

The swing of pernicious media influence

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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I'm getting seriously worried about the changing media in South Africa (and throughout the world, for that matter).

Firstly, we have to acknowledge that newspaper circulations (and obviously readership – which we don't measure so well any more – actually, we never have) will continue their nosedive and eventually bottom out.

Not many will survive and, naturally, there'll be fewer jobs (ask around at Newspaper House).

But that's probably not as bad as it sounds. We'll get the news from somewhere – internet and some radio and TV, I guess.

The second (and more serious) problem is the standard of journalism and the demands of their masters.



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There was an article a couple of weeks' back, where the reporter included a reference to Penny Sparrow – the sentence went, more or less, like this: "...Sparrow, a DA supporter, was fined R150,000..." Why? What does that have anything to do with the story?

Whether or not she supports the DA is completely irrelevant. It was a cheap shot because, as most of us realise, the *Cape Times* does not like the DA and tends to sidle up to the ANC.

It's a subtle but effective use of words – only just managing to disguise hidden agendas.

And the quality of subs these days! Just about every edition of local newspapers is littered with typos, appalling use of English and dreadful, absolutely dreadful grammar. (My own writing is far from perfect, as you can see – my English teacher would give me a zero out of ten each time I began a sentence with “but” or “and” or any other conjunction for that matter).

On the other side of the computer screen there are the fake news stories – about which, much has been said recently.

I'm getting tired of reading that Michelle Obama is actually a man, Jacob Zuma has a jet bigger than Airforce One or Donald Trump is rounding up young girls for his own personal harem in the White House. They're so obviously untrue (although I wouldn't bet too much on Zuma's jet).

But, when you think of it, a really good manipulator of the truth can do wonders for any election campaign (or any promotional effort, for that matter) because you don't have to do much research – just make it up as you go along. And if you're outrageous enough (but subtle) you'll get millions of minds coming around to your way of thinking.

None of this is breaking news, obviously.

The media, around the world (the USA being a prime example by showing its partisanship in the recent election), has always had favourites and dodgy agendas since the first story was chiselled into stone. But in this time of wondrous technical advancement the world seems to be increasingly veering towards “yellow press” standards.

And who would have thought that most of the world's young people (you know, the future leaders), would rely on Facebook and Twitter for their news? Now that's a very scary thought and we must find a way to be more vigilant and stop the rot.

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