



kediretswe pule

OBSTACLES FACED BY NEWS JOURNALISTS IN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

ANALYSIS OF FOUR BOTSWANA NEWSPAPERS



LAMBERT
Academic Publishing

kediretswe pule

OBSTACLES FACED BY NEWS JOURNALISTS IN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

ANALYSIS OF FOUR BOTSWANA NEWSPAPERS



LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing

Impressum/Imprint (nur für Deutschland/only for Germany)

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Alle in diesem Buch genannten Marken und Produktnamen unterliegen warenzeichen-, marken- oder patentrechtlichem Schutz bzw. sind Warenzeichen oder eingetragene Warenzeichen der jeweiligen Inhaber. Die Wiedergabe von Marken, Produktnamen, Gebrauchsnamen, Handelsnamen, Warenbezeichnungen u.s.w. in diesem Werk berechtigt auch ohne besondere Kennzeichnung nicht zu der Annahme, dass solche Namen im Sinne der Warenzeichen- und Markenschutzgesetzgebung als frei zu betrachten wären und daher von jedermann benutzt werden dürften.

Coverbild: www.ingimage.com

Verlag: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG
Dudweiler Landstr. 99, 66123 Saarbrücken, Deutschland
Telefon +49 681 3720-310, Telefax +49 681 3720-3109
Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Approved by: Port Elizabeth, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 2009

Herstellung in Deutschland:
Schaltungsdienst Lange o.H.G., Berlin
Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt
Reha GmbH, Saarbrücken
Amazon Distribution GmbH, Leipzig
ISBN: 978-3-8443-8164-1

Imprint (only for USA, GB)

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Any brand names and product names mentioned in this book are subject to trademark, brand or patent protection and are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders. The use of brand names, product names, common names, trade names, product descriptions etc. even without a particular marking in this works is in no way to be construed to mean that such names may be regarded as unrestricted in respect of trademark and brand protection legislation and could thus be used by anyone.

Cover image: www.ingimage.com

Publisher: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG
Dudweiler Landstr. 99, 66123 Saarbrücken, Germany
Phone +49 681 3720-310, Fax +49 681 3720-3109
Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Printed in the U.S.A.
Printed in the U.K. by (see last page)
ISBN: 978-3-8443-8164-1

Copyright © 2011 by the author and LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG and licensors
All rights reserved. Saarbrücken 2011

kediretswe pule

**OBSTACLES FACED BY NEWS JOURNALISTS IN INVESTIGATIVE
REPORTING**

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. Janina Wozniak, and Co-Supervisor, Bianca Wright, who patiently guided me throughout the research for the book. Their immense contribution in terms of revising and editing this book, and their valuable input into the writing of the book are greatly acknowledged.

I must also acknowledge members of the press in Botswana who sacrificed their valuable time and participated in the research for the book, despite pressure from newsrooms to meet deadlines.

Special thanks go to my wife and son who supported me emotionally throughout the writing of the book.

Table of contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
I Introduction Background on Investigative Journalism Definition of Investigative journalism Procedures in Investigative Journalism Benefits of Investigative Journalism Obstacles to Investigative Journalism	3
II Botswana's Media Landscape A brief History Media Self-Regulatory Bodies A History of Investigative Journalism Research Problem and Context of the Study	14
III Literature Review Theoretical Basis for Investigative Journalism Media Legislation in Botswana	20
IV Methodology Primary Data Content Analysis Results and Discussion Quantitative Analysis Content Analysis	54
V Conclusions and Recommendations	74
References	78
Appendices	87
Appendix 1: Table 1- Attitudes of Investigative Journalists	87
Appendix 2: Table 2 & 3 - Obstacles faced by Investigative Journalists	94
Appendix 3: Table 4 - List of Investigative Articles	95

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. Janina Wozniak, and Co-Supervisor, Bianca Wright, who patiently guided me throughout the research for the book. Their immense contribution in terms of revising and editing this book, and their valuable input into the writing of the book are greatly acknowledged.

I must also acknowledge members of the press in Botswana who sacrificed their valuable time and participated in the research for the book, despite pressure from newsrooms to meet deadlines.

Special thanks go to my wife and son who supported me emotionally throughout the writing of the book.

Table of contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
I Introduction Background on Investigative Journalism Definition of Investigative journalism Procedures in Investigative Journalism Benefits of Investigative Journalism Obstacles to Investigative Journalism	3
II Botswana's Media Landscape A brief History Media Self-Regulatory Bodies A History of Investigative Journalism Research Problem and Context of the Study	14
III Literature Review Theoretical Basis for Investigative Journalism Media Legislation in Botswana	20
IV Methodology Primary Data Content Analysis Results and Discussion Quantitative Analysis Content Analysis	54
V Conclusions and Recommendations	74
References	78
Appendices	87
Appendix 1: Table 1- Attitudes of Investigative Journalists	87
Appendix 2: Table 2 & 3 - Obstacles faced by Investigative Journalists	94
Appendix 3: Table 4 - List of Investigative Articles	95

**OBSTACLES FACED BY NEWS JOURNALISTS IN INVESTIGATIVE
REPORTING: ANALYSIS OF FOUR BOTSWANA NEWSPAPERS,
JUNE 2008 - OCTOBER 2008.**

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Mass media are channels of communication through which information is conveyed to the society, particularly in free societies to enhance democracy. Unfortunately, journalists who assume the moral authority to perform the duty of information dissemination face obstacles daily in their endeavour to fulfil this obligation. They face obstacles that range from financial to legal limitations. Sociologists like Peterson (1956:73) and De Burgh (2000: 6) believe that what drives the journalist to perform his duties is the notion that journalism is objective and has a social responsibility to create a public sphere through which ideas and opinions in a free society are played and exchanged for informed decision making by individual citizens. Peterson (1956: 82) views the media's social responsibility as a safeguard to totalitarianism.

However, De Burg (2000:5) questions journalists' functions, asking with what right investigative journalists exercise their profession, what idea of social responsibility appears to motivate their activity, and how they define objectivity.

A possible answer is that the media have a duty to inform us about events in the world that significantly affect our lives, according to Kieran (1999: 25). The author contends that this traditional conception of the role of the news media generally underwrites the presumption that the press constitutes the fourth estate. The other three estates are legislature, executive, judiciary, all semi-autonomous and official spheres of the government (Kieran 1999:25).

Kieran justifies the imperative role of the media (1999:25) as follows:

Although the political arrangements of the checks and balances aim to prevent the domination of one sphere of government on another, it remains possible for devious, powerful individuals and institutions within the

government to conspire in their own private interest. This is a perversion of the transparent functioning of the government, the aim being accountability, in order to achieve private ends independently of legality and public interest. But due to complexity, size and levels of government, the mechanisms, bodies, personnel and interrelations involved in the democratic process are far from transparent.

Kieran (1999:25) therefore argues that there is no absolute guarantee of trust and the trappings of power and influence can often corrupt those in positions of authority, adding that "it is possible for those in political sphere to club together and attempt to prevent the democratic process to further their own aims and goals".

"This is where the notion of the press as an unofficial estate comes in" (Kieran 1999: 25), Kieran states, "... obviously we can not get to grips with the opaque workings of government or hope to grasp the nuances of political manoeuvrings, but those who study the process itself from day to day, comment on it, and relay reports to us through the news media are not only there to report public workings of the government but can hope to explain to us what significance of certain events might be". He posits that journalists reporting on the day's proceedings in congress, parliament, the courts or the behaviour of the police are in effect watchdogs for the people over those who occupy positions of power and rule in the name of "our benefit".

Kieran (1999: 26) emphasises the watchdog role of the media;

The watchdog role of the press brings with it its own form of power to shape and influence events. Rather it is to point up the implied contract between the citizens in a liberal state and the news media. The point of the press is to keep a watch on those in position of power over us, in order to report what is actually happening and being done in our name. We need this information both to know what is happening and so that we can judge whether our representatives are doing their job, whether we should make representations to government against some policy and whether true justice is being carried out.

The author contends that it is important to realize that the implicit contract between citizens and the news media, as a watchdog, entails a normative conception of good journalism. A failure to investigate and report a story constitutes a failure to fulfill the function of the news media and live up to the implied contract, particularly where

there is evidence, sources are available and that the events have far-reaching implications for the savings or lives of many people (Kierian 1999: 26).

Schultz (1998: 17) views the investigative journalist's obligation similar to that of a saint. He states that sound investigative reporting is needed to restore the public faith in the credibility of the press and to make the press a more reliable and more effective monitor of government.

On the other hand, Schultz (1998: 17) believes that investigative reporting has its own hiccups, because it may also be salacious, commercially driven and trite and thus further undermine public faith in the press. A constant diet of exposure without sufficient context may also erode public confidence in political institutions and simply encourage cynicism, anxiety and an insatiable demand for conspiracy and titillation (Schultz 1998: 17). The author argues that though journalists could be seen as guardians when their methods and motives are questioned – as in the rising public anger about media intrusion and lack of respect for privacy – those in the industry may be quite disdainful of public attitudes. Investigative journalism therefore is a controversial genre implied in its definition, method, obstacles, history and the consequences of its application.

DEFINITION OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

It seems there is no one definition of investigative journalism, therefore it tends to depend on the inclination of the author towards the genre and probably on the objective of the investigative reporter or the profession itself.

However there are generally two accepted principles on investigative journalism, that of exposure and disclosure. Therefore, Spark (2003: 6) and Aucoin (2005: 89) share the opinion that the information must have been intentionally hidden, so that investigative reporters have to gather facts which someone wants suppressed or kept secret. It seeks not just the obvious informants who will be uncontroversial or economical with truth, but less obvious, those who know about disturbing secrets and are angry or disturbed enough not to divulge them (Spark 2003: 6).

De Burgh (2000: 9) defines investigative journalism as a career:

An investigative journalist is a man or woman whose profession is to discover the truth and to identify lapses from it in whatever media may be available. The act of doing this generally is called investigative journalism and is distinct from apparently similar work done by police, lawyers, auditors and regulatory bodies in that it is not limited as to target, not legally founded and closely connected to publicity.

Other authors (such as Faure 2005:157; Waisbord 2001:14, Schultz 1998:58) have attempted to define investigative journalism operationally. These authors share sentiments that investigative journalism involves publicizing information about wrongdoing that affects the public interest and that the story should arise from the initiative of the reporter. Aucoin (2005: 89) thus describes investigative journalists as dispassionate professionals probing beneath the surface to uncover whole truth.

Faure (2005: 157) attempts to clarify investigative journalism further by listing its characteristics as follows:

- Investigative journalism
- is a distinctive journalism practice that thrives on confidentiality
- is characterized by a unique news gathering process
- when published, discloses abuses of human rights and interests
- may cause a reaction in readers and authorities
- may lead to changes in public policy and eventually social change.

Aucoin (2005: 85) describes investigative journalism by showing how it differs from conventional reporting. The writer says, though some commentators think any good reporting is investigative, investigative reporting is a "speciality" that requires special skills for digging out information, more than normal stamina and tough-mindedness. Secondly, he concedes that it is a separate, coherent social activity differing from conventional reporting in its intensified use of traditional reporting methods and in the manner which it conceptualizes a reporting project. According to Aucoin (2005: 85), the genre is different in the sense that it involves two special talents, "one is the ability to use

public records, the other is the ability to see and understand relationships between people and institutions". Aucoin (2005: 85) concedes that there two types of investigative reporting, first is the widely understood perspective of exposing hidden illegalities and public official malfeasance, the second one is where the reporter "zeroes in on systems and institutions in public or private realm, to find out how they really work, who exercises power, who benefits and who gets hurt."

Aucoin (2002: 91) sums up the definition of investigative journalism as follows: 1) exposure of information 2) about an important public issue 3) that someone or some organization does not want reported and 4) that is revealed through the original, time-consuming "digging" of the reporter, for 5) for the purpose of inspiring reform.

Procedures in Investigative Journalism

There are no hard and fast rules on how to carry out an investigation; however Aucoin (2005: 92) traces attempts to develop a systematic investigative reporting methodology back to the 1960s. He posits that this is what differentiates modern-day investigative reporting from early twentieth century "muckraking" which only involved distillation and interpretation of already-known information.

For a social practice such as investigative journalism to thrive, Aucoin (2005: 98) contends, practitioners should be able to exude virtues such as courage, justice, honesty and a sense of tradition.

As a methodology for investigation, Aucoin (2005: 97) tends to advocate techniques that were used in *Newsday's* heroin investigation, the exposure of police brutality in Chicago, the study of the Philadelphia court system, and the revelation of voter fraud in Chicago.

Aucoin (2005: 97) says that all serve as a breadth of methodology applied by investigative journalists particularly in the mid 1970's, and documented a list of skills required for investigative reporting, as follows:

- Conceptualising stories at a systemic level concentrating on patterns of abuse, illegalities and corruption rather than on a few wrongdoers;

- Organising, correlating and evaluating massive amounts of information and sifting through thousands of documents;
- Interviewing hundreds of sources for an individual or stories;
- Analysing with computers otherwise unmanageable amounts of data;
- Persisting in an investigation over months of inquiry, even when faced with what appear insurmountable odds, such as following up hundreds of leads to find information and develop evidence;
- Collecting evidence that people and institution want to keep hidden, even if collecting it means surveillance or undercover work by the reporters;
- Conducting tough interviews with targets of their investigations ;
- Verifying the truth evidence, such as through the use of polygraph tests in the police brutality series
- Cooperating in teams to accommodate investigations that go beyond the scale that individuals could handle alone.

Utilising this broad definition and noting Aucoin's stringent requirements, this study applies a rigorous expectation to articles that are perceived as investigative journalism in the context of Botswana in 2008. Hence the term is understood to imply a far deeper investigation than a mere collection of facts with critical comment, whether the sources are police spokespersons, court reports, public relations and news agency reports or informants. This type of reporting must, ideally, reflect a deeper probe into the reported events than the above sources can provide.

Benefits of Investigative Journalism

Democracy

The importance of investigative journalism in democracy is centred on the press as the fourth estate or fourth power which describes it as independent from other institutions of power in a democratic government such as the executive, judiciary and the legislature. Waisbord (2001:15) posits that the role of investigative journalism can be understood in keeping with the fourth estate model of the press. It is based on the

political arrangement of the checks and balances aimed at preventing the domination of one sphere of government over another (Kieran 1999:25 and Waisbord (2001:15).

Other writers deem that the influence of investigative journalism in democracy is explained by its role in the social fabric. Schultz (1998:47) argues that by claiming a public and essentially democratic purpose, which shapes its other imperatives, the news media have been able to define themselves as an institution with a public political, social and cultural role. The claim to this central independent status is based largely on the liberal arguments of the enlightenment, which led to the successful creation of the notion of the press as the fourth estate in the nineteenth century Britain, and as an institution of such importance to the democratic process that it must not be limited, in the United States (Schultz 1998:47).

According to (Schultz 1998:48) the press emerged as the fourth estate by the practical application of the principles of the freedom of expression that were vigorously sought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By asserting an independent role in public life and the centrality of freedom of expression, the press began to legitimize itself as the conduit for public discussion and took a crucial step towards becoming a source of power in political life (Schultz 1998:48).

Waisbord (2001:15) views the media as machinery for monitoring those in authority and to curb abuses of power and he says, "[t]he centrality of the media in contemporary democracies makes political elites sensitive to news, particularly to bad news that often causes public commotion". He adds that the publication of news about political and economic wrong-doing can trigger congressional and judicial investigation, though he warns that continuous press attention does not guarantee congressional and judicial attention to investigate and prosecute those responsible for wrong-doing. At a minimum, investigative reporting retains important agenda-setting powers to remind citizens and political elites about the existence of certain issues (Waisbord 2001:15).

Nonetheless most writers like Waisbord (2001:150), who advocates for the genre, are optimistic that investigative journalism results in a healthy democracy. Investigative journalism contributes by nurturing an informed citizenry. Information is a vital resource to empower a vigilant public that ultimately holds government accountable through voting and participation. With the ascent of media-centred politics in contemporary democracies, the media have eclipsed other social institutions as the main source of

information about issues and processes that affect citizen's lives (Waisbord 2001:150).

In short, investigative journalism nurtures democracy through its influence on policy as shown in the history of investigating reporting in the literature review by exposing wrong-doing, for instance the publication of news stories about the White House eventually resulted in Nixon's resignation as the public lost confidence in his administration.

Obstacles

Obstacles in investigative journalism tend to vary within different countries, depending on existing variables. However it is generally agreed that obstacles include finance, time constraints, legal restrictions, culture, politics, management commitment and journalist commitment (Baker 2005:1 and De Burg 2000: 304).

Finance/Time

The effect of finance on the media involved in investigative reporting is multi-pronged. This could include profit maximization, time and cost-effectiveness and muzzling of investigative media institutions by advertisers.

Because most media organizations, particularly in free market societies, are run like business, the prime drive is profit. Barker (2005: 1) observes, "today with ownership of the media increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few corporations, everything is about generating larger and larger profit margins and better corporate quarterly reports". He posits that putting a reporter on a six-month project with no guaranteed income is less cost-effective than having that person "crank out" a new article every day. Hence, quality and quantity are often natural enemies (Barker 2005:1).

Depending on how much a media institution or newspaper may rely on income from advertising, advertisers may control the editorial content of the medium of communications, for instance newspapers. Fourie (2004: 180-181) explains this:

The west is often accused in Marxist circles of allowing advertisers to determine the content of newspapers. According to the Marxist view advertisers in the west insist on a particular type of news presentation and will withdraw their advertising should the newspaper fail to comply. Allegations of such flagrant manipulation are probably somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless it is true that advertisers are guilty of subtle or indirect manipulation or influencing of news content.

Fourie (2005: 180) points out that in view of the present economic demands, a newspaper's editor will think twice before publishing a story that will annoy its largest advertiser. Fourie argues that the advertiser's power of regulation depends on the degree to which the medium is dependent on income from advertisement.

Investigative stories are more likely to provoke advertisers, compared to those from conventional reporting. Since newspapers are dependent on advertising for survival, most media organizations might prefer to ignore investigative reporting in order to attract more income from advertisers.

Culture

De Burg (2000: 304) posits that culture, meaning 'the social practices and beliefs of a given group of people who share them' are fundamental, in shaping news. He observes that a central message of cultural scholarship over the past decades has been that what observers see depends upon both what they look at and what their previous experience has taught them to see. The author posits that most scholars have shown how our culture affects the ways in which we represent others according to where we ourselves are situated.

Reporters thus carry their own beliefs and mores to the newsroom, which are likely to constrain investigative reporting to a certain degree. This raises questions of authenticity: does a foreign story realistically reflect a society upon which it reports, and how much is it a reflection of the audience's own culture? A factual report may appear to outsider readers not as truth but as the reality of the foreign society, or even represent ethical imperialism in reporting according to the expectations of the audience, rather than those of the subjects. An example of a situation where culture might restrict investigative