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**THE 19th AFRICAN
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CONFERENCE
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**Big Tech and News – The Fight
for Fair Compensation**

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GIBS Media Leadership Think Tank

The Think Tank was launched at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) in 2021 with the following key objectives:

- to be an independent, thought leadership and advocacy platform for stakeholders in the African news media and audiovisual content industries;
- to generate innovative research and policy solutions for government, industry and civil society; and
- to primarily focus research and policy initiatives on media sustainability, mis/disinformation, internet freedom and competition in the digital economy.

Global crisis for media sustainability

- Link between media sustainability and survival of democracy
- Journalism as a Public Good
- Pandemic's impact on public interest media
- 'Media Extinction Event' and News Desserts
- Rise of digital authoritarianism around the world
- Negative impact of Big Tech on media sustainability was global but more acutely felt in the Global South

Conference in Johannesburg

- Think Tank organised and convened a conference in July 2023 on **Big Tech and Journalism – Building a Sustainable Future for the Global South.**
- Brought together over 70 participants, including journalists, news publishers, media organisations, scholars, activists, lawyers, and economists from 24 countries
- Discussed solutions to the crisis of the sustainability of journalism and its intersection with the role of major tech platforms.

Common themes emerged

- Sustainability of media not only dependent on fair compensation by Big Tech – there are other pressing needs like training at all levels of media organisations, on innovation and management
- Power of **collective bargaining** in achieving change was emphasised for small media organisations and countries with lower bargaining power over tech platforms
- **Distrust of repressive or dysfunctional governments** raised questions about the suitability of competition or regulatory efforts in some countries in the Global South
- Range of tools available to countries in the Global South to achieve change, including media **bargaining codes** and **national funds**, with various benefits and drawbacks

Adoption of Big Tech and Journalism - Principles for Fair Compensation, 14 July 2023

- Adoption of principles received global attention
- Intended to be universal, serving as a framework for any country seeking to address media sustainability through competition or regulatory mechanisms, while enabling adaptation to unique contexts.
- To date, the Principles have been endorsed by 101 individuals and organisations from 28 countries.
- Full conference report [here](#)

The Principles

1. Public interest
2. Plurality
3. Diversity
4. Sustainability
5. Fairness
6. Collectivity
7. Transparency
8. Accountability
9. Independence
10. Outcomes

Revenue Shares and Platform Strategies

- Calculating the value and revenue gap (Swiss research)
- Further research by Anya Schiffrin and others, using the same methodology, shows that Google and Meta Owe US Publishers \$14 Billion a Year
- Research on Platform Beneficiaries – grants, commercial agreements & country funds
- The Playbook and Democratic Will

How to take the Principles forward?

- Use Principles as an advocacy **document** to assist all stakeholders in lobbying for new mechanisms that aim to address media sustainability through fair compensation
- Further research needed including comparative studies on initiatives across the world.
- Ensure they are tabled at the appropriate AU fora, as well as informing African Continental Free Trade secretariat
- Principles submitted as part of a civil society filing to the South African Competition Commission's market inquiry on Media and Digital Platforms

Importance of Competition Commission's market inquiry on Media and Digital Platforms

- Most comprehensive market inquiry in Africa and the Global South
- Competition authorities across Africa will be keeping a close eye on this inquiry which is expected to conclude by January 2025
- Commission will determine appropriate **remedies** where an they find an adverse effect on competition
- On 14 November 2023 the Think Tank made a joint submission with the South African National Editors Forum, the Press Council of South Africa, the Association of Independent Publishers, Media Monitoring Africa, SOS Coalition, the Forum of Community Journalists



**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria



14 November 2023

TO: THE COMPETITION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

“We appreciate the importance of this process to create an **efficient and fair market in which diverse and alternative routes for the sustainability of journalism can be pursued. We are of the view that the MPDMI has the potential to play an important role in creating a fair, transparent, and accountable environment in which public interest journalism, and the news media organisations which sustain it, can thrive.”**

Joint submission by SANEF, Press Council, AIP, MMA, SOS, Forum for Community Journalists and GIBS Media Leadership Think Tank, 14 November 2023

Joint submission included:

- importance of news media to constitutional dispensation
- Notable international developments, including the Principles, UNESCO Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms (2023), and recent research
- SABC News should be included in the statement of issues as it is part of ToRs
- General trends in public, private and community media
- Commercial relationship between platforms and news media and competition distortions
- Information asymmetry and bargaining power
- Transparency in the ad tech stack in the online distribution of news media
- Use of AI and need for guidelines and compensation for news content used to train LLMs
- Incentives for investigative journalism
- Requiring digital platforms to provide auditable information on the flow of news on their services

In Conclusion

- Aim is for the Principles to inform not only the Commission's final remedies but also guide other mechanisms across the world
- Big Tech platforms are trying to avert regulation by doing direct deals with publishers, many of whom are struggling to survive
- These agreements are short-term solutions to what scholars believe is endemic, anti-competitive conduct and alleged abuse of dominance

While it is not a magic wand for media sustainability, resolving the commercial relationship between news media and Big Tech could be fundamental for the future of journalism.



Thank You!

Michael Markovitz AIJC 2023