley 2001:233).

On the level of routines of work, decisions are made according to pre-established and generalised practices on how the work is to be done and news values. These values include accuracy, the right length, good visuals, human interest, novelty, negativity, conflict and violence, loss of lives, and the story's timeliness. Some gatekeeper-journalists claim to select news mostly based on instinct and news judgment (see Berkowitz, 1990, 1991). Routines are the "patterned repeated practices and forms media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker and Reese 1991:85). Tuchman said news is an outcome of a "strategic ritual" (1978) and Fishman (1980) called routines the "crucial factor which determines how newswriters construe the world of activities they confront" (Fishman 1980:28). Other routines-level forces include how much effort a news item takes to be transformed into a story, whether selection decisions are routinely made by individuals or groups of people (Berkowitz 1990), and the desire for a 'balanced' mix of stories.

On the organisational level of analysis, the gatekeeper's position within the organisation is seen as influencing the power he or she has in making final selection decisions. At the organisational level, news is the result of a combination of decisions by journalists within news organisations and the influences from media owners, editorial policies and budget constraints (Donohue, 1967; Epstein, 1973; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). It is suggested that "most media regulation starts internally, and that media's self-censorship can often be more crucial than outside pressures" (Hiebert et al 1991:91). Organisational-level force research has included whether a radio station has a group affiliation (Riffe and Shaw 1990); the number of gates a news item must pass through within the organisation (Berkowitz 1990); and resource constraints, such as number of staff, level of funding and equipment availability (Berkowitz 1991). McCombs and Becker (1979) suggest that whether a gatekeeper is assigned the work role of a news manager or a news gatherer is important in studying the gatekeeping process because people in the two types of jobs face different pressures or forces.

Extra-media influences include but are not limited to news sources, audiences and corporate advertisers, media markets and economic forces, government, interest groups, public relations efforts, and competition with other news media (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1989; Willis 1987). News judgment, according to a cultural perspective, is also a product of differences in socio-cultural orientations. These

structural attributes differentiate one society from another, and people with similar attributes tend to relate more with one another (Reese and Ballinger 2000; Fee 2002). Based on this gatekeeping perspective, news items are accepted or rejected based on various factors, such as journalists' perceptions of a news event, daily working norms, the written and unwritten rules of news organisations, and extra-media pressures as well as societal and cultural influences. Extramedia force research has included the availability and capabilities of new technologies and the availability and quality of information subsidies, such as video releases (Berkowitz 1991). Riffe and Shaw (1990) found that the size of the market positively influenced the amount of news radio stations can carry.

The final analysis level is the basis for the other influences. The culture, societal interests, societal structure and ideology are all variables of this level (Shoemaker 1991:68). These variables often contribute to the media treating ideas that deviate from the status quo as illegitimate. Content is also a function of ideological positions and maintains the status quo. The hegemony approach locates the major influence on media content as the pressures to support the status quo, to support the interests of those in power in society. Ideologically, professionalism takes on broader implication, that professional values should be consistent with the prevailing power structures.

From this model the researcher can conclude that what appears in the mass media results from many different influences. The five levels form a hierarchy of influences that can and do occur simultaneously. Each class evidently is affected by those that encircle it. The individual analysis should not be discarded because as Mills (1990) argues, personal values journalists bring to their jobs from their social background will "colour the news they produce" (cited in Willis 1997:30). While this level is important in analysing influences to news content, it is certainly limited. The work of individual communicators cannot be understood outside organisational, industrial and institutional contexts.

2.4 Method and models

Shoemaker notes that although several gatekeeping models have been proposed (McQuail and Windahl 1981), “none covers the full complexity of gatekeeping in the communication process” (1991:4). This may help explain why O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske say that gatekeeping is “oversimplified and of little utility” (1988:97-98). The theory as it is diversely developed and applied has “appeal and plausibility” and applications wider than news decisions (McQuail 2000: 277). However, these criticisms do not invalidate the theory as much as they caution about missing complexity when doing a study within this framework.

Its chief value comes in summarising the various forces that come into play as news people make decisions about what messages will be selected to present to their audiences. It provides a framework researchers can use. It serves as a building block for other theory and methodological approaches. In this light, one can agree with Fisher (1978) who saw gatekeeping as “a significant element in much communication research and is therefore, a basic and powerful force in society” (1978:120).

Since its first appearance, researchers have extended the study of gatekeeping activities in newspaper newsrooms, to television newsrooms (Abbott and Brassfield 1989) and at websites (Beard and Olsen 1999). They have also expanded their study from the individual journalist to the study of four other levels of analysis (Shoemaker 1991:32). Researchers have used case studies, surveys, content analysis and a host of other methods to determine how and why news becomes news. They have looked to see if gender, publisher’s attitude or wire services influence news. The 1950 study of Mr Gates and the follow up of Ms Gates were examples of case studies that “examined many characteristics of a single subject” (Severin and Tankard 1988:24). One of the most common methods of studying gatekeeping is the survey. Severin and Tankard said “a sample survey is used to answer questions about how a large number of subjects feel, behave or are” (1988:17). Shoemaker also used the survey method in 2001. She surveyed reporters and editors about the coverage of congressional bills. Berkowitz (1990, 1991) used an unstructured interview format coupled with four weeks of observation to determine the reasons behind news selection. A third method of study is content analysis. Severin and Tankard define this as “a systematic method

of analysing message content” (1988:19). Smith, Tumlin and Henning used content analysis in their 1988 study. Several researchers used a combination of the above methods (Dimmick 1974; Fee 2002; Donohew 1967).

2.5 My core assumptions of gatekeeping

New developments in the field of journalism are changing the role and process of gatekeeping. Many factors influence gatekeepers. No universally accepted definition of a mass communication gatekeeper exists. Bass (1969) said there could be two types of gatekeepers, news gatherers and news processors. Shoemaker (1991) suggests that all media workers are gatekeepers to some degree but she does not follow up that suggestion in her research. How is media worker defined? Have they all been studied? How does a researcher identify gatekeepers?

Though there is no single gatekeeping theory, several academics have provided a conceptual base by rooting their ideas about gatekeeping in other theories (McQuail and Windahl 1981). They help explain how news moves through gates, what influences the gate and how the gatekeepers make decisions. Individual, organisational, societal and a host of other influences play a part in the gatekeeping process. My theory conforms to a gatekeeping writer who argues that “the gatekeeping process relies on individuals with personal ideas and beliefs functioning within organisations that have a set of norms, which are tied to larger societal ideologies” (Shoemaker 1991:71).

I wish to argue that gatekeeping involves not just selection, but producing, discarding, processing, packaging and transforming content as well. The packaging is especially relevant to convergence, in theory at least. I agree with Donohue et al who contend that rather than only selection, gatekeeping includes “the selection, shaping, display, timing, withholding and repetition of messages” (1972 cited in Shoemaker 1991:43).

The concept of news workflow refers to the dynamics of media production and it embraces the process which goes from story assignment and its production to editing and packaging content, and distribution. The gatekeeper is the person who decides: what shall pass through each gate section and if it will be reprocessed there. Gatekeeping occurs at all levels of the media structure, from a reporter deciding

which sources are chosen to include in a story to editors deciding which stories are printed, or even covered. A focus on media gatekeeping shows that decision making is based on principles of individual beliefs, news values, organisational routines, input structure and ideology.

As studies by Altheide (1976) and Schlesinger (1978) show, all journalists are to some extent gatekeepers in the flow of information from source to receivers. 'Copy-flow' starts with an organisation choosing to cover a particular issue, and then, choosing to allow information about that issue through the initial gate and to begin the flow towards its audience. At a number of points along the production process, a variety of journalists must make decisions about continuing and discontinuing the copy flow of every story and about what production work to do in terms of transforming or not the content that does go through. Perhaps the most influential of all these gatekeepers are the editors who make decisions about which stories will get into the production and what prominence will be assigned to them. Editors are a small subset of the editorial team in a newsroom but they clearly wield an enormous amount of influence in 'constructing a reality' for the audience and a newsroom relies on their judgement to an enormous extent in addressing its audience.

For purposes of this study, gatekeeping will only be investigated in the editing of the news workflow. This is because editors are basically the traffic cops in a newsroom. The editor decides if, when and how a story will be used. News media gatekeepers are particularly important because these senior editors and producers determine what goes into print or on air, assign reporters to stories, and set editorial policy. If the editor is the final arbiter on editorial content, that implies seniority. They may also intervene or specify what processing takes place of the selected content. The roles of editors become much more complicated in a converged newsroom. They must now think about more than what the stories are and how they will be covered. They must determine the best ways to cover the story for print, broadcast and online platforms. Editors can no longer think of stories for one medium exclusively. They need to determine the "best" ways to tell a story.

In the next section, convergence is discussed in detail. The role of editors is especially relevant to convergence.

2.6 Defining convergence

There is no single definition for convergence. We can think about convergence in several different ways. One is in terms of different industries converging, such as telecommunications, media-entertainment, and computing. Another is converging voice, video, and data over a common infrastructure or within a common computing platform. These previously separate technologies are now able to share resources and interact with each other creating new efficiencies. In regard to a third area of focus, Pavlik reports that convergence results in “an unprecedented opportunity for creating collaborative approaches to reporting” (2004:12). He adds that the rapid convergence of computing and telecommunications technologies is rapidly rewriting the traditional assumptions of newsroom organisation and structure. It has been noted that the trend toward convergence among media companies is becoming more common and is being driven by “a set of economic, regulatory and cultural forces driven by technological change” (Pavlik 2004:12).

It is also argued that convergence within the media operates at different levels, as can be seen in the remark that “convergence is a very polysemous concept that has been used to describe various trends in journalism that have something in common: the blurring of limits between different media, professional skills and roles” (Domingo 2006:1).

Despite the wealth of writing on convergence (see Berger 2001, Buckland 2006, 2007, Jenkins 2006, Singer 2003, 2004, Quinn 2005, Pavlik 2004), the academic and trade literature reflects a lack of agreement on the definition of the term. Convergence is a form of merger between previously competitive media delivery formats. From the technological side, the general concept has been to bring the platforms together to provide information to the public through shared multiple technical pipelines. On the content delivery side of convergence, the founding idea was to ensure relatively equal distribution of information through each platform, thus creating a partnering of equal information providers (Killebrew 2004:40). Because of the relative newness of the converged environment, it seems logical that the media platform that is more entrenched may exercise a level of influence on the other partners in the convergence process.

This study is placed within a broad convergence framework. Although the study focuses specifically on the newsroom environment, it is important to realise that media convergence represents more than a common technical platform. In the next section I distinguish convergence at the two levels of media and newsroom:

2.6.1 Media convergence

The term media convergence originated in an attempt to give meaning to the phenomenon whereby different media forms come together or exist in synergy with each other. Such convergence occurs in a market context characterised by the growth of the internet news users and media diversification (see Deuze 2004; Klinenberg 2005). Media convergence is inseparably related to industry convergence facilitated by media digitisation and the global reach of the internet. As managers perceived the internet as a multimedia platform, convergence has grown to currently become 'the strategic option' for many media companies (Dennis et al 2003).

According to Jenkins (2001), part of the confusion about media convergence stems from the fact that when people talk about it, they are actually describing at least five processes: technological, economic, social, cultural and global. Technological convergence is the digitisation of all media content. When words, images and sounds are transformed into digital information, the potential relationships between them are expanded and enabled to flow across platforms (see Hansen et al 1994; Hermida and Thurman 2007). There is technological convergence within content production devices, distribution devices and consumer devices.

Economic convergence refers to the horizontal integration of the communications industry. This is usually implemented to reduce operating costs, which in turn increases revenue. A company like AOL Time Warner controls interests in film, television, books, games, the Web, music, real estate and countless other sectors. The result has been the restructuring of cultural production around "synergies" and thus the transmedia exploitation of branded properties. Media convergence is an economic strategy in which communications companies seek financial benefit by making the various media properties they own work together. The strategy is a product of three

elements: 1) corporate concentration, whereby fewer companies own more and more media properties; 2) digitisation, whereby media content produced in a universal computer language can be easily adapted for use in any medium; and 3) government deregulation, which has increasingly allowed media companies to own different kinds of media (e.g. television and radio stations and newspapers) in the same markets. The strategy allows companies to reduce labour, administrative and material costs, to use the same media content across several media outlets and to increase brand recognition and brand loyalty among audiences through cross-promotion and cross-selling.

From the business perspective, newsroom convergence tends to be regarded as a cost-saving strategy and as an opportunity for newspaper editors to revise their business models. According to Quinn (2005), managers adopt convergence with two main goals: improving the quality of journalism and tightening production costs.

Social convergence refers to consumers' multitasking strategies for navigating the new information environment. For example, this occurs when a student is watching rugby on a big-screen television, listening to music on ipod, word-processing an essay and chatting to friends on Facebook and also convergence between all three moments in a single device as well, even though diverged, devices and technology are not killed off.

Cultural convergence is the explosion of new forms of creativity at the intersections of various media technologies, industries and consumers. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences. Global convergence is the cultural hybridity that results from the international circulation of media content. These new forms reflect the experience of being a citizen of the "global village" (2001:93-94).

Several forces, working together, render this form of publishing possible. The main factors are the fragmenting of audiences, the availability of relatively reasonable digital technology and changes in social and legal structures that make cross-media ownership more possible. Media companies hope they can reach fragmented audiences through multiple media, recognising that consumers have already embraced

convergence, in the sense that they use a multitude of media. These forces can be elaborated as follows:

Technology

From a technological perspective, digitalisation makes it more and more important not to rigidly separate different media as almost all media content can be repurposed with the help of database publishing. This does not mean that there still are not huge (historically constructed) differences in media institutions, audiences and responses, an aspect that seems to be quite often forgotten in the most enthusiastic techno-discourses. This technological convergence has streamlined the process of reporting and disseminating the news (see Hansen et al 1994; Jankowski and Martine 2000). The common thread of convergence as Berger puts it is “therefore the coming together of things that were formerly apart” (2001:21).

Media Economics

Media convergence is more than simply a technological shift as cost-conscious media companies have realised the advantages of forming partnerships in the face of rising costs, shrinking audience shares and revenue streams (see McQuail and Siune 1998; Erdal 2007; Saltzis 2006). The strategy allows companies to reduce labour, administrative and material costs, to use the same media content across several media outlets to attract increased advertising, increase brand recognition and loyalty among audience through cross-promotion and cross-selling. Media companies are looking to convergence as one solution to the uncertainty in the marketplace. According to Kawamoto (2003:5),

“Newspapers were getting signals that their industry was in decline, especially with the younger generation of information seekers and they would continue to suffer unless they embraced a number of technological, economic, and organizational innovations”.

2.6.2 Newsroom convergence

The existing literature distinguishes newsroom convergence from other, more technical forms of convergence although there is not one all-encompassing definition. For purposes of this study, newsroom convergence refers to blurring lines between

traditionally separate media due to the growing use and influence of digitisation within a single enterprise's production systems (Quinn 2005:29). Gordon attempted to distinguish newsroom convergence from other forms of convergence when he wrote that it is one of the five distinct forms of convergence: ownership, tactical, structural, and information-gathering and storytelling. As discussed at the media level in 2.6.1.above, ownership convergence refers to the ownership of multiple content and/or distribution channels by a company. Tactical convergence is the cross-promotion and sharing of content between print and broadcast organisations. Coming down to the newsroom level, structural convergence defines changes in job descriptions and organisational structure when media organisations begin to merge their content. Information-gathering convergence occurs when news staffers collaborate on story production. A TV reporter may cover an event for broadcast then write a longer story for the web. In other words, journalists multi-task in multiple media, whether it is one story produced by a team of online, print and broadcast staffers or one reporter preparing variations of one story for several different media. Finally, storytelling convergence describes the new innovative forms of presenting information (Gordon cited in Quinn 2005:32). A debate often occurs between those people (Ursell 2001; Fidler 1997) who see convergence simply as a technological development driven by newly available digital tools and others (Tompkins 2001; Stevens 2002) who say convergence must be defined in terms of fundamental changes in storytelling. So this requires empirical research.

Convergence is reshaping the landscape of journalism in a variety of ways for, as Pavlik puts it, "newsroom structure, journalistic practices and news content are all evolving" (2004:28). The process has been described in terms of "increasing cooperation and collaboration between formerly distinct newsrooms" (Deuze 2004:40). The definition of convergence is evolving in a media landscape where competing media are "forming alliances to meet a variety of technological, editorial, regulatory and market-based opportunities and challenges" (Dailey et al 2003:3).

When many newspapers launched their web services, they initially chose to set up a small newsroom whose journalists were devoted for the most part to repackaging news content from the traditional media in the new platform (Boczkowski 2004; Deuze 1999), although some news organisations began to draw plans to converge

their print and online newsrooms. At that stage, convergence originated many practical problems and it was regarded with scepticism by industry leaders and fiercely opposed by many journalists (see Stone 2001; Ulrik 2002).

Models of newsroom convergence have been established by several writers. Dailey et al (2005) have conceptualised the nature of newsroom convergence following the assumption that convergence is characterised by “some degree of interaction and cooperation among cross-media partners, whether the media are owned by common or separate companies” (2005:151). These authors established ‘the Convergence Continuum Model’ and the categorisation of the specific cross-media behaviours in the various levels on that model.

In Lesotho only one company has so far implemented newsroom integration to supply the information requirements of at least three media. Over the past year, MoAfrika has begun a process of convergence which is still in its infancy. The most extended model of convergence contemplates the collaboration of journalists from different platforms, content cross-promotion and multimedia coverage of news events. In South Africa, the most significant convergence ventures began at three newspaper companies: *Die Burger*, *Mail and Guardian* and *The Times*. In United States, Media General’s Tampa News Centre (Huang et al 2004; Dupagne and Garrison 2006), the Tribune Group and Belo Corporation (Lawson-Borders 2006:127-58) were pioneers.

Discussion of media and newsroom convergence has constituted one of the major discourses in the media environment during the last decade. As with any discourse, in a Foucaultian sense, convergence talk has also had real and material consequences: it has reformulated media economics and politics, nation states and media companies; it has precipitated reorganisation of media companies and changed media environments in the name of digitalisation.

2.7 Studies in newsroom convergence

Several case studies have examined converged newsrooms (see for example Filak, 2004; Singer, 2004a; Dupagne & Garrison, 2006). Other studies have examined the impact of the Internet in news work, and the emergence of online newspapers (for

example Garrison 2001; Flynn 2001). The Tampa News centre convergence effort triggered media researchers into examining the actual changes inside newsrooms and the effects this converged environment has on reporters (see Singer 2004a; Silcock and Keith 2006; Dupagne et al. 2006). Since fully converged newsrooms remain rare, “little research has examined how convergent news operations, such as those at the News Centre in Tampa, have affected newsroom practices, roles, and culture” (Dupagne et al. 2006:241).

Singer’s (2004) study examines newsroom convergence among previously distinct provinces of print, broadcast and online media through the framework of diffusion of innovation theory. Ashton and Cottle (1999) examined how new communication technologies, digitalisation and technological convergence along with multi-skilling and multi-media production are now contributing to the transformation of broadcast news production at BBC. Dupagne and Garrison (2006) investigated the meaning of media convergence experiment, the changes in the newsroom culture, and the type of job skills necessary in a convergent newsroom at Tampa News Centre.

Some studies have investigated whether media convergence yields direct effect on media use, content diversity, newsroom practices and curriculum structure. Killebrew (2004) hypothesises that “convergence will disrupt news operations due to differences in cultures and decision making procedures” (2003:43). Powers (2005) investigated how news managers were overcoming barriers to convergence when dealing with personnel. Her findings indicate that leadership behaviours relate to job satisfaction and to greater levels of convergence activities.

Despite these valuable contributions made by scholars to the converged newsroom studies, there has been little attention to the effect of newsroom convergence on traditional newsroom practices and routines; hence this research investigates the implications of gatekeeping in a converged newsroom. Previous research shows that convergence varies from company to company and in context, therefore they cannot be generalised. This study will add new knowledge from an African context to the existing scholarship.

2.8 Debating convergence

Some critics equate convergence with monolithic news and opinion. They argue that substituting cooperation for competition will curtail the diversity of voices in the media which may best serve a democracy and an informed public (Gates 2002:17). There is fear that convergence is more of a marketing ploy than anything else, very good for media companies but very bad for journalism. Haiman has argued that “no matter how smoothly the transformation into convergence goes, it will still be a distraction to journalists” (2001:22). For its proponents, convergence is the appropriate business and journalistic response to customers’ increasingly multiple media consumption. According to Huang et al (2005), there is a growing concern among media analysts that cross promotion could harm the diversity of viewpoints in the news (2005:85). Some critics lament that ‘convergence is the enemy of good journalism’ (Haiman 2001:36).

This trend of media convergence has brought up many concerns, such as the need to update news staff, production quality, compensation for multiplatform productions and who is benefiting from convergence (see Huang et al 2005; Singer 2003, Buckland 2007) It is predicted “despite the uncertainty about where convergence will take journalism in the future, changes in the form of new jobs, new job requirements and new opportunities lie ahead” (Kawamoto 2003:72). Killebrew has argued that

(i)f convergence is done for journalism’s sake and to increase the effective coverage of meaningful stories, it is a welcome and useful extension of our field. If, however, convergence is embraced by management as a way to create economies of scale, produce information more efficiently across platforms and increase profits without improving journalism, it will fail (2004:33).

Today, media convergence is sparking a range of social, political, economic and legal disputes because of the conflicting goals of owners, consumers, producers and gatekeepers. These contradictory forces are observed to be “pushing both toward cultural diversity and toward homogenisation, toward commercialisation and toward grassroots cultural production” (Jenkins 2001:93).

Newsroom convergence challenges some traditional journalistic practices. First, it advocates some degree of multi-skilling. Debate on gatekeeping implications on newsroom convergence raises many questions such as just what and how much one person can be asked to do. Second, it can also speed up the production process, in order to meet shorter deadlines, as argued by Singer (2006), where questions arise about journalism standards and editing procedures. Finally, it creates a conflict between routines and practices prevailing in each journalistic culture (print, broadcast, online) when they get to work together (Huang et al 2006). Convergence also complicates gatekeeping because it enables increased content flows to emanate from the audience, not just the professional employees of a media house (see Gillmor 2004; Hermida and Thurman 2007).

The purpose of this section was to outline concerns that scholars have raised about convergence at levels of media and newsroom. These concerns serve as background for further research. I believe to be converged media need to respect differences, but also to celebrate similarities. Sufficient training and compensation is essential.

2.9 Gatekeeping and convergence

The increasing convergence of news media industries makes gatekeeping of continuing interest particularly on the routines and organisational levels of analysis. If a newspaper, radio and web come together to provide a new form of news medium, which routines prevail? Or is some new set of routines established? Likewise when two organisations with different organisational cultures and structures collaborate on news production, how will their differing organisational characteristics impact on the selection and shaping of the news? The arrival of the Internet as a mass communication source in developed countries has further sparked considerations of gatekeeping in both scholarly research and in popular press (see Fitzgerald et al 2003; Garcia and Leon 2006; Garnham...). Singer (2001) for example, has studied how traditional newspapers (now referred to as “mainstream” media) chose to link or not to link to Web sites, and how those decisions forced more decisions by gatekeepers.

Gatekeepers have traditionally played a key role when it comes to print and broadcast media. That prominence has made its way to the internet as well. When convergence is added to the mixture, these roles become even more challenging and complicated. Editors must now think about more than what the stories are and how they will be covered, but also determine the “best” way to cover (or not) a story for print, broadcast and online platforms (see Kawamoto 1998; Singer 1998).

It has been argued that convergence of professional and amateur content creators online is contributing to changing the concept of news and newsgathering. Some argue that new technologies are enabling the public to join professional journalists as gatekeepers of information today (see Witt 2004c). Pavlik and Beyers agree that convergence “is reshaping the landscape of journalism” in terms of “newsroom structures, journalistic practices, and news content” for news workers as much as for their audiences (cited in Pavlik et al 2004:35), and this would clearly impact on gatekeeping.

Convergence potentially blurs distinctions among media domains leading to questions about changes that journalists may need to make in the practice of news work. Many news practitioners’ functions are gradually changing or are expected to change as media convergence rolls on. Changing technology continues to challenge, with many new questions remaining unanswered (Carr 2002:59). Many newsrooms find themselves struggling with questions such as, “How much time can we devote to creating web content without weakening stories for the paper?” (Wenger 2005:40). Every newsroom must decide what it does best with the resources it has available.

Gatekeepers working in television are said to have more autonomy than gatekeepers at newspapers (Abbott and Brassfield 1989:26). Stempel (1985) found that gatekeepers have similar news values depending on the medium within which they work. If gatekeeping includes all these processes, then routines of individual medium staffers will obviously clash. There is a significant difference in how newspapers are structured, compared to broadcast media. In general, a newspaper covers much more news than the broadcast media, because it has much more space to fill. Another key difference between each medium is the deadline. TV and radio have several deadlines throughout the day depending on when newscasts are scheduled. Newspapers have a

set deadline. The Web, however, has no deadline. It needs to be updated constantly. Converged newsrooms offer researchers new venues for extending the understanding of gatekeeping. The suggestion that newspaper and broadcast journalists bring different news values to their jobs, (see Reese and Ballinger 2000; Shoemaker 1991; Abbott and Brassfield 1989 and Berkowitz 1990) presents an opportunity for research.

Gatekeeping in converged newsrooms raises four main concerns. First is the extent to which differing news values of individual broadcast, newspaper and online journalists affect decisions made in converged operations? Second, there is the effect on the new media operations of different established routines of journalists? For example, will new routines emerge to accommodate the needs of the new medium? If newspaper and radio journalists bring different routines to the converged operation, which set of routines will survive? Third, there is the effect of the different organisational structures of those organisations? Finally, one can identify different forces that determine where a news item is published first. Critics have raised concerns that convergent newsrooms would damage the editorial independence of news operations, reduce the amount of original content and augment employee workloads without proper compensation. This constitutes a fifth area of concern.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter covered gatekeeping on five levels of analysis, looking at individual gatekeeping decisions, the influences of work routines, organisational gatekeeping, social and institutional factors and social system influences such as ideology and culture. It synthesised what is known about gatekeeping and related it to newsroom convergence. Findings from other gatekeeping and convergence studies were discussed. It has argued that there are many gates and factors influencing what pass through these gates. Gatekeeping is a process based on forces operating on more than just the individual level of analysis. Rather than selection and discarding, gatekeeping also involves processing and transforming content. Convergence is occurring because of technological and business factors. Media convergence is about encoding new or existing information into several different products for transmission over a variety of vehicles to satisfy different customer needs. Newsroom convergence challenges some

traditional journalistic practices and routines. The next chapter discusses the methodology this study has employed.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design employed for this study. The discussion covers a statement of the research question, the overall research design to be implemented in order to answer the research question, the chosen research methodology and particular methods of data collection to be employed in the research. We need to know how the data was obtained because the method affects the results. Knowing how the data was collected helps the reader evaluate the validity and reliability of results, and the conclusions drawn from them.

3.2 Qualitative research methodology

The nature of the research questions demand that the respondents describe their experiences and perceptions of gatekeeping in a converged environment. Because the researcher has to interpret what the subjects of inquiry are articulating, therefore an interpretive qualitative research methodology is more suitable for the study in question. With a view of generating empirical data for this study, a research process was designed using qualitative method. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is

- (a) multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their

natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (2000:230).

Qualitative research is ideally performed in a naturalistic setting with emphasis on everyday behaviour and is often descriptive in nature. Qualitative researchers seek to explain the world rather than measure it. The world of social science is explanatory. As Iorio posits, “qualitative research is holistic and blatantly interpretive. Qualitative researchers go ‘into the field’ to gather data by observation and interaction with the people from whom they hope to learn from” (2004: 4).

Qualitative research sees the social world from the point of view of the actor (Bryman, 1988:106). Other than naturalistic inquiry or quantitative research, qualitative research often focuses on “only some partial set of relationships in group life or on one aspect of a scene” (Lindlof, 1995:21).

Qualitative researchers tend to conceive of their studies, most generally, as an iterative or repeated process which allows for the flexible application of theoretical concepts and analytical procedures to a wide variety of empirical domains. It is possible to identify three distinctive features that are shared by a number of qualitative research reference works (Bryman and Burgess 1999; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). First, there is the concept of meaning, as embedded in and orientation of social action. A second assumption is that “meaningful actions should be studied, as far as possible, in their naturalistic contexts” Jensen (2002:236). In its strong form, this assumption calls for the classical variety of anthropological fieldwork, in which a “researcher’s lengthy immersion in a whole culture enables the researcher to ultimately grasp in full ‘the native’s perspective’ on reality” (ibid). A third common feature concerns the role of the researcher, who is defined emphatically as an interpretive subject. In one sense, all research depends on the human subject as a primary instrument. However, a frequent criticism of qualitative research has been the lack of explicit research procedures.

Qualitative researchers often draw on a variety of methods selected according to their appropriateness to the particular study “in an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the subject” (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2). Participant observation

and case study are primary methods of qualitative empirical studies. I discuss the case study method in detail below.

3.3 Case study

Media research indicates that journalistic standards and practices are socially constructed systems, which deal with complex work processes by organising news flow and explicating roles and competencies (Tuchman 1978; Fishman 1980). The case study method is regarded as a valid tool to analyse a complex issue. A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin 2003:13). It is best used to understand complex social and organisational issues. Case study evidence to answer research questions and contribute to theory development originates from a variety of sources, such as documentation, archival records, interviews (qualitative or quantitative) and observation. In this study I focus on one organisation as a unit of analysis and use a combination of non-participant observation and in-depth interviews to address the research questions. The case study approach seems the most plausible choice because it concentrates on “an intensive investigation of a single unit” (Babbie & Mouton, 1998:281). That unit in this study is MoAfrika. With its phenomenological underpinnings and reliance on qualitative research methods, such as observation and interviews, the case study method provides me with a ‘thick description’ to develop what is to be perceived as “the case’s own issues, contexts, and interpretations...” (Stake 1994: 450).

The qualitative case study occupies a unique position in social sciences in that it is defined more by its object of inquiry (the case) than by the particular research methods used to study it. Simply put, a case study uses as many data sources as possible to investigate systematically a subject of inquiry. The case study as Stake (quoted in Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 236) noted “is not a methodological choice but a choice of object to be studied”. The object can be an individual, a group, an organisation, a community among many other things.

A purpose of the case study as argued by Jensen is “normally to arrive at descriptions and groupings which have implications for other larger social systems” (2002:239).

Another view however warns that “the aim of the case study research should be to capture cases in their uniqueness rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalisation or for theoretical reference of some kind” (Gomm et al 2000:3). With other qualitative research methods, case studies share the detailed attention given to phenomena within their everyday contexts and structural interrelations with other phenomena and contexts.

One of the most prominent case-study scholars defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2003: 13). This definition also highlights how the case study is a particular type of qualitative research that “contrasts with two other widely used strategies of social research: the experiment and social survey” (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster 2000:2). To exemplify this statement is simple: “in experiments, the researcher creates the case(s) studied, whereas case study researchers construct cases out of naturally occurring social situations” (Gomm et al., 2000:3).

Many case study researchers recommend using multiple sources of data, thus offering triangulation of the phenomenon under study (Gillham 2000, Gomm et al 2000, and Jensen 2002). In addition, multiple sources help the case study researcher improve reliability and validity of the study. The case study is most valuable in this research because the researcher wants to obtain a wealth of information about the research topic, newsroom convergence and its implications to the practice of gatekeeping. Simon (1969) argues that “the case study is particularly advantageous to the researcher who is trying to find clues and ideas for further research” (cited in Gomm et al 2000: 5). He adds that the case study technique can suggest why something has occurred. Depending on the characteristics of the object of inquiry and specific goals of the case study, the qualitative researcher uses different research methods including participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and archival research.

However, the technique is not above criticism. There are three main criticisms. The first, Yin (1984) points out that “many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the findings

and conclusions". The second is that it is not easily open to generalisation but if it is "contextualised and carefully described then others can consider its usefulness in other contexts and examples" (Wisker 2001:191). Finally, Dominick and Wimmer argue that case studies are likely to be "time consuming and may occasionally produce massive quantities of data that are hard to summarise" (1987:165). With regard to this study, I would like to argue that the strengths of observations outweigh the weaknesses. In addition, there is simply no other method that applies better to what I want to investigate. The findings are not representative of all newsrooms experimenting with convergence since the research is derived from one case. Therefore I do not wish to generalise any findings from this case study. I tried to "provide readers with good raw material for their own generalising" because "the reader can make his or her own generalisations and interpret it their way" (Stake, 1995:102). However, the findings will offer insights that could be probed for future studies.

3.4 Methods of data collection

The following section reviews the main instruments in qualitative research. It is noted that "the adequacy of a research method depends on the purpose of the research and the questions being asked" (Seidman 1991:4). This research brings into play methods of observation and semi-structured interviews. Non-participant observation was employed as the first source of data. A second source of case study data was the in-depth interview. The emphasis on observation and in-depth interviewing to gather information and the importance of perspective in explanation are all principal foundations of traditional journalism as well as qualitative methods. The techniques were chosen because of their respective capacities to generate relevant data to the research question. These methods provide the researcher with the opportunity for independent explanations; assessment and descriptions (see Deacon et al 1999; Lindlof 1995; Jensen 1982). My choice of these two sources is also motivated by Hansen's argument that "researchers should not only consider which is the most appropriate method for the study of their chosen topic but also what combination of research methods will produce a better and deeper understanding of it" (Hansen 1998:1). In the following section I discuss the rationale for each method and the process of their application in this research. In order to examine the explanatory value

of specific methods, I next consider more closely observation, which is frequently identified as the ideal method for qualitative research.

3.4.1 Observation

According to Jensen, observation refers inclusively to “a set of research activities that involve the continuous presence of the researcher in one delimited locale” (2000:242). The rationale for observation is that a very detailed analysis of a setting is necessary in order to establish the implications of what people do or say (Deacon et al 1999; Jensen and Jankowski 1991). This approach is in keeping with the qualitative ambition of searching out one’s analytical categories in the field itself. Observation entails the sustained immersion of the researcher among those studied with a view of generating an in-depth account of the group and the organisation. The typology suggests that observation is best suited for case studies. The researcher collects data while observing people interact and by interacting with them. Then the researcher analyses and writes about themes found in the setting.

The primary purpose of observation research, accordingly, is to describe in fundamental terms various events, situations, and actions that occur in particular social setting. This is done through the development of case studies of social phenomena, normally employing a combination of data-collection techniques. Deacon et al have observed:

(o)ne of the strongest claims made by observation studies is about being there actually witnessing the events or processes being researched. It gives one an opportunity to produce independent assessments of events and processes (1999:258-259).

Many qualitative researchers see the latter as a weakness of the observation method because a researcher may make biased assessments (for example Babbie et al., 1998; Gorman et al., 2005). It can also be strength because it helps the researcher to understand newsroom interactions better than an “outsider”. Other weaknesses that are of importance to this research method include the claim that “...observation can be very time consuming, even when appropriate events and situations are chosen; and

the subjectivity of the observer must always be taken into account” (Gorman et al., 2005:105; for more limitations see Yin, 1994 cited in Gray, 2004:135). The researcher combined observation with interviews in order to save time and record events and processes as they happened.

Elliot points out that one of the strengths of observation as a technique is that “it implicitly includes within itself other methods such as interviewing” (cited in Deacon et al 1999:277). Observation “has a present orientation, recording what occurs as it occurs; ...it allows behaviour to be observed in its natural setting; it permits the study of people who may be unwilling to give their own reports of their activities” (Gorman et al 2005:104; also see Yin 1994 cited in Gray 2004:135). Furthermore, observational studies “allow a flexibility of approach which permits researchers to modify their assumptions as they go along and unusual can be understood in the context of the routine” (Deacon et al 1999:259-260). The data collected from the observation periods provided a basis for more in-depth information which helped in constructing interview questions.

Not all gatekeeping processes are observable. Combining observational data with interviews can help the researcher understand the gatekeeping process better. The decision as to whether to use content analysis, surveys, personal interviews, observation or experimental methods to study gatekeeping depends on the hypotheses being tested (Shoemaker 1991:86). She adds that the fullest understanding of gatekeeping will come from a multiple-method strategy. Thus, while it is the most common method of data collection associated with qualitative research, observation is, as discussed, only one of these used in this study. The hypothesis being tested is addressed in the previous chapter.

3.4.2 Semi structured in-depth interviews

As a supplement to observation, the researcher used in-depth semi-structured interviews as an equally important qualitative approach. The interview method is a “valuable adjunct to observation” and also “has the potential to offer balance and corroboration where observed phenomena are complex or involve a number of factors” (Gorman et al. 2005:41). In-depth interviews have been called “one of the

most powerful methods” in qualitative research because they allow the investigator to “step in the mind of another person to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (McCracken cited in Gillham 2000). Research interviews “involves gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals” (Cohen and Marion 1994:272).

Most case study interviews are either open-ended or focused but I use a semi-structured open-ended interview for the purposes of this study. This type of interview allows for “probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers” (Gray, 2004: 215). This means that in semi-structured interviews the main questions are open-ended, “where you are raising the topic and indicating the kind of answer but where the actual answers are entirely up to the interviewee” (Gillham, 2000:41). At the same time, the interviewer stays in control of the terms of the discussion (see Deacon et al, 1999:65). An open-ended interview is flexible and can range over a wide variety of topics. Sometimes the respondent’s answers will suggest a new line of questioning to the interviewer. Interviewing is one of the most widely used methods of data collection in the media and communications research. Bower (2000) contends that “a commonsensical justification for this fact is that the best way to find out what the people think about something is to ask them” (cited in Jensen 2002: 240).

In media research, qualitative studies have primarily employed three types of interviewing: respondent, natural group and constituted group interviews. Across the different interview forms, three issues normally call for the researcher’s attention: duration, structure and depth. Unstructured interviews are another method of data collection associated with qualitative research. In this method the researcher provides minimal guidance and allows considerable autonomy for interviewees.

The key thing that distinguishes the in-depth interview from survey research is the researcher’s flexibility to explore interesting things that come up. An advantage of the in-depth interview is that it can go deeply into responses of respondents and pick up on contradictions and play around with responses. Gillham explains that “the strength of the interview lies in its richness and vividness of the material it turns up”

(2000:10). In addition, it also adds on both “depth and breadth to one’s understanding of the issues” (Gorman et al., 2005:41).

The semi-structured form of interviewing is often used in qualitative interviews because researchers intend to gain understanding of “... the experience of other people and the meaning they make of their experience” (Seidman 1991:3). He further explains that this form of interviewing yields understanding of how and why people act and interpret their experiences in relation to a particular context. Gorman et al. assert that the information gained from interviews is of “inestimable value in understanding contexts and creating links that are such key aspects of qualitative research” (2005:41). Kvale defines the semi-structured interview as one “whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (1996:5-6).

This type of interview also allows adjustments and alterations of the sequence of questions in order to accommodate different respondents. It will further help the researcher in guiding the discussion in terms of themes embedded in the research questions. Generally, qualitative interviews are said to be useful in establishing a “variety of opinions concerning a particular topic” (Fielding 1993:137).

In such interviews the researcher may have a set of questions and can rephrase or reorder them in response to the “conversation” between the researcher and the participant (Fielding 1993:136). Deacon et al have observed that

(s)emi-structured interviews abandon the concerns with standardisation ... and seek to promote an active, open-ended dialogue. The interviewer still retains control of the terms of the discussion. The interviewer controls the discussion by referring to an interview guide that sets out the issues to be covered during the exchange (1999: 65).

Weaknesses of the interview method mostly lie in the danger of bias and inaccuracies (Yin 1994 cited in Gray 2004:135). I may have unintentionally been biased in collecting data from the interviews as Babbie et al. note: “Ultimately, anything the observer does or does not do will have some effect on what is being observed; it is

simply inevitable” (1998:296). The researcher confirmed with the interviewees if their comments were appropriately recorded to avoid inaccuracies.

3.5 Sampling techniques

Qualitative studies often sample in two or more steps, first determining the relevant context of certain meaningful events which, next, are singled out for detailed study. Second, these studies require, at least ideally, that such contexts remain accessible to the researcher in the process of analysis and interpretation.

MoAfrika newsroom was selected as a case study subject. The study focused on the journalists as core members of a newsroom under inquiry. It employed a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select potential interview subjects. This technique is appropriate because it allows the researcher to focus in depth on issues important to the study. In purposive sampling, “researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality. In this way they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs” (Cohen and Marion 1994:89). The logic behind this sampling is to have a small but information-rich sample of informants.

The selection of the sample is at the discretion of the researcher but consideration is given to the case’s relevance to the research question. Convenience sampling, appropriate in exploratory study such as this, is sometimes used as a derogatory term for studying those individuals most easily available to the researcher. Interviewees will be selected according to their functions and degree of involvement in convergence operations, so that they would represent journalistic and managerial areas of the process. Respondents with different specialised roles in the newsroom were selected based on their contributions to the news process and their involvement in news convergence. To further diversify the sample, I also sought respondents in different types of news decision-making roles as well as news content development and news production roles. For balance of perspective, I selected respondents from each media of the organisation. Each interview was recorded with the expressed permission of the respondent (see Berg 2001).

3.6 Data collection procedures

The research design, methods and procedure are discussed prior to the actual collection of data. My supervisor wrote a letter to MoAfrika owner and Managing Editor to request access to the newsroom so the researcher could observe and interview his newsroom staffs; permission was finally obtained after several attempts. The purpose of the study was also explained. Informed consent was sought and obtained.

Informed consent entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project. It further involves obtaining the voluntary participation of the subject, with his or her right to withdraw from the study at any time, thus counteracting potential undue influence and coercion (Kvale 1996:112).

The researcher conducted a pilot study to discover the organisation's goals, identify the types of personnel who would be potential respondents and determine the interview schedule (see Lindlof and Taylor 2002). This preliminary field visit included observation of facilities and attendance of one news diary. An interview guide and checklist was drafted and discussed. Following the pilot field study, I developed an open-ended questionnaire for the in-depth interviews.

3.7 Data processing and analysis

Data collected from both methods will be integrated in the final analysis. All recorded data will be analysed on thematic basis to see if any patterns emerge that suggest relationships between variables. My theory tells me to look out for challenges in converging newsrooms and convergence's implications for gatekeeping. The theory also suggests I ask the following questions in my interviews: With respect to changing professional practices, how do reporters relate to multiple media strategies in their daily news work? How is production for multiple media platforms organised, practiced and conceptualised within a news organisation? The interview guide is attached in appendices.

3.8 Ethics

It was made clear from the first communication with the Managing Editor that everyone will stay anonymous, which means that there would be no names in the actual thesis unless I had received permission.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the qualitative research methodology as the main paradigm within which this study is located and argued that more specifically the case study design suited the aims of this thesis. The data collection methods of observation and semi-structured interviews were outlined and justified. As it turned out, the newsroom was observed over one week. A total of seven journalists were interviewed. The sampling methods used were purposive and convenience. The chapter also discussed data processing and analysis, ethics and research procedure. The next chapter presents the main themes in the research data organised in topic-related categories. Four issues kept on recurring: multi-skilling, “shovelware”, journalistic cultural clash and implications of convergence for gatekeeping. These are described in detail in the next chapter.

4 DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with methodology and research methods employed in this case study. This chapter deals with findings on the work of journalists in MoAfrika's newsroom that produces content for multiple media: print, radio and the internet. The research was designed to investigate the impact on gatekeeping of the processes of production convergence, the trend towards reporting for more than one medium.

The researcher sought qualitative empirical data, appropriate to a method whose fundamental question is what can be learned from a particular case (Stake, 1994). Such field research is called for when research questions involve learning about, understanding or describing a group of interacting people (Neuman, 1991). After negotiating access with the newsroom gatekeepers, the site was visited. I spent a week (June 10-16) observing newsroom operations, attending meetings and conducting interviews on convergence and gatekeeping. An interview guide (see appendix 2) was used to conduct interviews with seven journalists including a news manager who is also a managing editor, the editors, reporters and the online content manager. Social scientists stress that triangulation of methods, such as this combination of observation and interviews, helps guard against the danger that findings reflect the method of inquiry in potentially misleading ways (Babbie, 2000).

4.2 The newsroom (Physical layout and personnel)

MoAfrika is located on the second floor of a three-storey building. MoAfrika has eleven full-time journalists and four volunteers. Radio has four of these reporters while the newspaper has seven, and radio has fewer specialists in specific topic areas. There are four specialist organisational sections in the newsroom: sports, politics, economy and business, and arts and culture. Each of them consists of one newspaper journalist who often produces content for both platforms. The space contains one sound-editing booth and post production facility. In 2007, MoAfrika brought together its newspaper and radio content on the web. It did not have a website before this but

there was some content repurposing even at that stage between radio and paper. The radio existed alongside the paper eight years before the website.

The company structure is designed to generate synergies between all its platforms, especially in content sharing and cross promotion. Convergence at MoAfrika is a corporate management decision and involves multi-platform publishing and promotion. Since it launched its web services in 2007, MoAfrika has been repurposing original radio and newspaper stories for the online service. Unlike many other media companies in developing countries, MoAfrika has not hired online journalists but “shovels” radio and newspaper content online with the help of a technician.

Among the key factors, MoAfrika has developed a converged news desk located at the heart of the newsroom that handles stories regardless of medium or distribution method, “in an attempt to equalise perceptions of status between radio and newspaper workers and encouraging print journalists to generate content exclusive for use online” (Interview, Managing Editor). The news desk is the heart of the system with the role of managing the workflow in order to simultaneously supply the radio station, the website and the newspaper. The desk consists of the Managing Editor who operates as news manager to supervise all the assignments and stories.

The newsroom is organised in a traditional pyramid structure led by the Managing Editor, the portfolio being occupied by the owner of MoAfrika. The Managing Editor is considered the coordinator of the editorial convergence among all media. He coordinates workflow among sections, channels the news flow and sets priorities. (See figure 1 below).

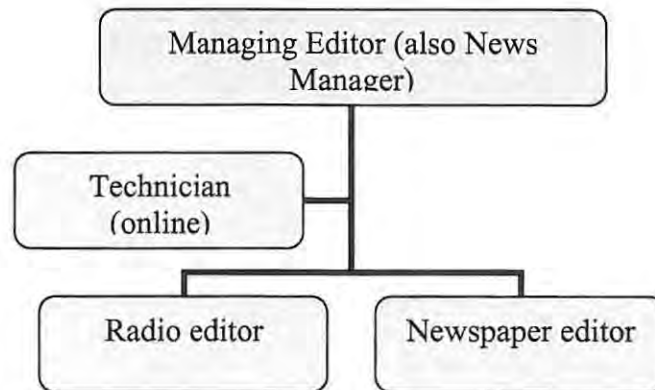


Figure 1: MoAfrika's newsroom

management system (CMS) has a server to run the system which allows the technician to make changes on the website. It facilitates the organisation and control, in other words the creating, editing and deleting of content. This CMS stores the content that has been created and relies on systems developed by a web development company (proprietary solution), which implies that it is limited in scope and very specific to the requirements of the user. They had no application to handle user interaction and no page visits facility to study which pages were accessed the most. Long-planned special events (like elections or MoAfrika cultural festival) were often the only time that significant storytelling innovations such as text-audio-and image packages were attempted. The technician creates, edits and packages content online drawing from the CMS database. Audio gets stored in the CMS. Reporters created MS Word files which were stored according to date and beat. These were then worked on by the editors.

The website www.moafrika.co.ls is characterised by four elements. First is a verbatim radio feed. As soon as the page is opened, users do not make a choice to listen, that choice is made for them. Second is the latest edition of the print newspaper in PDF format, which can also be viewed from page to page as would be done with a print edition, in other words, it is a print newspaper online. It is uploaded two days after the print edition has been on sale from layout straight to online. Content (text) is bi-

lingual (some in Sesotho and English) but audio is mostly in Sesotho and seldom in Sephuthi (only two bulletins a day).

Third there are occasional text stories put up during the week (only once during the time of this study) that have not been either broadcast on radio or printed in the newspaper that are uploaded on this website. Fourth is a section of photographs wider than those published in the paper. This website is updated randomly; there is hardly ever new text on the site during the week emanating from written stories (whether for radio or print). The online facilities are very basic with limited archives and interactivity. There is no space for commentary on the stories or even email addresses to contact the reporters. There is no user counter facility as a result MoAfrika does not know how many of its users access its content online. I was told they used to have a forum but had ceased it because they do not have software and expertise to edit users' comments before they were published online.

4.3 Implementing convergence

Convergence is primarily developed at the website which publishes news and features from the newspaper and radio station. There was consensus during the interview process on the fact that there had not been a plan behind the change from bi-media to multiple media production, and that it was not a well-organised process. It was a common perception that it was a vision of the Managing Editor. The Managing Editor acknowledged a bottom-line corporate rationale for convergence and described convergence as “expanding our ability to do our job exponentially”, and added “Obviously, our company is interested in this project for cost and market-driven reasons”. He stated that he had a high level of commitment to multiplatform publishing. The goal according to the Managing Editor was to “use all our resources: personnel, infrastructure, and media to provide information to the community in a timely manner without regard to platform”. However, at this stage of transformation, the online platform was not a priority to break news and the efforts were focused on repurposing audio and print content online and getting newspaper and radio to work together.

For some interviewees, the problem was not so much competition as much as cultural differences in the different mediums. The cultural clash was not only hard for reporters but also for editors. When reporters were “thrown in together” (Interview, Managing Editor), the lack of knowledge of each medium’s basic practices was obvious. By getting them to work together, reporters noted, they came to the realisation that given those differences, work would be easier if done in a cooperative rather than a competitive way, as it was possible to benefit from each other’s expertise and knowledge. Reporters confessed that as a result they have learnt the value of working together, but there was still a workload concern. With the merging of media platforms, cooperation is replacing competition toward the end of more centralised production of content.

When asked to describe their responsibilities, participants’ responses varied greatly from “you do what management wants” to a more conciliatory approach “...working as a team”. The individuals explained that working for a converged operation requires cooperation. Journalists, particularly those in radio, also cited the value of access to expanded resources such as additional manpower and devices like a digital camera. Respondents saw convergence as important to the future of journalism because they recognised the trend that today’s journalist must be willing and able to perform in more than one medium. And even if most journalists are not expected to produce content for every delivery platform, some are already being asked to gather information in multiple formats. Working across media creates situations that journalists have not faced before in their careers. The Managing Editor pointed out that fundamentals such as solid reporting and writing were critical, while convergence-related skills such as being able to write across media were secondary.

4.4 Workflow

Multiple media workflow at MoAfrika takes place in a functional way that goes beyond sharing information about a particular story. Sometimes a radio journalist writes an article for the newspaper as in the case of a reporter who had covered a court case involving one local journalist. She wrote a piece for radio and expanded it for the newspaper. Staff share interviews and package them for both media, for example, two reporters covered the music awards and shared interviews for writing

stories for both media. When reporters go out into the field to gather news, they are told to pre-purpose for more than one medium such as in the last example. That means thinking ahead about how to present a story via the newspaper and radio or even the web.

Journalists generally produced content for other media only as a possibility not an obligation, although on busier days they were ordered to multitask. Print journalists wrote articles and contributed to radio news by giving raw notes, collecting audio and writing news items. They “shovelled” content verbatim in terms of both substance and style. However, radio journalists collaborated to a lesser extent with the newspaper. Management praised the benefits of cross-media convergence although they were aware that each platform involves its own production constraints and demands. There was separation of deadlines and staff by media. Radio had six deadlines a day while the newspaper is a weekly and had fewer deadlines. The radio and newspaper feed is “shovelled” online. In this way deadlines set the flow during an average working day so that as many products as possible were made out of a single news story. Radio journalists faced constant deadline pressures as they worked to broadcast their work six times a day in two languages (Sesotho and Sephuthi). The bulletins alternate in terms of language. Not all content contributors were fluent in both languages. Only one radio reporter was fluent in Sephuthi. Some degree of gatekeeping occurred in translation as a result. Newspaper journalists are accustomed to updating and delivering their stories only a few times a week. Most of the print content is in Sesotho except a few stories once in a while written in English.

Many of the newspaper reporters worked with audio voice-overs, and most also shared their sources and tips with radio. The Managing Editor headed up a converged operation, meaning that he managed content and reporters for both platforms and kept track of it all from his desk. During my time of observation, only once did a reporter/photographer team up with an online producer to work on a multiple media breaking news story on the launch of a paediatric HIV and AIDS clinic roll out in Lesotho. For the newspaper she wrote a trend piece examining the larger issues. For radio, she reported and wrote a 2-3 minute piece. For the web site, she wrote a synthesised story and added links back to the radio report. In addition, she wrote up results from a newspaper poll and also produced a slide show of photos that would not

make it into the paper. They started the project at 10am on a Wednesday and by noon, everything I just listed was online and the radio package made the 1:00 p.m. newscast. The newspaper package was in the Friday paper (weekly).

Collaboration in pre-purposing happened during the period of this study on planned events such as press conferences, court cases and marches. For instance, this was evident in covering a court case in which a political journalist and regional chairperson of the regional press freedom organisation MISA, Thabo Thakalekoala, was accused of “high treason,” and “failing to report subversive activity”. Two MoAfrika journalists together planned on how to produce content for radio and newspaper before covering this case. Another example was when journalists for both mediums worked together in covering a march organised by taxi owners and operators after a two day strike. This case of the march was only for two platforms and pre-purposing there did not go as far as plans for the web.

Jobs and responsibilities have also been affected by multi-platform approaches to daily news coverage. There is now a routine, many respondents observed, to meeting with, seeing, talking to, and interacting in other ways with journalists from platforms other than the one within which an individual works.

4.5 Decision-making

One of the most important functions for the Managing Editor has been running the editorial meetings, the most critical of the news department rituals. The Managing Editor is charged with assigning reporters to “breaking” news stories, but it is the radio editor who is charged with getting the content to the public first, and the newspaper editor responsible for the weekly paper. Two meetings were programmed at 7:50am and 2:15pm and attended by news staff. The morning meeting attended by all news staff was the place to access, discuss and assign news coverage. During this meeting, editors shared breaking news, planned coverage throughout the day and set tasks to be carried out by each section. The afternoon meeting served the same function but tended to focus on the evening newscasts. During the second meeting, traditionally devoted to closing the evening bulletin at 7:30pm, the editors checked the work done and resolved last minute problems. After this second meeting, the radio

and newspaper editors continue to interact with reporters in terms of the content decisions that have been made.

Editorial conferences were part of a daily routine where editorial staff convened to deal with various organisational tasks, the most important of which was determining the line-up of stories for radio newscasts. The Managing Editor usually chaired the conference meetings. As indicated, editors and news reporters also took part. The conference formally began with story review initiated by the Managing Editor. Then editors proceeded to summarise stories being developed in their platforms. Reactions to story summaries tended to come primarily from the Managing Editor. Here he commented on the newsworthiness of particular stories, offered forms of acknowledgement, probed for further details, made suggestions regarding angles to be pursued, facts to be verified, and so on. The conference then proceeded to story selection. In the course of reviewing stories, editors sometimes offered evaluative comments that bore more or less explicitly on the question of newsworthiness. A team was assigned to cover a major taxi strike but only one reporter for a routine press conference. Newsworthiness assessment represents just a part of a complex and multifaceted gatekeeping process. Despite complexity, the assessment a story received was strongly associated with its placement in a particular medium. Thus, of those stories that received strong favourable assessment, most subsequently appeared on radio newscasts. Editors assessed each news event on its merits and assigned the most appropriate staff for the story, sometimes an individual. The significance of the story dictated the size of the team. Each judgement was based on what was considered to be the most appropriate medium for telling the story.

The gatekeeping function is generally shared by many people ranging from the news source to the Managing Editor. There were three primary kinds of gatekeepers in this newsroom. First, there is the Managing Editor, charged with running the overall operation; second, the editors, charged with managing content; and third, reporters, whose primary function is to gather the content and package it initially for radio and for newspaper and on rare occasions for online. Reporters are constantly generating news content and the central and the Managing Editor decides each time how to distribute it: if it is immediately broadcasted over radio and automatically fed to online, or if it is saved for the newspaper. When the editors were asked how often and

how much they contributed to convergence, they said not much, and that the Managing Editor makes those decisions. For the most part, the gatekeeping task was carried out by editors in the context of an editorial conference. Frequently proposed criteria included news values such as prominence, timeliness, proximity, impact and so on in relation to their particular platforms.

This study also sought to investigate to what degree convergence affects how an editor makes decisions regarding content. In scrutinising gatekeeping and the editor, one of the primary findings is the distinction between news gathering and news processing. News gathering involves the research and reportage of news, while news processing is the function of putting together the product for presentation. Putting together story elements for a final news product and collecting story elements and information for that news product constitute this process. Print, broadcast and (on rare occasions such as the clinic story mentioned above) online platforms cooperate in news gathering and share their information, but each medium also operates with a series of conventions for presenting and selecting information. Hot news chosen for the radio on a Monday is rejected at the gate for the Friday paper.

Although editors generally agreed on the use of traditional news values such as proximity, impact, timeliness, prominence, there was conflict in how they ranked them in deciding which stories to run or discard. This could partly be because there are no pat answers. The information considered most newsworthy depends in part on personal values, experiences and knowledge. In addition, the decision to include a news story depended partly on which medium it fits into most easily. When news stories are the result of extensive research, however, the media platform becomes more important. This is partly because this kind of news is not expected to be covered by other media; hence there is no need to get it out there before anyone else. If it is an important story, with a huge and immediate impact on public opinion, then policy requires it is aired by the radio station and print newspaper first.

Decision-making also considered expense and expertise. Editors noted that national news trends also factored into their decisions. They all valued providing their audience with the top news stories as their primary priority. Decisions were also affected by news values and constraints and society among other variables. Although

editors shared similar news values such as accuracy and fairness, these sometimes differed from those embraced by the organisation. The organisation's values often took precedence. For example, they would not even consider writing anything negative about major advertisers because it would cost them their jobs. A well-known retailer, also MoAfrika's loyal advertiser, was reported nationwide to have sold expired baby formula but MoAfrika did not carry the story.

Although individual journalists have been located within a web of organisational and ideological constraints, they also have a certain level of influence on news content. During my study the psychological factors impinging on an individual journalist's work were difficult to pin down. However, there is no doubt that a reporter can become a source of bias on their own. Gatekeeping begins with the sources of news who decide in part on what information to narrate to the journalist, but in turn the journalists can accept or reject the information relayed to them. The source and the journalist are gatekeepers at the input stage through which news and information is allowed into the news production process. For example, when covering the Lesotho Haeso music awards, a radio reporter did not interview the overall winner Chakela because MoAfrika has been boycotting his music and it is likely that the artist would also not give an interview to MoAfrika's reporter because of their differences suspected to be political. The perceived differences are that the musician is a pronounced loyal supporter of an opposition party whose leader does not see eye to eye with MoAfrika's owner who is perceived to be now favouring the ruling party. So in this way the journalist, following informal policy, was biased. The Managing Editor was reported in a rival weekly that claimed he had received a scam grant at the time of the study but none of MoAfrika's three media platforms took it up.

Gatekeepers have certainly felt the impact of convergence. They reported that change is evident in the number of choices about coverage. These decisions involve the number of stories covered in one given day, number of reporters involved, and even the basic range of stories covered.

4.6 Organisation structure and norms

MoAfrika has a newsroom policy, although not on paper. The Managing Editor claims “everybody who joins our newsroom is made aware of the rules and regulations”. There are two different areas of policy: general editorial and on convergence. These do not explicitly inform journalists on what to prioritise. Several journalists cited organisational variations as significant obstacles to a policy of flawless convergence. Radio had no beats, and print was inexperienced in radio production and presentation (as was evident in their voice-overs and audio clippings). Different media demanded different narrative styles, according to various reporters who cited this as a challenge. Another deterrent was different cultural socialisation in the newsroom. Journalists generally disagreed with the statement “the same story can be told equally well in any medium” since they did not have the expertise for multi-platform publishing and also maintained that some stories fit better on a particular medium than others.

The overarching norm in most professions including journalism is public service. MoAfrika’s journalists noted they worked in the public interest and that their primary purpose was providing citizens with necessary information. All journalists noted that convergence, at least potentially, could enhance that role by providing better, deeper and detailed information than a single outlet can offer. But how that public service norm is fulfilled varies by medium, and print journalists tended to see their way as best, looking down on radio journalists. For example, one newspaper reporter said radio is an appetiser, and the newspaper, the main course. The radio staff saw the print reporters as unappreciative of the challenges involved in putting together a good broadcast news piece.

The idea of convergence clashes with traditional newsroom values in two major areas: competition and media-specific culture. Within these areas, this study revealed concerns about convergence in regard to both style and substance such as the short radio stories and the more literary narrative form of print storytelling.

4.6.1 Internal competition

Asked about newsroom policy goals with regard to internal competition for stories, and requirements for convergence, the Managing Editor pointed out that both media operate independently; each makes its own judgement calls and produces its own content.

The newspaper editor had a negative attitude about broadcast news's contribution to convergence, in comparison to print's, and this was reiterated by one newspaper reporter who said that "radio reporters contribute small content which becomes just a lead for our newspaper articles while they use our stories for multiple bulletins". Another newspaper journalist complained that "other entities get more from us than we do from them".

Competitiveness was also manifest in the way the medium did affect the types of stories published. Journalists operated with categories, such as hard news, spot news, or soft news. Spot news got less emphasis in print than radio, which typically values timeliness over other news criteria. Print journalists saw themselves focusing more on hard or soft news. Some newspaper reporters feared convergence would "drag down" their own product, potentially forcing "shallow radio stories" into the paper. The newspaper editor saw radio as "often shallow and quick".

As could be expected, there were also 'hold-outs' in the print reporting and editing ranks who did not like sharing scoops with their radio colleagues or the web. Newspaper and radio reporters have often seen their jobs in diverging ways, in large part because of the natures of each medium. As observed by a print reporter, "we have been socialised to see radio journalists as our competitors although we have seldom informally shared sources and stories". The newspaper editor added "I think one of the things that is always difficult for reporters is to open their notebooks, open up their source list to another reporter. I think that was one of the hurdles that initially we had to get over because; our reporters have been used to compete against radio reporters". I observed that this issue at least is being resolved at MoAfrika such that the main manifestation of convergence was shared news tips, sources and copy. However, although journalists understood and even appreciated the logic of

convergence, some were still uncomfortable about sharing ideas, sources and information.

However, shared resources mean more and better information, some journalists said. Others were sceptical and said their incentive to push on a story was diminished by a sense of reduced competition. Before convergence, said one newspaper reporter, he raced all over town trying to find something the radio reporter did not have, whereas now the company just sent one reporter to do a check for both broadcast and print platforms. Reporters had been competitive. “In that sense, it’s a hard psychological barrier,” a radio reporter explained, adding that all her professional life she had seen print reporters as competitors and she was now asked to regard them as colleagues. The competition continued alongside the collaboration.

4.6.2 Different cultures

MoAfrika journalists came from two different media backgrounds; accordingly implementing a degree of convergence from scratch was hard work: “Journalists who had been working in print for years and suddenly also had to tell stories on radio, experienced a lot of frustration when using new techniques they were not familiar with,” said the newspaper editor. The radio editor noted “radio reporters have no time to write anything for the newspaper and the web, they have a number of deadlines during the day”.

Different beat structures of print and broadcast outlets exist at MoAfrika, as indicated above. The result is that the newspaper is more likely to produce a considerable number of stories that radio has chosen not to cover or does not have the staff to cover.

Further, newspaper journalists at MoAfrika shared a solid culture of exclusives, in-depth reporting and analysis which they were reluctant to share with their broadcast counterparts. These journalists worked with sources and contacts that add value to their stories and therefore they tended to be reluctant to share information with colleagues. For example, once a newspaper reporter got a tip-off about a politician who had assaulted his wife, and did not share it with radio colleagues because he

wanted to scoop the story for his native medium. The staffers from both media were also reluctant to pass on their main sources of information. Journalists remained especially possessive of enterprise stories resulting from individual initiative or what McManus (1997) has called “active discovery”.

4.7 Resistance to convergence

Print journalists were ambivalent about the perceived effect of convergence on professional norms of credibility, accuracy and quality. They agreed strongly that “the quality of the story is more important than the technology used to tell it”, as one newspaper reporter put it, but they were unsure whether convergence affected that quality. They expressed concern that pressure for immediacy required for online and radio platforms might overwhelm the need to get what one called “a good story with accuracy and perspective”. However, they appreciated immediacy when a big story broke. Broadcast reporters like to see their by-line on their newspaper articles, and print journalists enjoy a wider audience reach with their radio broadcasts. In general, the newspaper journalists liked being able to tell a story in different ways. Radio reporters complained of their workload and several deadlines as opposed to those of print reporters.

As noted in 4.6.2., interviews indicated that journalists were concerned that convergence potentially undermines or at least threatens specific professional standards such as accuracy. For example, a newspaper journalist during this study gave raw content from an interview with the chairman of the electoral commission on the Rothe bi-election results to a radio journalist, without double checking her facts. The aim was for MoAfrika to scoop the story. But after announcing wrong statistics, they had to run an apology later. Despite such cases and although journalists at MoAfrika experience additional pressures as compared to those already existing in a traditional news operation, they do not believe that convergence by itself poses significant problems.

Journalists agreed that producing products for other media is more time consuming than they believe management realised. Time pressures can create considerable stress. One newspaper reporter revealed: “If I have to rush to the newsroom to enter with the

story in an hour's time, I just cannot stay around to get another interview or to do additional research, which I would had done if I were only writing for the newspaper." For these journalists, the demands of their primary medium have not been lessened as new demands for producing content for other media have increased. Many were concerned that the time required to gather material for a different medium could be spent in other ways.

Print reporters were concerned about fitting new duties into their newsgathering and production routines. Used to weekly deadlines, they struggled with radio and online requiring frequent feeding. Radio created problems especially for recorded sound bites and caused confusion for print journalists' accustomed routines. Sound bites usually required the journalist to physically travel to the location of the source or event rather than staying in the newsroom and making phone calls or writing emails. One print reporter said he sometimes feels stretched to the point of a nervous breakdown. Another print reporter grumbled "they forget that we have our own jobs". Moreover, time devoted to other media comes not instead of, but in addition to, time spent producing their usual newspaper articles. Before convergence, print journalists had no obligation to contribute to radio news.

Although a few journalists felt that concentration of media ownership was potentially troublesome, most said it was realistically not likely that the market would end up with one news provider. Independence from business pressures and issues related to cross-promotion that some journalists saw as excessive, are also salient here. They influence journalists' perceptions and understanding of newsroom convergence. The main question for these journalists was how much commercial undertow the convergence will have on the integrity of their work. Many perceived MoAfrika's convergence operation as profit obsession of cutting costs through increased productivity.

From the reporter's point of view, resistance to convergence also comes from concern that he or she is being expected to present information in more than one media without appropriate compensation (see below). While some journalists accepted the logic of convergence, but others were still uncomfortable with multiple media and

they struggled to acquire the necessary skills to do well in all media. Journalists also worry about the quality of content in a cooperative environment.

4.8 Training and compensation

Added to the pressures above, was a perception among journalists that they received inadequate training for work in a different medium and some did not receive any training at all. There was agreement among all participants that convergence had forced everyone on the two platforms to do more work and that they did not receive any additional compensation. “The only thing we really do that’s different is that we share... radio reporters are sometimes asked to carry small digital cameras so they can get pictures for the newspaper. But when they do get pictures for the newspaper they don’t earn extra money,” as one newspaper reporter stated. Another reporter grumbled, “We have to elaborate three pieces using the same material, in order to feed the three media. And there is neither salary increase nor other type of compensation for that.” The Managing Editor stood to differ, saying: “Multi-skilling is not difficult. It’s not time-consuming. Any knucklehead can master these technologies. You can’t demand a salary premium for skills that are in abundance.” Journalists revealed that they were not rewarded financially for their contribution to convergence. Most reporters felt they were being asked to do a lot more work for no extra pay. One reporter commented: “This leaves us feeling used and burned out; it’s like throwing an extra workload on you without giving extra compensation.”

MoAfrika is taking relatively little formal action to build new skills sets among news workers. Radio and newspaper journalists cited lack of training for writing for other media as problematic, and observation results supported the view of reporters that the employer had not provided appropriate training for transition to a converged operation as they struggled to write across platforms. Newspaper journalists wanted training with production and delivery of radio content. Radio journalists wanted help with writing for print. For example, a newspaper reporter once failed to submit a sound bite for radio news after covering a major state press briefing on SADC Free Trade Area launch because he could not record it well enough for broadcast.

4.9 Future plans and challenges

The management's intention is reporting and editing news for the web as opposed to "shovelling" stories and audio online that were originally conceived and written for radio and newspaper. The Managing Editor disclosed: "As part of this initiative, we will devote a reporter and editor to the website full time. We'll work to make sure our print journalism contains all its customary context, analysis and expertise, while our online journalism provides immediate information that is regularly refreshed." He added that his plans are that MoAfrika should no longer be a newspaper, radio and online, but an information company that publishes news and information whenever and however people want it. The Managing Editor also noted that the goal will be to adopt the use of mobile technology. He stated that in this era of 24/7 news and information, the company's future rests on its ability to tell people what they want to know whenever they want to know it, via the web, radio, newspaper, e-mail and cell phone alerts. His aim was to improve the quality of online journalism while not diminishing their print and broadcast journalism. He added the objective is to get as many people converged on an individual level as possible so that "the newsroom can move closer to the model where everybody can go out and deliver the news story on their own".

The online component is the one that most challenges the traditional newsroom structure. Although the news staff are a converged team that is trying to think first about the story and then in terms of the best medium to tell it, they still keep the traditional print and radio news primary divisions. Radio and print reporters also have editors who have a product to put out every day. To go from servicing three different outlets to be one media company working together requires "a lot of lubrication between ideal and execution" as the Managing Editor put it.

Another challenge that the newsroom convergence is dealing with was the copy editing process for the website. For any outlet that involves text, the copy editing process is a very careful and delicate one. However there is not yet one established for MoAfrika.com. For example, the technician took content from post-edited versions under the guidance of the Managing Editor. The need for an online editor was recognised by the Managing Editor: "One of the online ideals is direct publishing. I

can create the content and I can put it up there. One journalistic ideal is it goes through an editing process. You don't want that direct publishing. You don't let a reporter just put something into the newspaper without having read it and checked it."

The copy editing for the web also has to consider different aspects. On one hand is the text, on the other the multimedia elements. The copy editing process is a work in progress and it is a matter of adaptation instead of just replicating practices. The Managing Editor hopes when they find a way around this challenge they will do less "shovelling".

4.10 Conclusion

From these findings I wish to conclude that within each platform are the organisational structures, workflow processes and tactics that reflect the way MoAfrika employees create the content. The word convergence can be applied to all of these: the platforms, their operations and the way their employees do their jobs. Convergence (up to a point) and multitasking is also the norm at MoAfrika. The newspaper and the station sometimes shared story ideas and content, but seldom worked on joint pre-planned programs. There were cultural stereotypes to overcome. Newspaper journalists generally saw the radio journalists as shallow and more interested in sound than substance. The radio staff saw the print reporters as not showing appreciation of the work involved in producing a good broadcast news piece. Gatekeeping functions as a form of knowledge control. Even when reporters choose the subject, the editors decide if, when and how the story will be used. A story is transmitted from one gatekeeper to another, with news values and platforms specifically among the many considerations that gatekeepers used to determine which stories passed the gates. Journalistic routines such as beats and deadlines, organisational norms and national news trends also played a role. Pertinent issues that have surfaced during this study were: "shovelware", multi-skilling, and lack of policy on adopting and implementing convergence. These topics will be discussed at length and analysed in the next chapter.

5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the data by building on the relevant literature about implementation of newsroom convergence and its implications for gatekeeping. The chapter discusses some recurring topics and outstanding issues pertinent in MoAfrika's convergence effort. Convergence is often said to bring some changes to journalism that are not simply technological. From these findings, I wish to acknowledge that newsroom convergence at MoAfrika indeed challenges some traditional journalistic practices. First, it advocates some degree of multi-skilling. Second, it also speeds up the production process in order to meet tighter deadlines in numerous news cycles, where questions arise about journalistic standards and editing procedures (see Singer, 2006). Third, it creates a clash between the routines and practices prevailing in each journalistic culture when they work together (see Huang et al., 2006). Lastly, it has a bearing on gatekeeping. I discuss these in more detail below.

5.2 Multi-skilling

Digital technologies and convergence have changed the landscape of news production. These developments affect the organisation of newsrooms and the working practices of journalists in profound ways. At the heart of the changes is a deliberate strategy to augment the skills base and functions of journalists, commonly referred to as multi-skilling (see 4.4), a point of some critical and professional concern. Multi-skilling or 'deskilling' according to advocates or critics respectively (Cottle 2003:16; Quinn 2004:111), for instance, is a trend with increasing acceptance in MoAfrika newsroom, as journalists have to cope with a widening range of responsibilities in order to get their jobs done. Cottle (1999) claims that the increasing demands on journalists create a more pressured working environment which ultimately has a negative impact on journalistic standards. While technology may make the multi-skilled journalist possible, in reality there were not many at MoAfrika for several reasons. Most journalists did not have the necessary level of technical

expertise and adequate training. The latter has not been a priority in MoAfrika's newsroom (see 4.6).

Journalists could get so busy providing content for multiple platforms that they simply do not have time to reflect and analyse, or to verify information they gather. As critics have complained, requiring journalists to be jacks of all trades, means that they will become masters of none (Haiman, 2001; Huang et al, 2006). In their most extreme forms, concerns about efficiency can push journalists to forgo traditional kinds of reporting and to rely, instead, on the most easily accessible information. As far as many of the MoAfrika journalists interviewed are concerned, producing content for other platforms comes not instead of but in addition to their originally specialised jobs, as one journalist complained "they forget that we have our own jobs" (see 4.7). The frustration of professionally 'being spread too thin' can also turn into a sense of resentment when expected to perform tasks that are felt to fall outside the remit of any news journalist. But then again changes that affect deeply rooted habits and motivations tend to be instinctively rejected at the start.

The rationale for multi-skilling is clearly rooted within the competitive and commercial imperatives informing the shift to multiple media production. Multi-skilling is a norm at MoAfrika, because for the company, it is about maximising the information they have acquired in whatever medium and making it available across a variety of platforms. While Bromley (1997) showed that this is not a new phenomenon (see 4.3.), he argues that digital newsrooms facilitate multiple media work (1997:341).

Convergence and multi-skilling are not in themselves resented by MoAfrika's journalists, who for most part recognise the advantages and inevitability of both, even if their newly acquired skills are found to be lacking in depth. Rather the problem is professionally perceived and experienced as one of increased pressures of work informed by what Cottle (1999) called "an impinging context of cost reduction and management's sought efficiency gains through multi-skilled, multiple media working practices" (1999:38-39).

That requiring journalists to perform all multiple media skills at high level can lead to bad journalism and burned-out staff members, was evident in MoAfrika (see 4.7). Can the media then retain its watchdog role? My findings show that while multiple media news is becoming well-established at MoAfrika, journalists are slowly trying to accommodate the multiple media production process. This is because of the pressures that multiple media work adds to the journalists' daily routine and concern over the impact on the quality of output. Some radio reporters were not doing well when writing in the newspaper, and some print reporters performed poorly when they broadcast on radio. Becoming multi-skilled is a good thing, provided that it is developed with caution, in a rational and coordinated way.

5.3 Tighter deadlines in numerous news cycles

The new media environment discussed above has undoubtedly increased the quantity of news disseminated by MoAfrika via radio, newspaper and website. But what about quality of news work produced in this multi-skilled, multiple media environment? Here I have a number of concerns at heart, one of which is that reporters, particularly when they are working against the clock, are susceptible to mistakes. Where journalists are critical in the case of MoAfrika, is with respect to the increased workloads and pressure that have accompanied the multi-platform publishing. The pressure to produce news material for multiple media is said by some of the journalists to severely constrain their ability to work on news items (see section 4.7.). This was confirmed by one journalist who acknowledged: "Because generally speaking, we're all very rushed and trying to do many things at once, we don't tend to do that many complicated edits". This means the time previously allotted to researching and producing news items is now constrained by increased demands placed upon the multiple media journalist. Given the numerous daily radio deadlines, a journalist originally assigned to a story may not necessarily be the person who 'versions' it for transmission and publication. The possibility of inaccurate reporting may thereby be increased such as in the case of the coverage of Rothe bi-election results (see section 4.7.).

Perhaps the deepest source of MoAfrika journalists' frustration is their perception that the new environment has forced them to take on additional responsibilities in the

same work period, which could have serious consequences for public service standards and ethics. Of course, there is nothing new about deadlines and news cycles. However, the time cycle for news making in the age of digital production is radically different: the regular news cycle has spun into an unpredictable pattern that Klinenberg (2005) characterises as “news cyclone” (2005:54). With MoAfrika’s journalists it is not digital per se, nor is it unpredictable, but rather it is the frequent radio bulletin schedules. According to one reporter: “If I have to rush to the newsroom to enter with the story in an hour’s time, I just cannot stay around to get another interview or to do additional research, which I would have done if I were only writing for the newspaper” (see 4.7).

So just how has MoAfrika managed to meet the new time pressures and to increase the efficiency and productivity of its staff? In the new media environment, journalists have to become flexible labourers to meet demands from several media (just two at present) at once. And as division of news labour becomes the norm at MoAfrika, reporters experience time pressure that they make sense of through the language of stress. For these reporters, the more they work with different media, for example, the more they realise that content does not move easily from one medium to the next, and therefore that they must develop techniques for translating work across platforms.

The responsibility to produce content that can be used across platforms also places a different kind of pressure on editors. For them, working for a multiple media company requires ensuring that a sufficient amount of content meets the needs of each medium. This in turn means that reporters assigned to key stories have to produce even if they want more time to explore. Alongside the reporters, the editors also had to acquire new abilities in order to edit content in all media. The Managing Editor assumes that the multi-skilled reporter is able to adapt content according to the narrative qualities of each medium. This assumption takes for granted that each journalist would easily acquire the talent and the competence required to master news language in print, radio and online but this is not an instant process. The bilingual nature which requires translating news also adds more pressure to the working practices of these editors.

My findings confirm what many media critics have complained about, that the additional labour demands and the work speedup required for convergence can undermine the conditions of news production, mainly by reducing the time available to report, research, write and reflect on stories (see chapter 2). But there are compensations to this organisation of labour: the first is sharing information and the second, is that if only one reporter is needed to cover a press conference for two platforms, that frees another reporter to focus on a different story. Having multi-skilled reporters gives opportunities for shuffling them between media platforms when needed. It does not mean that managers need to think that everybody should do everything, but at least that their staff should be able to serve more than one platform.

5.4 'Shovelware'

Based on these findings (see section 4.4), it seemed the process of online 'shovelware' has at MoAfrika persisted mainly unchanged since the website was started in 2007. Stories that were repurposed to the Internet did not vary at all with the odd exception from the medium from which the information was passed. News gets shovelled almost verbatim online. Treating the Internet as a feeder for "shovelware" is a means to achieve cost savings and efficiency gains for MoAfrika, but it can serve only a limited purpose for the audience. Past studies have criticised the amount of content repurposed for the online platform (Katz 1994; Regan 1995; Lasica 1996). These critics begrudge "shovelware" as lacking original content in a fresh medium and as not fully utilising the technology available to online. From results of this study I agree that much of the criticism of journalism available online is well founded. MoAfrika is not using multimedia or interactive tools to assist in storytelling. Another characteristic is the lack of appealing graphics. Singer's (2001a) study also found very little original content on the online editions. She also noted that "despite the web's multimedia capabilities, many online papers are less visually enticing than their print counterparts, at least in terms of information-conveying graphics" (2001:76). Singer's analysis seems to agree with that of other critics of too much "shovelware", little original content and few multimedia applications (among others see Gubman and Greer 1997 in chapter 2). MoAfrika followed in this vein.

Internet offers a means of enhancing political discourse as a two-way, interactive medium with tools such as polls, e-mail, discussion forums and information-retrieval tools. These are absent on MoAfrika's website. Despite lacking the strict space limitations found in print, MoAfrika's online edition did not display additional content. This may be explained by the lack of resources devoted online (Singer et al, 1999). The level of homogeneity between each platform observed at MoAfrika manifests the use of content management system applications to place stories online. All this reflects is a policy position that favours "shovelware".

Some authors (Huang et al, 2006) have warned of the danger of trivialisation of quality journalism when the same journalist "shovels" the same story from one medium to another without producing content appropriate for the medium. Evidence in relation to MoAfrika was in the reportage of the taxi strike (see 4.4.) which was similar across all media. A carbon copy of a story in print, online and on radio does not serve the purpose of convergence, nor does a single perspective.

According to *State of the news media 2004*, "content on the web is still driven by text narratives. Most sites make only limited use of the multimedia potential of embedding such things as videos, audio, still photos and user feedback into news stories". This is precisely what I found in the research done at MoAfrika. They do not even rewrite the text from print, nor do they repackage the audio feed for the website. This sounds very similar to what was found by the U.S. Project for Excellence in Journalism (publisher of the *State of the news media*), which said: "Internet journalism is still largely material from old media rather than something original".

This current prioritisation probably makes good business sense. The motivation for convergence was disclosed by the Managing Editor, "obviously our company is interested in this project for cost and market-driven reasons" (see 4.3.). It is important to note here that news companies (including MoAfrika) have long been driven by bottom-line considerations. Perhaps this is proof to Klinenberg's (2005) argument: "The most exciting innovations in journalistic forms, particularly those involving multimedia packages disseminated through the Internet, have received little support from news organisations because they are not profitable" (2005: 61).

5.5 Journalistic cultural clash

At MoAfrika I observed that reporters kept some information to themselves rather than sharing it with others especially those working for other platforms (see section 4.6.1). This finding follows Filak's study which concluded that reporters prefer to share information with reporters who work in the same medium (2004:220). Singer (2004a) argued the same: "Intellectually journalists may understand and even appreciate the logic of convergence, but many are still uncomfortable about sharing ideas, information or sources" (2004a:10), as evident in the MoAfrika findings (see 4.6.1).

A study by Silcock and Keith (2006) revealed that professional culture differences between print and broadcast may hinder the convergence process, because they give rise to several practical problems that are difficult to resolve. This was also evident in the case of MoAfrika. As noted in 4.6.2., stereotyping between broadcast and print staffs can be strong given the fact that they have been culturally trained to see the other as their competitor (see Singer, 2004). This mindset has not gone away easily.

Despite the increasing cooperation observed at MoAfrika, the print and broadcast platforms still appear to compete in many areas. In the beginning staff in both platforms stated that convergence would help consumers by expanding each media's resources to provide more coverage of events. Although I have examined a small part of the total picture, I would argue this particular arrangement has fallen short of its objectives. The production culture of journalism values the exclusive story usually regarded as a reward, such as in the case when a newspaper reporter did not share a story on a politician who had beaten his wife (see 4.6.2).

The idea of convergence clashes with traditional news values in two major areas: media-specific culture and professional competition. This study revealed concerns of both style and substance such as the difference between short radio stories and the more literary narrative form of print storytelling. Another challenge to compatibility involves competition. Newspaper and radio reporters at MoAfrika have often seen their jobs in diverging ways, in large part because of the natures of each medium. As observed by a print reporter, "we have been socialised to see radio journalists as our

competitors although we have seldom informally shared sources and stories” (see 4.6.2.).

Newspaper reporters work in a platform where written words and symbols convey meaning; radio reporters work in a platform where spoken words convey meaning. Newspaper writers tend to appeal more to the analytical and deliberate faculties in their readers’ minds; radio reporters tend to appeal more to the immediate and emotional in their listeners as in the example of the reportage of the HIV and AIDS story (see 4.4). For radio specifically, good sound illustrates a story, whether it takes the form of recorded interviews, live audio feeds, sound effects and so on. A job of a radio reporter is partly to make the listener feel as though they are on the scene as events unfold. Radio is also built on the principle of speech; having a conversation with the listener, and that makes it a very personal medium, for example, spectator background noise at a soccer match adds value to a match broadcast. While newspaper provides background and analysis by using words, graphics and photographs. A newspaper generally has more space in which to delve into a story. Its journalism aims to reflect this opportunity for depth, breadth and context. A newspaper story can describe the roar of a crowd at a football game but radio can help the audience experience what it might be like to be at the game.

5.5.1 Print roots run deep

Although MoAfrika has been up online for more than a year now, print roots run deep. Reporters and editors are still reluctant to yield to the convention of putting up breaking news online. As the newspaper editor acknowledged: “In our own newsroom, we continue to debate the wisdom and strategy of scooping ourselves by putting a story online”. Deuze (2003) argues that the web has had a substantial impact on journalism as a profession as well as on journalistic culture. He recognises that for most mainstream news media (such as MoAfrika), going digital repurposes not only content, but also their own journalistic culture (see chapter 2).

MoAfrika is still inclined to break stories on the broadcast and print platforms because they have traditionally been profitable because of their advertising revenue,

which allows their financial viability (Bagdikian, 2000). A newspaper's print audience is what maintains the print advertising revenue. MoAfrika's website does not get advertising. As a result the Internet edition has proved to be less profitable, and research reveals that in some cases it actually runs at a deficit.

MoAfrika treats the website as a mere extension of print and broadcast, not the main driver of news content. They have not exploited the Internet as a unique mass medium that is being driven by new user expectations and experiences.

5.6 Bearing on gatekeeping

Conventions of news production as well as influence across platforms play an important role in how news content is selected and presented. In my view, this becomes even more recognisable in a multiple media environment such as MoAfrika, which increases the complexity of interrelationships between news media throughout a news day.

There are limits to how much news values can reveal about the story-selection process. Criteria alone tend to have weak predictive value, and they do not fully explain actual selection decisions (see Shoemaker 1996). Thus, I argue that news values function only as loose and flexible considerations, not as strict selection criteria (see Gans 1979:82- 83). A second and perhaps more fundamental limitation of the criteria approach is that it overlooks the actual social practices central to the gatekeeping process itself. News stories at MoAfrika were usually chosen in the context of the give-and-take of editorial conferences, in which editors formulate and assemble the attributes of each story, invoke criteria for judging those stories, express their views on a given story's newsworthiness, and nominate and justify particular stories. This reasoning process does not take place exclusively within editors' minds; it is worked out publicly, through concrete discussion in their conference meetings. For example, reporters motivated their story ideas to be selected for publication which sometimes the editors would have been reluctant to assign reporters to cover, and what happened depended on how well the reporters pitched their ideas. The reporter who covered the taxi operators' march to deliver a petition to the minister of transport motivated his idea for covering the march itself, and not just the delivery of the petition at the

ministry's premises, to the editor who at first did not see it fit and in the end the reporter got what he wanted.

MoAfrika journalists work within a complex institutional and cultural environment that leaves its imprint on the daily news. Extra-journalistic, organisationally-driven considerations enter into the gatekeeping process, such as in the example of the coverage of the music awards and omission of the expired baby formula. In addition, gatekeeping itself is fundamentally a social and collaborative process. Gatekeeping is often a group effort, negotiated via specific discursive and interactional practices by participants who are accountable to collegial or social relationships.

Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of news influence model casts some light on all the gatekeeping happening at MoAfrika because as the findings (see chapter 4) have revealed, many variables such as news values, daily deadlines, resource allocation, pre-established and generalised practices, organisational norms and values, entrenched social structures and ideology are factored into the gatekeeping decisions. In some gatekeeping practices there were explicitly defined limitations to what news and information enters into the news production process such as in the examples of stories involving the retailer (MoAfrika's main advertiser) and the Managing Editor (see 4.5). I have not gone extensively into the role of ideology in affecting the news decisions, aside from noting that the journalists generally share the view that they operate in the "public service". Nevertheless, what the evidence does show overall is that gatekeeping is indeed a process based on forces operating on more than the individual level and subject to various complexities.

The different information travelling through each gate of transmission illustrates the concept of media gatekeeping. In the case of MoAfrika, radio, newspaper and website serve as gatekeeping channels through which news and information travel to its audience; although these channels did not necessarily stream different amounts and types of information to each respective audience. Examining news content on these three platforms allows comparison of what stories are redistributed across platforms and exclusive to each. Media gatekeeping theory (see chapter 2) points a researcher to evaluating the similarity and difference between content produced by traditional established print and broadcast media and the Internet-based media. This was evident

in a minority of instances such as in how MoAfrika decided on the presentation of some stories (on the clinic and elections) on the internet as opposed to most others which were just “shovelled”. The gatekeeping considerations in these two cases prove that extra-media influences are also a factor in making news content decisions. These influences include but are not limited to media markets, interest groups public relations efforts and competition with other news media. The cases also show that gatekeeping goes beyond just selection but includes shaping, display, timing, withholding and repetition of messages.

Because the public perception of issues is framed generally by news organisations and specifically by gatekeepers, the news culture of the Internet that offers immediate news and information, presents new responsibilities for journalists and the public. The introduction of the Internet at MoAfrika has provided a new perspective on the gatekeeping process. MoAfrika’s technician made limited decisions regarding the selection but made significant ones on the presentation of messages. On some stories of national interest he became innovative online. For example, he uploaded slides of the taxi strike using pictures provided by a reporter who had covered the march. The Managing Editor selected content and left presentation decisions to the technician. Like other traditional media gatekeepers, the technician’s skills and experiences influenced content and selection of information when performing the gatekeeping role, as was found in a different study by Beard and Olsen (1999). His understanding of the technology informed his decision on uploading the information online of what he perceived as main stories of the week. The technician put up extra pictures that were not in the paper. Among journalists, the online gatekeeper plays a unique role. Unlike reporters or traditional editors, online staffers are often understood to be “content providers” who understand the technology necessary for putting the information on the web (Lasica, 1997). This point is less applicable to MoAfrika because if print and broadcast content is “shovelled” to the Internet, then the process of discriminating between content passed through this channel is eliminated. The process of taking content from one format and channelling it to another is an example of gatekeeping. The Managing Editor and seldom editors decided what print and broadcast content is to be repurposed in the Internet platform.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that MoAfrika's findings follow expectations of previous research on multi-skilling, "shovelware" and cultural melding. As MoAfrika services more and more platforms, I presume the demands on journalists' skills will continue to rise. Multi-skilled journalists are required to produce tailored content for different platforms. The problem here is twofold: it assumes journalists can wear all these hats, and in the limited time also do justice to all the different versions of a story. Lack of resources for devoted online work results in too much "shovelware". Professional culture differences between media created by stereotyping and socialisation may hinder progress on MoAfrika's convergence. This chapter also argues that gatekeeping at MoAfrika is a group effort but the Managing Editor makes the call and sets the frameworks. The Internet has become a third gate in channelling information. The next chapter draws a conclusion, makes suggestions for further research and recommends a few pointers for MoAfrika's newsroom convergence.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter sums up the key issues that arose out of this study. In the following sections I discuss limitations of this study, raise issues for further research and make recommendations for MoAfrika. When considering the process of gatekeeping at media organisations, it is rare to find an example of a study that examines the process occurring between two or more forms of media. This study analysed the gatekeeping process across different media owned by MoAfrika. The process of media gatekeeping which dictates what information is channelled to the public is essential in the functioning of a democratic culture. Because democracy relies upon informed citizens to advance public policy, the media's gatekeeping function is one means of judging public exposure to issues and news events in society. In essence at MoAfrika, the same content generally appeared across all platforms, meaning that the democratic significance of gatekeeping did not vary much. By the same token, its limited character meant that the potential richness and diversity of the three platforms for democracy was also constrained.

6.2 Summary

The relationship between the theory of gatekeeping and convergence with the data is that news media going digital repurpose not only content, but also their own journalistic culture. In particular, gatekeeping theory was used in the execution of this research. It informed the following questions which I focused my observation attention on: How do journalists operate in order to produce content for multiple media? What factors affect their decisions on selecting or discarding stories for publication? Which forces and values determine where a news item is published? What are the main motivations for adopting convergence?

In introducing myself to MoAfrika, I had a meeting with the Managing Editor who in turn introduced me to his staff. I attended news diary meetings while observing and interviewing journalists at work. Once I had collected the data, I assessed it by looking at parts of the theory that pointed me towards some phenomena such as

journalistic cultural clash as a result of converging media, repurposing content and journalistic culture, issues of training in cross media production and multi-skilling among others.

When observing and comparing content, the results demonstrated a considerable similarity between MoAfrika's three media platforms, and also that the third 'gate' that may dictate which content is distributed online in fact remains as print and broadcast-only with only occasional differences in presentation. The level of homogeneity between content of traditional and digital platforms may be explained by the lack of resources devoted to online (Singer et al 1999). This lack of variation among MoAfrika's platforms reinforces the established criticism of online news being simply "shovelware". This criticism contends that since Internet editions lack much original content, the online editors fail to utilise the interactive and multimedia capabilities of the web. These findings offer important implications for the consumers of these news sources. While examining only a case, this study does show that individual values, routines, organisational and social factors can determine what content is transferred across platforms.

This study has also shown how newsroom convergence operates at MoAfrika. Collaboration ranged from information sharing between journalists, through reporters producing for more than one platform, to various forms of repackaging of content for different platforms. Reporters covered some events for all platforms (mainly radio and web), and it was assumed by the Managing Editor that they would exercise skills in writing, editing, audio recording, voice-over narration and even preparing versions for web publishing. In essence they did not manage to do all these tasks. To some degree, however, production for radio and newspaper has been integrated with production for online. Reporters who used to exist in separate worlds are now working together, cooperating across media boundaries. The platforms have been converged in terms of two production processes. The basis for this development is digitisation of production systems, which enables content to travel across media boundaries. In MoAfrika's case, their content management system facilitates this. These changes in turn have opened the arena for 'multi-skilled' or 'deskilled' journalists according to advocates and critics respectively (Cottle 2003:16; Quinn 2004:111).

My findings suggest that while digitisation and convergence have undoubtedly facilitated changed journalistic working practices as the means to achieve cost savings and efficiency gains at MoAfrika, increased pressures of work related to multi-skilling and multiple media production have been the result. However, the journalists recognise the advantages and inevitability of both. It is clear that there is a growing demand for multi-skilled journalists. In that sense there is no question that this is a management-led development as many authors have pointed out (Bromley 1996; MacGregor 1997; Cottle 1999). The benefits for the broadcasters and publishers are significant reductions in costs and a more flexible workforce. And here efficiency could be understood not so much by the reduction of costs through redundancies but by what Sheperd (1979) defines as “maximum value of outputs for given values of inputs” (quoted in Doyle 2002:40). That is why MoAfrika like most organisations, was keen to stress that its aim by favouring multi-skilling in the newsrooms is to produce more from the same resources.

Convergence sometimes brings a heavy burden for the professionals. If the reporter faces a tight deadline and has to produce stories for all three media, time for research or following up the news will be scarce. Besides, it is difficult for the same journalist to carry out a quality job in all media, for each of them demands skills and competences that are only achieved with adequate training and compensation, dedication and experience. Time is one of most frequently mentioned structural constraints. The time allowed for researching and producing a news item is now constrained by the increased demands placed upon the multiple media journalist. While management wants more multiple media cooperation and production, reporters accommodate this with complaints in their daily work by stating that they do not have the required time. All platforms demand content. The ability to build media-specific narratives is a professional skill for journalists, who rely on norms such as accuracy, credibility and fairness among others. The conventions vary by medium. There also are stylistic differences.

A common view among MoAfrika’s journalists was with respect to the increased workloads and pressures that have accompanied newsroom convergence. A further general criticism voiced by many of the interviewees concerned the decline in

specialist skills, notwithstanding evident broadening of journalistic tasks. Newsroom experiments with convergence's sharing of news staffs, technologies and products, disrupt not just the norms and routines of news work but, more profoundly, the professional socialisation of journalists and their perception of themselves as a distinctive kind of news worker. Journalists are socialised not just to feel part of a particular group but also to do things in a particular way and to see that way as natural and desirable. Beliefs about competition also affect journalists' perceptions and output. The quality and quantity of content that converged journalists at MoAfrika are expected to produce also are key concerns. Other than the consequences already described, however, changes in quality were difficult to locate.

The rationale for MoAfrika's adoption of digitisation of news production seems to undermine simplistic ideas of technological determinism and locates the driving forces elsewhere, such as commercial imperative and reaching wider audience. The technological developments were incorporated for strategic and competitive advantage. Advertising and marketing gatekeeping influences are encroaching upon news content decision-making at MoAfrika. What stories are economically advantageous and which ones are not? Obviously the most time-consuming and expensive types of journalism do not fit well into this market-driven journalism mentality. The Managing Editor expressed a desire to strengthen the company as a news provider on the whole and promote a converged culture that is mainly 'content-oriented', rather than 'platform-oriented'. This process, however, erodes the dedication of journalists to a single medium, and it encourages them to regard the news as the basic commodity, which they exploit, regardless of the medium.

This study has some implications in regard to the field of converged journalism. Based on this study's results, the process of online "shovelware" is prevalent at MoAfrika. Stories that were repurposed to the Internet were identical with a few exceptions from the print and broadcast editions other than the medium of which the information was passed. Beyond deciding what information is granted to the public, the Internet allows editors to choose how to present newsworthy information. But on this basic level as at MoAfrika, the online gatekeeper is concerned with simple replication from traditional medium to online format.

While the Internet is not bounded by space or time, even digital journalists still make gatekeeper judgments. This is, for example, by deciding what material is highlighted on the web and what would be made accessible with hyperlinks.

In this digital age, information is at least in theory available to anyone and everyone so journalism should distinguish itself by making sense of the information in a way that no one else can or will. As Kovach and Rosenstiel state,

(t) he new journalist is no longer deciding what the public should know – this was the classic role of gatekeeper. He or she is helping audiences make order out of it. This does not mean simply adding interpretation or analysis to news reporting. The first task of the new journalist/sense maker, rather, is to verify what information is reliable and then order it so people can grasp it efficiently (2007:19).

Another observer notes, “trying to play gatekeeper looks a lot like locking a gate that is connected to a fence that is lying flat on the ground” (Anderson 2006:1). In the Internet age, some of the media monopoly gatekeeper function may be more or less over, but in its place arises the need for a new kind of news manager who can gatekeep with an eye to multi-platform differentiation, and to the democratic potential of the technical capacity of the new media platform.

This study has been able to achieve most but not all its objectives. First, Shoemaker and Reese’s theory as I have shown in the previous chapter, casts light on all the gatekeeping taking place at MoAfrika which is converging to some point. The study has shown that individual values, routines, organisational and social factors can determine what content is transferred across platforms. Second, editors recognise the best medium for a particular story by considering constraints such as deadlines, expertise and cost. Third, stories were seldom tailored to meet the needs of various media. And fourth, there was no user-generated content online at MoAfrika. Further research at other media houses could profitably look at how gatekeeping decisions are affected by user-generated content across all platforms.

What my study shows are the challenges faced by journalists in cross-media news production. Although this was not an explicit research question I was exploring from the start, the investigation generated additional information relevant to the challenges. My results suggest, with hindsight, that my general research method and questions could have been phrased differently, reducing the distance between the theory of (gatekeeping and of convergence) and the empirical data, such as for instance in-depth tracking of more stories as distinct from general interviews with the staff.

There are three vantage points on convergence that all inform my study: what is important and good/bad from the point of view of those actually producing the journalism; what is in the interests of the owners, and what is in the interests of audiences. These three strands are evident throughout my work.

6.3 Limitations of the study

It must be stated that a single newsroom cannot begin to give scholars an overall perspective of how convergence might affect all newsrooms. This study has several limitations, the first of which is its small sample size. Most studies examine big newsrooms or more than one newsroom to generate findings of value and sometimes statistical significance. The research described here is derived from one case study, and the findings are clearly not generalisable to all newsrooms experimenting with convergence. Nor are the journalists who participated in this study necessarily representative of others in their own newsrooms since they were not randomly selected. Different methodologies can address these issues. That said, the virtue of a case study is in its ability to assist in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation.

Another limitation is the methods of data collection used. This research only investigated effects of convergence on gatekeeping from the point of view of the journalists and observations conducted within the newsroom. A triangulation of different approaches to research such as a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies could come up with different results. The media environment is also evolving rapidly and research findings on this topic quickly go out of date, but the

findings presented here offer valuable insights into the news production processes operating at MoAfrika.

The study was unable to fully address the research questions because the data that I collected is not very deep, detailed or rich. However, I should point out that the issue is not the number of interviewees or the time I could have spent on location, but whether the data gathering could have been approached in any other way to get more out of the process.

I recognise that the section of contextual information about MoAfrika could have been presented in detail. This limitation is because there is no accessible secondary literature on MoAfrika. I also wish to add that future research could build on the work so as to build up the contextual knowledge.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

While this study thoroughly investigated the specified goals, the scope could be increased both in the size of newsroom and number of newsrooms investigated. However, this research may play the role of a pilot study offering useful insights that could be probed in future studies of newsroom convergence.

This study has identified some research questions that need to be investigated. With respect to changing professional practices, how do reporters relate to multiple media strategies in their daily news work? How is production for multiple media platforms organised, practised and conceptualised within a news organisation? Concerns expressed about time pressure and how this affects the quality of journalism need to be researched further. Proliferation of platforms and deadlines tends to increase the workload and pressure on multi-skilled reporters, therefore more research is needed to examine the opposing perceptions both of managers and reporters.

Because each media organisation has a unique management philosophy and newsroom policy, online content varies among each organisation. This could be examined for a number of variables: multimedia content, interactive content, citizen journalism and the distribution of content among different platforms within the

organisation. Further research could examine conceptual and sociological shifts among journalists and explore the effect of convergence on both news culture and content. Researchers should also investigate the perceived effect of convergence on professional norms such as credibility, accuracy, and quality. It is necessary to look at other news companies because the findings of this case study at MoAfrika cannot be generalised.

More research into convergence is called for as the concept evolves over time and across markets. In addition to continuing to examine effects within newsrooms, researchers will want to explore the fundamentally important issue of the impact on content and audiences. A variety of research methods should be applied. Further study could expand this to include the views of the audience. Such a study may investigate perceptions of the users on the converged production of news they consume. It may be that they are grateful for “shovelware” on the online platform.

Scholars may consider exploring the effect of convergence on both news culture and content. Further research could also investigate how decisions are made within the newsroom management about what content is included online and what is withheld. This could include a survey of editors’ use of content management programmes to transfer stories to the web. Further research is needed in other media companies with different scopes and newsroom size. Boczkowski (2004:179) argues that there is too much focus on the products of convergence. Wanting to “make visible what is left unexplored by the dominant discourse around convergence” (2004:181), he calls for a greater focus on issues of the processes that create these products.

Deuze (2003) argues that the web has had a substantial impact on journalism as a profession as well as on journalistic culture. While he recognises that most mainstream news media going digital repurpose not only content, but also their own journalistic culture, he claims that much of the research on journalism and new media fails to consider the current and potential connections these online journalisms can have to “broader and more profound changes and redefinitions of professional journalism and its (news) culture as a whole” (2003:203). Future research could look into why MoAfrika has not taken advantage of the possibility of telling stories in a multimedia fashion. There is need to examine the forces that work to shape the media

content, given the multitude of factors that exert influence on the media, not only that, but questions of media operation in this age.

6.5 Recommendations for MoAfrika

The recommendation to MoAfrika is that eventually all three platforms should contribute equally to the convergence process. It is not whose idea it is: it should be which platform is in the best position to tell the story, that should determine who takes the lead. Right now, the three, while trying to work together, act more like unilateral news platforms rather than converged ones. Each news medium tends to think of itself first, and then, if it remembers, the other two. Currently, the radio and newspaper voices dominate the convergence conversation.

This study revealed MoAfrika's under-use of the Internet, which is made evident by too much "shovelware" and the low frequency of updates. There is a big challenge here. Who would generate this content and these updates? The answer lies in a human resource hungry for training. The journalists' perception was that they received inadequate training for work in a different medium and little if at all in online publishing. Another challenge which explains the previous is the fragility of the business models that support the online and their dependence on the resources of the print platform.

I support Kenny et al. (2000) who argue that there is need for original content that is designed specifically for the web as a new medium of communication. Ideally, I believe convergence should use shared resources to provide more thorough coverage of major news events. MoAfrika, like many newsrooms, are still using just "shovelware" on their websites. More exclusive material is needed to benefit audience. It obviously takes a lot longer to write and edit a package for a radio newscast than online. So should not reporters be writing for online first and then for radio? While I do not imply that radio and newspaper content are not good enough, if web content is going to be completed last, at least give people a reason to view it. Unless individuals missed a newscast, why would people take the time to visit a website that teaches them nothing more than what they heard earlier in the day?

MoAfrika can use radio for immediacy, online for interactivity and print for context. Also, online can be most immediate not waiting for a news bulletin. Convergence can also harness the benefits of online, broadcast, print and mobile to provide news to people when and where they want it. With convergence, radio and online can get the depth of reporting and expertise that newspaper offers. In exchange, the newspaper can reach people who would never buy a newspaper. The key I believe is to play to the strengths of each medium and to respect those strengths. The Internet and radio are useful because they can deliver breaking news to the public faster than other platforms can. Internet also allows newspapers to supplement printed content with audio and video clips, animated graphics and links to source information. Stewart (2006) posits that “the newspaper is typically fed a fully prepared meal once a day, while the web wants to snack on smaller bits every few minutes...” (2006:2).

Successful newsroom convergence facilitates the delivery of good journalism to multiple media, without sacrificing quality in any format. When the process is executed correctly, print and broadcast quality should not suffer at all, and well-reported news hits the web quickly. The proof of that statement would be evident daily, when breaking news is reported online first, developed throughout the day, then written and packaged for radio and the next edition paper. Journalism can function effectively and prosper in the converged newsroom so long as reporters continue to tell great stories and do not play media favourites. Consumers will eventually decide where and how they are going get the news, and the converged newsroom ultimately offers them the most options for good journalism.

The content online should complement print and broadcast. The purpose of convergence is to think about which medium or media work best and then create the story. Convergence puts the story before the media platform. MoAfrika, like many organisations, does not have the budget to hire as many ‘specialists’ as they would need to maintain a strong web presence. This is a matter of economics, MoAfrika’s website is not yet profitable at this point, and so most companies must rely on skeleton crews to handle them. It seems to me that once web divisions do start turning a profit then we will see a return to specialisation as more revenue becomes available and more employees are hired. The challenge faced by news organisations like MoAfrika is: How to establish a web presence with limited resources? If they clearly

want more than “shovelware” on the site, MoAfrika needs a detailed and flexible plan for staffing and maintenance, and then they will have the foundation. The trick to multi-skilling is for MoAfrika to have a perpetual audit underway where they can look at what reporters do and how effective they are in terms of it. I think putting in more financial and human resources into online would mean that MoAfrika could reap the benefits of newsroom convergence, whereas at the moment they are not using it to its full potential because they have untrained people to use the technology, and news management needs to shift priority so that reporters also have time for web service by reducing the pressures from print and radio proportionately.

Although Lesotho has internet access, such is largely confined to the capital, Maseru. Access costs are generally high and this is mostly due to the nature of the telecommunications sector where the revenue per subscriber line is as twice high as that of Europe, for example (Lesotho ICT policy 2005). The dilemma is how many MoAfrika users are connected to be able to access news online. While the site visits statistics are not known, MoAfrika could also consider publishing news on the mobile phone because of its wider coverage and access.

In terms of a current business analysis it may make sense not to manage for web as an equal platform because of lack of revenue there. There is no point in a brilliant website if only a handful can access it, at the expense of a suffering radio outlet that reaches thousands and gets adverts. It needs managers who know the value of all media so that this new platform can be harnessed properly. Just like every newsroom, MoAfrika should decide what it does best with the resources it has available.

The implementation of convergence brings about the need to invest in additional training for journalists. I wish to argue that for the adoption of continuous news operations to succeed, they should be preceded by a formal training and education process covering writing news across platforms and online publishing among others. A cultural change this profound cannot be dictated to staff in a memo or a meeting.

MoAfrika needs to define its core editorial proposition, what they will cover that others do not, or the way they will cover news that is different and decide how this plays out in terms of website design and navigation, then list the special sections and

in-depth areas that the online version will be required to offer, to back up the overall editorial proposition. MoAfrika's should move from a model in which the website is maintained by an online specialist to one in which every member of the news organisation can play an appropriate role in direct online publishing and interaction. It also needs a CMS that is easy to operate, requires almost zero maintenance, and lets journalists focus on the writing and other kinds of online content.

6.5.1 Human resource needs

MoAfrika should

- Set out the expected content production levels (frequency of update).
- Translate this into staffing needs, hours to be covered, multi-skilling training required (all staff should be able to use the content management system to update the website).
- Train staff in the writing disciplines needed to create content once so that it can be exploited on multiple platforms.
- Ensure all existing and new staff realise they are working as part of a multi-skilled team in a multiplatform news operation.
- Offer training for those who need to learn new multimedia skills.

MoAfrika also needs to think through multimedia news-on-demand plans, again in terms of design, navigation, staffing, update expectations, and hours covered. MoAfrika also needs to examine what models are best equipped to deliver quality, relevant content in this digital era of information excess or as Buckland (2008) argued, "If debate isn't about quality, then we as a society are becoming DUMBER. And if that's true, then it's an entirely different debate" (Paper presented at HighwayAfrica conference 2008). MoAfrika could also get their audiences involved by opening up the news-making process to users. They should look into ways in which they could make use of user generated content or citizen journalism because it is cost-effective, can bring in unlimited reporters, creates loyalty and trust. Participative publishing is also reflective of democratic instincts.

While some form of gatekeeping is still necessary for credibility and to avoid litigation, MoAfrika gatekeepers need to be more flexible and rather become facilitators in a time when news is a conversation, even a colloquy. Today the audience often chooses the topic and the speaker is left with a choice: validate the audience's choice and join the conversation or ignore the audience and risk the relevance of their messages.

6.6 Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that MoAfrika's journalists bring different news values, routines and cultures to their jobs. The decision to include a news story depends partly on which medium it fits into most easily. Decision-making considered the ease of reporting which deals with expense, time and expertise. A reporter chooses or motivates the subject and source, but the editor also decides if, when and how the story will be used. Editors share some similar news values, but these sometimes differed from those embraced by the organisation. The organisation's values often took precedence. News values, deadlines and national news trends are some of the considerations MoAfrika gatekeepers used. MoAfrika has an unwritten newsroom policy but it is not very explicit on convergence specifics; journalists are sensitive to criteria established by the Managing Editor and owner. Although journalists can impose their individual values, organisational values win because of the organisation's power to hire and fire.

As MoAfrika's journalists produce content for multiple platforms to reach a mass audience, "shovelware" has become a norm. Convergence clashes with traditional newsroom values in two major areas: internal competition and media-specific culture. There was agreement among most participants that convergence has forced everyone to do more work. Producing content for other media is time consuming and requires skill. Similarity of content across MoAfrika's platforms reinforces the established criticism of online news being simply "shovelware". This study revealed concerns about convergence in regard to both training and compensation for multi-tasking. Journalists need to be trained on skills for writing across media and be adequately compensated for the extra tasks they perform as a result of convergence.

Limitations to this research were that its findings are not generalisable to all newsrooms because it is a case study and that findings on this topic quickly go out of date. However, the findings offer valuable insights into the news production processes operating at MoAfrika. Issues such as: how time pressure affects the perceived quality of journalism; the perceived effect of convergence on professional norms; impact on content and audiences are among others raised for further research. I have recommended that MoAfrika should ensure that each medium's quality is not undermined as they continue to converge. The company should decide what it does best with the resources it has available. They can also adopt citizen journalism and instead of publishing online, also consider mobile which comes with more access.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent form

Title of research Project: **An investigation of newsroom convergence at the MoAfrika media company in Lesotho and its implications for gatekeeping: A qualitative case study**

Please read this consent form carefully before you decide to participate in this study

Consent: by signing this form, you consent to answer questions relating to your role and experiences in the converged newsroom

Confidentiality: the researcher will maintain confidentiality to the full extent of the law. Any notes will refer to you by your position rather than by your name.

Benefits: no immediate benefits are expected. This means you will not be paid or receive any other remuneration for your participation, aside from the possible satisfaction at helping the researcher to understand implications of gatekeeping in a converged news operation.

Risks: taking part in the interviews will have no risks to you of physical, psychological or economic harm greater than those ordinarily encountered in everyday life.

Cessation: you do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer and you may cease participation and leave at any time

Concerns: Any concerns and questions about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, Upper Prince Alfred Street, Grahamstown, South Africa.

Agreement: I have read and understood the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Participant ----- Date -----

Researcher ----- Date -----

Appendix B: Interview Guide

NEWSROOM ROUTINES & PRACTICES

1. Did you work for MoAfrika before it adopted multiplatform publishing?

YES/NO

YES	NO
<p>-Have jobs & responsibilities changed?</p> <p>-In what ways have they changed? (coverage a story receives, how it is covered, how it is reported where & when)</p> <p>-Is your job in regard to decisions on story selection and/or transformation easier or more difficult?</p> <p>-Explain why?</p>	<p>-what do you understand by multiplatform publishing?</p> <p>-what does it require of you?</p> <p>-does it make work easier or more difficult for you? How?</p>

NEWS CONTENT

2. How do you operate in order to produce content for multiple media?

- newsgathering stage
- selection
- editing
- packaging

3. Do you produce original content for each platform or repurpose? Why?

4. Any cases where you pre-purposed: i.e. planned in advance what kinds of coverage would be undertaken and what mix would be of shared content and platform unique to content?

DECISION MAKING

5. What factors affect your decisions on selecting or discarding stories for publication?
 - personal attitude,
 - news values
 - newsroom policy [economics & politics]
 - ethics
 - other (e.g. language of content)
6. Which of the following forces determine where a news item is published?
 - time of day
 - deadline
 - news values
 - type of story [news, alert, feature, opinion]
 - time of delivery
 - strength of medium [radio, web, newspaper]
7. Where & when does a media platform become important?
 - news gathering
 - news production
 - news publication
8. How do you ensure that quality of each medium is not undermined?
9. How do you make decisions regarding discarding of news content?

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE & NORMS

10. Have journalists become multi-skilled as a result of convergence? What extra skills have they acquired?

11. What is the degree to which (a) organisational rules, (b) power structure & (c) norms affect your decisions? Elaborate on the basis of the following practices in:

- selecting
- discarding
- transforming
- packaging
- distributing news content

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

12. What are the main motivations for adopting convergence?

- make money
- save money
- technical efficiency
- reach wider audiences
- other

13. What is MoAfrika's internal communication strategy about the convergence project & its goals?

- How have you addressed the following requirements for convergence?
Explain in terms of the following:
- skills development & training
- motivation of staff
- compensation for additional duties

14. Has the newsroom developed policy with regard to the following factors?

- internal competition for stories
- each medium's needs
- what plays best where & when

SOCIAL & IDEOLOGICAL LEVEL

15. Which of the following values influence your decisions in selecting, discarding, and transforming, packaging & distributing news content?

- Gender
- Class
- language
- religion
- culture
- domestic/foreign news
- media laws
- politics

CULTURE

16. Have you experienced any problems in implementing convergence?
17. What kind of problems?
18. How do you overcome issues of
 - Cultural clashes
 - stubborn platform loyalty

Appendix C: