

## The Season Dictates – Trust, Media, and Political Leadership

In the age of media abundance, trust is the glue in the relationship between media and their audience. Digital has increased the 'media pace' exponentially. It gets sticky. A South African story can become an Australian headline, with global echoes. With thousands of influencers sharing a single story, an agenda can be set with detrimental impact on a person/country's reputation.

Measuring trust is essential for tracking citizens' perceptions of the media organization and its output. These perceptions also have an impact on agenda setting (political, corporate, economic agenda), and popular perceptions towards various organisations as shaped across a variety of state owned *and* independent media outlets. While radio and TV remain trusted sources of information in Namibia, the internet and social networks are trusted the least. Trust is an individual's perception of the reliability of sources, and is ultimately the result of socio-economic conditions, education and long-standing perceptions.

Can media organizations work towards increasing trust in the medium and long term by championing credibility and authenticity? Is there still room for changing some destructive and long-standing perceptions? In a democracy, citizens delegate powers to individuals and political parties charged with building and maintaining institutions that will ensure the people's well-being. In this arrangement, trust is one of the most important ingredients in the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems (Blind, 2006).

Several high-profile corruption scandals making headlines (for example the Gupta scandal, South Africa) hurt public confidence in media to find and tell the truth. The Afrobarometer (research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions) finds the link between perceptions of official corruption resulting in sharply lower levels of trust in institutions of public order, which in turn has a negative impact on citizens' perceptions of their democracy. Given economic pressure (unemployment, food insecurity, public debt), government-public communications become a cross fire for perceived versus real justice. 2% has never been as much as it was in Namibian media during the past few weeks. It's a fire that doesn't get set out, and its remains are forever online.

Across Africa, perceptions of corruption in government institutions have moved in a single direction – upward. It's drawn into almost every discussion. For example, fewer than half of Basotho trust the three major institutions of order – the courts (49%), the police (44%), and the army (41%). Losing trust in public service (governance) becomes the underlying agenda above all other contentious issues discussed in media. Government communications are evaluated for context and purpose, as opposed to promise and forecast. Public trust is also linked with public-patience; a scarce resource such as reputation capital that leaders count on for drawing from in times of crisis. If there is drought in pocket, in resources, in perceived accountability of practises that have become incongruent with the economic situation of the country, then the trust (the process) versus expectation (outcome and action) face heated arguments. It becomes the underlying decay that revolts by protest, or ignorance. Some people say no to cake, because they want bread for tomorrow. If there is no

bread for tomorrow, then fear is the root of conversation as opposed to peace or stability.

Perhaps it's less about media trust, and more about political trust. When action speaks louder than money, you know that there is very little money left. Ultimately, print, radio and TV communications remain indispensable assets for Namibia.

Love,

Natasja

Some highlights from the past few days;

03/06/2019

- Namibia Economist reports that every litre of fuel sold from any Engen service in Namibia over the next three months will contribute five cents to dare to Care to aid in drought-stricken farmers. Christian Li, the Managing Director of Engen, stipulated that "As Engen, we hope that our 5 cents per litre of fuel sold initiative will help them achieve their target and make feed more affordable to the farmers,"

04/06/2019

- ET Markets reports that Crude oil prices are likely to remain steady around current levels, as growing macro uncertainties, rising US output and large availability of core OPEC nations' spare capacity will offset supply constraints from Iran and Venezuela, Goldman Sachs said. Oil prices dropped to their lowest in three months on Monday, with Brent marking \$60.55 per barrel and US crude reaching \$52.11 per barrel.
- New Era reported that unleaded fuel and diesel would increase by 30 cents per litre as of June 5 Included in the 30 cents per litre adjustments is six cents per litre for the dealer margin. Escalating fuel prices usually have a knock-on effect for consumers who anticipate an increase in transport and food prices. In the fuel increase announcement made late last week, Alweendo noted that fuel is traded using United States dollars (USDs) throughout the international market. "Therefore, there is a need for Namibian bulk importers (fuel wholesalers) to convert Namibia dollars (N\$) into USDs to enable them to import fuel products (e.g. petrol and diesel). This review is based on the trading cycle between April 26th and May 24th," Alweendo said.
- Namibian reports that prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila yesterday expressed concern at the high number of cases of corruption reported in the public sector. "Cases referred from the Anti-Corruption Commission for the attention of the respective OMAs should be accorded due priority, as should the many disciplinary cases that drag on for too long, sometimes resulting in prescription of cases, and leaving perpetrators not being held to account," she said.

- Namibian reports that City of Windhoek councillor Brunhilde Cornelius has been elected secretary general of the Rally for Democracy and Progress. Cornelius was elected at the party's national elective convention held in Windhoek at the weekend as confirmed by, RDP spokesperson Nghiningiluandubo Kashume to The Namibian yesterday.

05/06/2019

- Market Watch reports that Royal Dutch Shell plan to increase spending and dividends after 2020, in a show of confidence despite an uncertain outlook for oil and gas prices. The plans to increase spending on oil and gas projects come as Shell set out the sector's most ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations in an effort to comply with 2015 Paris climate agreement.
- Namibian reports Ester Muinjangué urges the youth to be involved in the party's politics, and by doing this it will aid in shaping the country prospects. NUDO party President Muinjangué Ester, stated "I want to see more young people than ever before engaging in local community campaigns and other political activities. You, young people, can change Namibia, can change Africa, and can change the world through politics by becoming actively, meaningfully and substantially involved through political parties and beyond."

06/06/2019

- Market Watch reports that The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Wednesday cut its 2019 economic growth forecast for China to 6.2% on heightened uncertainty around trade frictions, saying that more monetary policy easing would be warranted if the Sino-U.S. trade war escalates. The downgrade came just two months after the IMF raised its China growth forecast to 6.3% from 6.2%, underlining the expected drag on the world's second-biggest economy from higher U.S. tariffs on billions of dollars of Chinese goods.

07/06/2019

- Namibia Economist reports the installation of 1740 solar panels and 9 solar inverters on the roof of Coca-Cola Namibia worth over N\$ 5.7 million. "The project makes a compelling case for implementing solar powered systems at a number of sites across Coca-Cola's operations in at least three other countries," CCBA Chief Executive, Jacques Vermeulen said.
- Namibian Sun reports that Engen has heeded calls to assist the Dare to Care Fund in order to help country farmers amid the National drought crises. Our target is to raise N\$ 3 million to help the countries commercial and subsistence farmers in this hour of extreme need. "said Christian Li, Engen Namibia's managing director.
- The Patriot reports the multi-million dollar renovation of SWAPO's headquarters has been heavily criticised by SWAPO's former Secretary-General, Pendukeni Iivula-lithana, who was quoted in a daily publication this week as saying that

the project that was awarded to the Chinese Unik Construction. NUDO Secretary General, Kauandenge Joseph said “SWAPO has an exclusive right to build its office that we cannot dispute, however what is disturbing is the timing and the amount involved. We think it is ridiculous for them to build a party (house) at close to a billion dollars. In this economic outlook and then the very same SWAPO government has the audacity to request a 2% contribution to drought efforts from already impoverished Namibians. The SWAPO party could have donated that money to the student’s financial assistance fund to fund those 12000 students who have no education, instead of spending it on a building.”

10/06/2019

- The Namibian reports Popular Democratic Movement leader McHenry Venaani says he will introduce a motion in the National Assembly to review the law regulating the benefits of former presidents. Venaani emphasized on the number of vehicles assigned to former presidents should be reduced to cut unnecessary government spending.
- The leader of the Landless People's Movement, Bernadus Swartbooi, has criticised the formation of a high-level panel on the economy, saying it does not address the fundamentals of the economy. Geingob had said the voluntary committee would also strengthen the social contract between the government, labour organisations and the private sector