

**An investigation of the Ugandan publication
Red Pepper—a case study from 2001-2004**

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late Dad, the Frank Old Man, Matayo Adocor, and to my late brother and guardian, Mr Lawrence Olaki, who inspired me to value academic inquiry, to work hard and to be compassionate.

To my wife Elizabeth, daughters Maria Aminat and Agnes Arereng; sons Lawrence, Victor Emma Emorimor, Prince Daniel Esiana and General Gabriel Ejai for your invaluable encouragement, prayers and understanding during the long spells I was away from home, at Rhodes University, thousands of miles away, or toiled in the study for hours, and denied you quality time.

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ABSTRACT

Red Pepper has been the subject of much discussion in Uganda, with some accounts describing it as a liberal mouthpiece, and others as pornography. This case study, therefore, sought to investigate Red Pepper as a media phenomenon in Uganda in the 21st century, specifically between 2001 and 2004. Employing quantitative and qualitative methodologies, it focused on the production process and the text. Although sexualised content dominate its pages, and news about issues such as the environment and education are near-absent, its managers describe the publication as legitimate, normative and consistent with liberal media standards. Accordingly, to interrogate Red Pepper in terms of its journalistic functions, selected debates associated with liberal approaches to news media, media political economy, tabloidisation, pornography and gendered relations were reviewed. The analysis entailed five phases. The first was a denotative or descriptive analysis, which focused on the publication's structure and content focus. This was followed by an interview with management, a broad content analysis to establish the incidence of predefined content categories expected of the tabloid, pornographic and liberal press and, lastly, a theme-based content analysis that sought to establish the potential meanings and framing of the dominant content categories of gossip and sexualised copy. Overall, the study found Red Pepper to be a misogynistic tabloid, having elements said to belong to pornography and homophobia. According to the findings, not only does Red Pepper fall short of a liberal understanding of a newspaper in terms of diversity of topics, provision of information and professional practice, it also does not fit the understanding of an alternative public sphere, mainly because it fails to challenge the patriarchal framing of sex, sexuality and gendered relations. This framing is undertaken deliberately as a means to securing economic rather than journalistic ideals to which the editors pay lip service. Consequently, the gossip and sexualised content are not problematised and as such discourses and power relations therein are not interrogated. Neither are inadequacies in local systems addressed nor corrective action mobilised as expected of some tabloids. All in all, the publication fronts superficial entertainment content that echoes particular gender constructions and patriarchal commonsense and entrenches the (undesirable) status quo which, ironically, it claims to challenge.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Red Pepper is a particular Ugandan publication, which has been described as a tabloid and/or pornographic press (Mukasa 2004; Nsambu 2004). Much of its space is taken up by sexualised content, some of which has been described as pornographic (Bugingo 2003) and gossip occupies about half of the space, while news about the environment, governance, crime, and education is absent. However, the managers insist the publication is legitimate and both normative as conceived by the liberal tradition, but that it also serves as an alternative public sphere. While condemned by both the left and the moral right, it continues to grow, moreover in a country that is increasingly dominated by fundamental rightwing Christianity (Muyita 2003). Civil society organisations, legislators, parents associations and moralists generally have called for its ban.

As a Ugandan journalist, I was struck by the emergence of this phenomenon. The number and variety of reactions, which Red Pepper elicited at its launch in 2001, and its apparent extreme representation of its actors¹ (women in particular), led me to carry out this research into this unusual phenomenon. This case study seeks to establish a general overview of Red Pepper, which could provide the basis for further research into the phenomenon that needs to be understood within the Ugandan political and media context against relevant theoretical perspectives. This context, the study objectives, research methods and the thesis outline are provided in this chapter.

General Background

The country now called Uganda resulted from a colonial policy that sought to transform a multiple aggregation of different groups of people into a viable political state. It has been argued that the leaders that took over from colonial administrators did not undertake a project of nation building (Tripp Aili Mari 2004). Not only did they inherit autocratic systems of government, but they did not attempt to establish democratic reforms that would ensure checks and balances and enable their citizens to participate in nation building. Instead, they took advantage of the repressive colonial legacy to entrench themselves in power by cracking hard on opposition and independent media.

¹ In this study, the word is used to refer to the human images featured in the publication, Red Pepper

For instance, Uganda's first post-colonial Prime Minister in 1962, Dr. Apollo Milton Obote, is acknowledged as a pivotal figure in Uganda's liberation, but he is also criticised for his failure to nurture democracy (Tripp Aili Mari 2004). Under his reign, fundamental human rights were further curtailed and the press co-opted as an extension of government, ostensibly to play a 'developmental' role. News media content, therefore, was designed and straight-jacketed along the lines of slogans such as 'patriotism', 'national security', 'eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease' (Bouckaert 1999; Tripp Aili Mari 2004).

This approach resulted into the suppression of particular forms of social commentary. Discussion of sex and sexuality was particularly disallowed as 'un-African', (Tripp Aili Mari 2004), as alien to African culture and as part of a neo-colonial onslaught on the purity of local tradition. Press laws on obscenity and pornography became part of the legal framework from as early as the 1960s, ostensibly to protect local culture from the decadence of the West (Bouckaert 1999; Tripp Aili Mari 2004). When in 1971 Gen Idi Amin, Obote's army chief, seized power and began a 10-year reign of terror, every semblance of civil liberty and press freedom that might have existed during Obote's regime was obliterated (Tripp Aili Mari 2004).

Amin's reign lasted from 1971 when he took over government in a bloody coup till 1979 when Ugandan exiles and Tanzanian armed forces routed him from power. By the time he fled into exile in Saudi Arabia, the economy had been run down and politics militarised, dealing a further blow to democracy and press freedom.

When the current Movement regime of Lt. Gen. Yoweri Museveni took over power in 1986, it allowed a degree of press freedom but it was not far-reaching since it was driven by the need to survive politically, not a commitment to democracy. Thus, Uganda remains authoritarian, although less so compared with the earlier Obote and Amin regimes (Tripp Aili Mari 2004).

Enormous constraints on civil and political liberties persist under a regime that arrests journalists who are perceived to be anti-establishment (Tripp Aili Mari 2004). Although it allows a vocal and independent press, the Movement government regularly detains, interrogates, and lays criminal charges against journalists for their news reports, under the 1995 Press and Journalists law, which grants the government Media Council

the power to suspend journalists and publications (Bouckaert 1999). It is notable that a leading non-state owned English daily, The Monitor, as well as other electronic media, some of them community radios, have frequently been closed for short times in relation to charges for reasons ranging from tax and licence issues to national security (Bouckaert 1999). Publication of false news and seditious libel, under legislation dating to the colonial era, top the list of charges which journalists have faced. Routinely, journalists are summoned to police stations and interrogated about particular press reports, and released hours later without charges. Ironically, the government justifies and legitimises this high-handedness as necessary to “maintain national security and sovereignty” and to enforce the law that calls for “responsible” journalism (Bouckaert 1999). Since 1995, the editors of Daily Monitor, The Citizen, The Crusader, The People, Rupiny, Uganda Express, Uganda Confidential, Assalaam, and The Shariat have all been detained and questioned about stories in their respective papers, and some were charged with criminal offences. Hussein Musa Njuki, editor of the Islamic paper Assalaam, died in police custody in August 1995 under unclear circumstances. It is unsurprising then that in this climate of harassment Assalaam, The Citizen, The People and The Crusader have long folded, while The Confidential has been on-and-off the street.

In addition, a small advertising base, low purchasing power and a high rate of illiteracy continue to be limitations faced by the print media, which largely depends on advertising revenues for survival (Mwesige 2004). In 2000, the government directed its agencies, departments and ministries not to advertise in non-state owned media perceived to be hostile to the Movement government. This “decree” has forced some newspapers to capitulate and to tone down their critical appraisal of the government (Bouckaert 1999).

However, partly as a result of pressure and other aid-related conditions set by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the current government has liberalised the economy, with consequent impact on the print media industry (Mwesige 2004). By the 1990s, the economy was growing rapidly and the country had started the journey to democratic governance under which the Ugandan press has become relatively independent and professional (Mwesige 2004). By 2006, Uganda had 26 newspapers and magazines. Although the diversity of ownership and range of topics covered in the Ugandan press has been argued to indicate official tolerance and openness to an

independent press (Robbins 1997), the country's press laws remain draconian (Mwesige 2004). Press-government relations continue to be adversarial and the press still has to surmount stringent legislation, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act and obscenity laws, in order to operate (Oloka-Onyango 1996; Onyango-Obbo 1996; Onyango-Obbo 1999; Robbins 1997; Baguma et al 2000).

Generally, it can be argued that the frequent arrest and harassment of journalists and the risk of losing advertising revenue have a stifling effect on the freedom of the press in Uganda, the consequence of which has been a tendency to self-censorship as a means of survival. Rather than producing higher quality journalism, it appears that economic imperatives in a liberalised environment have instead collapsed standards as evidenced in the emergence of sexualised tabloids. It is within this media (and political) environment that Red Pepper is located, and needs to be understood.

Red Pepper Background

Red Pepper is an unusual daily publication in Uganda that refashioned itself in 2004, three years after it first went on sale on Kampala streets. This study is restricted to the period from 2001 to 2004 (the time when this study was commenced). In this period, Red Pepper blended sexually explicit material and gossip with some "hard" news. Its coverage was condemned variously as sensational, propagandistic and non-journalistic (Etyang 2003). Within the context of a highly censored and constrained media, Red Pepper publishes content that has been described as pornography in an arguably conservative country in which the moral right wields considerable influence (Muyita 2004). It foregrounds sex/sexuality and male/female relationships and has been criticised as both homophobic and misogynistic. Though ferociously contested, as evident from the many street demonstrations and petitions submitted to parliament calling for its ban (Busingo 2003), Red Pepper survived in a country in which both the government and civil society constantly campaign against sexual promiscuity in relation to HIV/AIDS. Libel cases and petitions have been submitted to court and parliament seeking unsuccessfully to ban Red Pepper. Presidential spokespersons, on one hand, continue to contribute articles to Red Pepper, while ethics and information ministers condemn it. This

study attempts to understand these contradictions and contestations against a number of theoretical perspectives.

Theoretical Perspectives

In order to explore the puzzles that Red Pepper poses as a potential tabloid in Uganda in the twenty-first century, the study draws upon different strands of media theory that relate to journalism, gender, pornography, economics and newspaper tabloidisation. Theories relating to media and democracy focus on questions of citizenship, identity and democracy and consider the press and the media generally in relation to the public sphere and citizens' participation in national affairs (Atton 2002; Glasser 1999; Berger 2000 and Dahlgren 1995). However, the study does not assume that the democratic role of journalism, or the one proposed by the liberal approach generally, is better than all other roles. This frame is foregrounded because Red Pepper managers assert it inspires them. It is also argued to inform the practice of many journalists (Berger 2000). Because journalism tends to increasingly define itself solely as a business in which all standards of practice are sacrificed to profit (Glasser 1999), arguments about the democratic role of journalism in engaging its audience as citizens and advancing public discussion serve as foil against which to explore Red Pepper.

Political economy theory argues that production and distribution of culture occur in, and are largely determined by, the existing economic system, which constrains the range of discourses made available by the producing institutions (Strelitz 2000). Arguably, the logic of capitalism dictates the content and effects of the mass media. Commercial media organisations, it is argued, cater to the needs of advertisers to produce audience-maximising products, which is why their content sometimes has heavy doses of sex and violence (Curran et al 1987). Media institutions that depend on advertising revenues might be generally unconcerned with the quality of media products, provided these attract audiences that they can sell to advertisers (Jhally 1989). Given that newspapers (including Red Pepper), in the absence of independent funding, need to be profitable enterprises in order to survive before they can consider serving the public interest (Jhally 1989; Grossberg 1995; Garnham 1995), a political economy approach provides the framing of this study. These insights can help in exploring what worldview

informs Red Pepper's various operations and whether it is solely motivated by, and subordinated to, economic imperatives, and whether these imperatives explain the large amount of sexualised content in it. Thus, the study also draws, though to a lesser extent, scholarly discussion around the process of newspaper tabloidisation. Tabloids are frequently critiqued as being unserious (Atton 2002) and sensationalistic, and as focusing heavily on (mainly sex) scandal (Winston 2002). However, the idea that tabloids necessarily fail to serve the idealised democratic role of the media has been challenged (Dahlgren & Sparks 1992). Accordingly, this study does not assume that tabloidisation is necessarily non-journalistic. The discussion simply informs the examination of Red Pepper, which has been interpreted variously as pornography or even, in contrast, as popular journalism for mobilisation of oppositional meanings.

Theory on gender relations also informs this study since it also seeks to establish how Red Pepper represents its actors, particularly in the sexualised content. Discussions of gender, hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininities² (Connell 1987) are drawn upon in an attempt to establish how women and men are represented. Finally, theory on pornography, specifically the feminist poststructuralist perspective, also informs the study. While theories of pornography are numerous, two strands, namely radical and liberal feminist views, are introduced because some feminist post-structuralist approaches respond to them. First, radical feminists correlate pornography use and victimisation of women and children (Loots 1994; Osanka & Johann 1989; Zoonen 1994; Russell 1993). Radical feminists argue that pornography negates women's liberation struggle and advocate that it be censored and regulated (Dworkin 1981; Loots 1994). Second, and in direct contrast to radical feminist views, some liberal perspectives posit that pornography constitutes free speech, ensures diverse (sexual) viewpoints in a democracy and need not be censored (Loots 1994; Segal 1997; Fedler 1996). Some feminist post-structuralists criticise liberal and radical feminist views as reductionist. The forms of sexual desire inscribed within pornography, they argue, tend to be constructed within a patriarchal frame (Loots 1994). They consequently propose sexuality (and pornography) as a locus of power struggle (Loots 1994). I adapt a feminist

² The terms hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininities are explained in Chapter 2, which deals with the theoretical framing of the study (see section titled 'A Feminist Post-Structuralist Approach')

poststructuralist approach to this study because it offers a way of considering sexuality and its relation to power as exercised through contesting discourses, which compete for subjectivities.

Study Objectives

The broad goal of this study is to understand the particularity of Red Pepper as a potential tabloid and/or pornographic publication in Uganda in the twenty-first century.

Specifically, the objectives are three-fold: first, to explore the extent to which Red Pepper is a normative newspaper that plays a watchdog role and features diverse topics as recommended by the liberal paradigm (see Chapter 2). Second, to establish if Red Pepper is a tabloid and/or pornographic and whether these tabloid and pornographic credentials enable it perform journalistic functions permitted under the tabloid and pornographic press. Third, to establish how sex and sexuality are framed and actors, particularly women, represented. To this end, the study probes the discourses, the relations of power and subject positions inscribed in Red Pepper. Generally, the study looks at the possibility that Red Pepper represents free speech that liberates readers to explore sexuality in less inhibitive ways or constitutes an alternative public sphere to which new voices have access to debate social issues, gender and sexuality inclusive.

Methodology

This is a case study that involves an investigation into the Red Pepper phenomenon. A case study has been defined as both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning (Stake 1995). It has been argued that a case is a specific, unique, bounded system whose particularity, in and of itself, merits research (Stake 1995). A case study is not undertaken for generalisability or for causal inferences, but to simply better understand the case. For a case to yield richer and multiple insights into the phenomenon, it may be necessary to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods (Hamel, Dufuor & Fortin 1993; Yin 1989; Flick 1992 cited in Stake 1995; Scholz & Tietje 2002).

Qualitative research is credited for its substantial attention to detail in the research process (Bryman 1988). Thus, this study applies qualitative and quantitative research methods to cover only two of the three dimensions of media analysis namely, that of the text and production. The reception is addressed in general terms as part of the

background to the study for two reasons: first, the study is limited in terms of length. Second, it covers the period 2001 - 2004, which makes it impossible to establish what pleasures Red Pepper readers derived at that time.

Thesis Outline

This first chapter provides the general context to the study. Consequently, it identifies broadly the political and media context, the study objectives and the investigative strategy. The second chapter provides a literature review and the theoretical framework that inform the study. These include a liberal approach to news media with a political economy approach. This discussion is broadened to encompass scholarly debates around the process of tabloidisation, and, to a lesser extent, pornography and gender. Chapter Three deals with the research methods. Chapter Four presents the data and analysis while Chapter Five provides the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study aims to interrogate Red Pepper in terms of its journalistic or other functions and this chapter presents the theoretical frame that informs and enables it. This chapter reviews some of the debates advanced under a liberal approach to news media³. The review of this approach is undertaken here by first presenting the normative liberal approach to news media (McQuail 1987, Berger 2000; Severin & Tankard 1992, Siebert et al 1956), and then addresses the critique of this position (Curran 1991; Fraser 1992). Thereafter, it focuses on a political economy approach to the media. Because of the nature of Red Pepper this leads to discussion of tabloidisation, pornography and gendered relations. Given the limitations of this study, the theoretical review is selective and only arguments that are deemed relevant to this study are introduced.

Liberal Approach to the Media

Three elements associated with this approach are pertinent to framing this study⁴, namely the watchdog element, professional practice of news media, and that relating to the public sphere and information provision, which also broadly cover aspects of entertainment.

News Media as Watchdogs

Advocates of a liberal approach to news media have argued that the primary role of journalism is to act as a public watchdog overseeing the state. In practical terms, this role, which is sometimes referred to as normative, proposes that the defining role of journalism is to communicate political activities in public interest by professionals without vested

³ Any argument as to what constitutes journalism is linked to the position from which it is discussed. The liberal conception of journalism, despite counter-arguments, survives as a powerful motivating position in the media industry globally, and is a useful standard by which the performance and purpose of journalism can be assessed (Berger 2000)

⁴ There are many theories about the role of the media and of journalism in particular, besides watching the state. Generic functions of the media sighted by Severin & Tankard (1992) include surveillance, provision of information and news about impending or current dangers or about the economy, etc. The media are expected to select and interpret information for the public. As transmitters of culture, the media communicate information, values and norms from one generation to another and thereby reduce a sense of anomie or rootless ness. As entertainers, they provide respite from everyday problems and fill leisure time. However, entertainment can also mean escapism from reality, a corruption of art and the lowering of public taste, etc.

interests in what they are reporting on. As such journalism is expected to monitor political activities from a position of concern for good governance which is described as democracy (Moyo and Selekane 2007; Steenveld and Strelitz 2007).

Further, it is argued, the political role of journalism supersedes all other functions and dictates the form in which it should be organised (Berger 2000). As a (political) watchdog, journalism is seen to operate within the particular system of democratic governance with specific structures, systems and practices that check the exercise of power (Berger 2000). Democracy is, therefore, assumed to entail notions of participatory decision-making, free speech and association. It is within this particular form of democratic governance that journalism is argued to play a critically important role: it represents the broad public in holding the powerful, especially the state, accountable (Ocitti 1999; Schumpeter 1976).

This oversight function of news media is said to extend to the three arms of the state—the executive, the judiciary and parliament. Journalism is said to perform this function in a complementary rather than an adversarial manner, and as such, journalism and the news media generally are described as the Fourth Estate, (or arm of government). In this complementary relationship, news media are charged with reflecting and agitating for the interests of the society, safeguarding individual liberty and ensuring that those in positions of power do not abuse the citizenry and the political process (Tettey 2001; Gurevitch & Blumler 1977; Curran 1991; Berger 2000).

For journalism to perform its watchdog role, freedom of expression and of the press is considered mandatory and information in the possession of the state should be open and transparent and available to the news media and thus to all citizens. Such freedom of the press seeks to promote a culture of free thinking, ensures that all significant points of view from diverse and antagonistic forces are in play in the public domain, to enable informed public opinion that impacts on the progress of the state (Tettey 2001; Gurevitch & Blumler 1977; Curran 1991; Berger 2000).

Professional Standards and News Content

However, to exercise this freedom to publish implies rights and responsibilities and journalist are expected to operate according to a set of rules and professional

standards. In the first place, journalism is expected to be independent of vested interests, whether corporate or governmental. It is understood that such independence should be used responsibly, first and foremost, to inform citizens by providing news conventionally organised along the line of beats that are relevant to the public (Severin & Tankard Jr. 1992).

Consistent with their role as information providers, journalists are expected not to be political agents in adversarial relations with the state, but rather as neutral referees in the contest of political and other forces (Berger 2000). Journalists are expected in this frame to uphold a code of ethics that requires their reports to be balanced, “objective” and impartial. Objectivity is understood to relate to factual ‘reality’ as conceived by the journalist or as given by sources⁵. It is argued that such facts enable the public to make its own mind about issues that affect them individually and collectively in a rational-critical way and in this way, journalism potentially contributes to citizens’ empowerment and the democratic culture (Sparks 1992). Any other motive for writing, such as hatred or malice, or business, is said to demote journalism from the watchdog role (Kassoma 2000). It is for this reason that libel, defamation, obscenity, indecency⁶, sedition and hate speech are seen as unprofessional (Severin & Tankard Jr. 1992).

Thus, this approach proposes that journalists should avoid unprofessional conduct by espousing neutrality and detachment in pursuit of the ‘truth’. This is effected by drawing on different sources so as to present rival interpretations of the world. Additionally, they are expected to verify their facts. The facts are conventionally gathered under the formula described as 5Ws and H, or Who, What, When, Where, Why and How in relation to a news event (Rabe 2007; Djik 1998). This practice, referred to as the inverted pyramid, positions the abstract or summary of the story in the first sentence or two (Bell 1996) and thus fore grounds the facts simply.

In addition to a focus of facts, journalism is also expected to contribute towards the framing of a democratic citizenship. Thus, journalism is expected to provide information that assists citizens in exercising their civil rights and in participating in the

⁵ Debates on the role of journalism refute the notion of a single objective truth and argue that it is constructed and positioned through representation (see Stuart Hall 1997). However, this is beyond this study’s scope and it is not developed here

⁶ Indecency links to pornography and will be picked later

political sphere of their lives. Accordingly, journalism should reflect pluralism, divergent and independent voices that represent the interests of citizens. This is said to have additional benefit besides just framing citizenship and cultural identities. It is argued that it also helps citizens collectively arrive at a consensus, which can be the basis for informed decisions during election time and as citizens go about their daily lives (Kassoma 2000; Ocitti 1999).

Within this frame, the news media are also expected to resist market pressures, and to avoid trivialising and sensationalising the news by resorting to superficial entertainment, which is perceived to be a diversion from their cardinal role of providing rational-critical debate (Curran 1991). Although journalism might arguably be entertaining, its defining role is argued to be the provision of political information (Berger 2000; Tettey 2001; Gurevitch & Blumler 1990; Ocitti 1999; Kassoma 2000).

The norms of the liberal press that I have selectively identified will be used as a foil against which to appraise Red Pepper which has been variously described as a tabloid or a pornographic publication that falls short of being a normative newspaper and whose owners are motivated solely by economic considerations (see Chapter One). This study allowed that regardless of its form, Red Pepper might potentially play an important journalistic role. For this reason my discussion moves to considering the 'public sphere', which is introduced and also critiqued.

The Public Sphere

It is in relation to the public sphere and citizens' participation in national affairs that the liberal understanding of journalism, media and democracy focus on questions of citizenship, identity and democracy and the role of the press and the news media generally (Atton 2002; Glasser 1999; Berger 2000; Dahlgren 1995). Particularly, it is argued, journalism provides an avenue or a public forum, for debate between many divergent and independent voices, which is considered necessary for democracy (Mupfurutsa 1999; Milton 2001; Berger 2000).

Theorising about the role of the media in democracy in 18th century Europe, Habermas (1964) argued that the development of early modern capitalism had brought about an autonomous arena of public debate (Curran 1991; Habermas 1989). He argued

that the economic independence provided by private property, the critical reflection fostered by letters and novels, the discussions in coffee houses and salons, and above all, the emergence of an independent, market-based press, created a new public engaged in critical political discussion from which emerged a reason-based consensus, which contributed to the progress of the state (Habermas 1989). Habermas argued that the public arena was constituted by 'private persons' for the purpose of discussing 'public affairs' and that personal and individual interest would be subordinated to the greater public good. It is important to note that he assumed reasoning public. He argued that the bourgeois public sphere was the right one and conceived of other publics as 'variants' of it (Thompson 1995). However, he later conceded that according to this definition, participation was triply restricted to the propertied class, to men, and to the educated; nevertheless it was argued to constitute a public space between the economy and the state (Curran 1991).

In later years, he reconsidered this position. He argued that increasingly organised economic interests and an expanded state had come to dominate the public sphere. Thus the news media ceased to be central agencies of rational-critical debate and empowerment, but a further means by which public debate was stifled⁷.

Although Habermas' work has been severely criticised for idealising this period of history⁸, it is argued that the conceptual public sphere provides a normative ideal from which several 'models' can be extrapolated to suit specific socio-historical conditions (Curran 1991). One such model conceives of the public sphere as the space between government and society in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state. The formal control is achieved through the election of governments and informally through the pressure of public opinion (Curran 1991). For this to happen, another 'model' has been proposed which conceives of the public sphere as free space for rational and universal politics distinct from the economy and the state (Curran 1991). In such a space, it is said, access to relevant information affecting the public good is widely

⁷ Habermas argued that instead of rational-critical debate the media manipulated mass opinion and defined politics as a spectacle, offered pre-digested, convenience thinking and conditioned the masses into the role of passive consumers (Habermas 1989; Curran 1991). However, this modification, like the original version, has come under criticism since implicit in it is the notion of the masses as dupes who are easily manipulated to take the ideology of the dominant classes (see Thompson 1995)

⁸ See Curran (1991); Fraser (1987); Dahlgren (1995)

available, discussion is free from domination and the participants in public debate, particularly of political concern, do so on equal basis (Dahlgren 1995). The media are seen as critical to this process because they provide an arena of public debate and are therefore critical institutions of the public sphere.

However, the Habermasian public sphere—a forum for the propertied and educated men—excluded women and other marginalised groups (Thomson 1995). These criticisms are part of the broader set of counter arguments proposed in response to the limitations of a liberal tradition. Two responses are discussed below; namely a radical approach to news media (Curran 1991) and the notion of alternative public spheres (Fraser 1992). This discussion is relevant as it enables a frame that allows consideration of Red Pepper as operating as a public sphere in a form not addressed by the liberal model.

A Radical Approach

In response to the limitations of a liberal approach to journalism, some radical models place greater emphasis on social equality and representation of competing interests, whether political, social or economic. News media, it is said, are an arena where contending social forces jostle for advantage. News media, therefore, are not merely neutral referees but are expected to mediate appropriately to ensure the balance of social forces in the interest of social justice (Curran 1991). Within this framework, it is said, a democratic media system ought to represent all significant interests in society (Curran 1991). Accordingly, it is argued, the central role of the media should be defined as assisting the equitable negotiation or arbitration of competing interests through democratic processes (Curran 1991).

Another difference between the two approaches relates to the extent of the supervisory role of the media. Although both models conceive of news media as a countervailing agency, the traditional liberal approach limits this role to state power. Some radical advocates, on the other hand, argue that the media should subject the exercise of power to public scrutiny wherever and whenever it occurs (Curran 1991). Arguably, this means that the media mandate is extended to the home, the workplace and acts as a defence against exploitation in the private sphere as well (Curran 1978; 1991). Accordingly, news media play a role in supporting groups whose bargaining power is

limited and thus should function as an equilibrating force since there is no society in which 'power is evenly diffused or is in perfect equipoise' (Curran 1991: 124).

These approaches also differ over the value assigned to the notion of objectivity. Under some radical approaches, the role of professional objectivity, detachment, facts, fairness and balance is de-emphasised in favour of partisan and investigative styles of journalism. Journalists, it is argued, should not sit on the fence; they should clearly take the side of the public, of the vulnerable and speak for the voiceless (Curran 1991).

A further difference between the two approaches relates to the way in which they conceive of media entertainment. While some liberal scholars consider entertainment to be problematic, some radicals, on the other hand, describe it as 'a way of talking about the processes of our common life' (Raymond Williams in Curran 1991: 126).

In contrast, the notion of the alternative public spheres has been advanced in response to the limitations of a traditional liberal approach and its idealisation of Habermas' version of the public sphere.

Alternative Public Spheres

In response to the Habermasian public sphere—a forum for the propertied and educated men, which excluded women and other marginalised groups (Thomson 1995), a case is made for a plural definition of the concept (Fraser 1992; Thompson 1995). This is in direct contrast to Habermas' stress on the singularity of the public sphere and thus the bourgeois public sphere. It is argued that marginalised and subordinated groups, such as women, workers, people of colour, and gays and lesbians, have found it advantageous to constitute alternate publics, which Fraser describes as subaltern counter-publics, since they constitute parallel discursive arenas in which subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs. Habermas' bourgeois public sphere is critiqued for its neglect of the significance of other forms of public discourse and activity, which were not part of, and in some cases were excluded from or opposed to the bourgeois public sphere (Thompson

1995). The idea of counter-publics broadens the concept of the public sphere to encompass non-conventional forms, which would include Red Pepper⁹.

If Habermas initially conceived of the bourgeois public sphere as open and accessible to all, regardless of class and status, Fraser argues that an adequate conception of the public sphere requires the elimination of social inequality, which inhibits full and meaningful participation. Habermas also stressed that the bourgeois public sphere was to be a discursive arena in which 'private persons' deliberated about 'public matters'. Fraser also argues that a tenable public sphere must countenance not exclusion, but inclusion of interests and issues that bourgeois masculinist ideology labels 'private' and treats as inadmissible. By labelling some issues 'private', 'domestic' or 'personal' those issues are kept out of the public eye so that action to redress them is delayed or avoided. The terms 'private' and 'public' are not value-free; they are cultural classifications used to de-legitimate some interests, views and topics, and to valorise others (Fraser 1992).

It is also argued that the public sphere advocated by Habermas was too idealised. At best it remains a normative ideal. For instance, Habermas assumed a face-to-face communication between citizens, an impossible form considering the way modern society is organised (Thompson 1995). Therefore, the need for alternate public spheres is identified as "a better way to promote democratic participation and open public debate" (Fraser 1992:122-123).

It is further argued that in the bourgeois public sphere, the central struggle was of one class for a new place in society, but in the mediated public, it is for visibility (Thompson 1995). While Habermas looked at the bourgeois public sphere as a locus of political power, Fraser describes it as an arbiter of cultural recognition (Onerbring & Jonsson 2004). The mediated public sphere is not singular but consists of both mainstream and alternative spheres, the latter which provide marginalised groups a forum to gain access to and representation in the mainstream and so enables people to debate several issues in different ways (Fraser 1992). In alternative public spheres discussion and debate takes place in sites other than the mainstream press (for example, fanzines, and the Internet and tabloid newspapers) along lines that are not automatically

⁹ Fraser's notion of multiple public spheres has also been critiqued as underplaying the fact that not all counter-public activity is necessarily constructive (see for instance McLaughlin 1993) but this debate is not included here due to the limited scope of the study

constrained by class, gender, cultural affiliations, etc (Onerbring & Jonsson 2004). They draw in participants other than those who usually dominate media debate, feature issues other than those debated in, or absent altogether from, the mainstream media and they use forms of debating different to those common in the dominant media (Fraser 1992).

This conceptualisation holds the possibility that Red Pepper could serve as an alternative public sphere to which hitherto unheard voices and issues had been allowed visibility. This understanding also allows consideration of a publication's role in relation to non-elite political spaces and makes it possible to consider Red Pepper as extending the watchdog role beyond the political realm to the social or the private (sexual) level. Furthermore this conceptualisation is relevant to the investigation of Red Pepper which has been criticised as being unserious and non-journalistic because of its focus on entertainment and other content not admitted by a liberal paradigm.

A Political Economy Approach to the Media

A political economy approach responds to and critiques liberal notions of the public sphere. The preceding discussion notes the focus of some liberal approaches on issues of freedom of expression and of access to information. However, this is critiqued for its omission of the economic context, which is addressed by theorists associated with political economy approaches. Given Red Pepper's focus on entertainment and its sexualised content (or pornography as some have asserted), the inclusion of arguments associated with political economy approaches, therefore, is relevant to the investigation of Red Pepper which has been criticised as failing to strike a balance between journalistic principles and business interests (Nsambu 2003).

Theorists associated with some political economy approaches reject the liberal concept of the public sphere (including the alternative public sphere), calling it a disguise for bourgeois domination (Curran 1991). From a Marxist position, the media is considered an agency of class control since it is either owned by the bourgeois or is subject to its ideological hegemony (Curran 1991). Therefore, the idea of the public sphere, or of the media as a watchdog over public interests, is dismissed as untenable because the economic forces constrain the independence of news media. Consequently, the public sphere (both in Habermas' and Fraser's conceptions) is under siege from

powerful interests such as corporate groups that seek, or have co-opted the media, to promote their ideological interests (McChesney 1987). In that case, the media could be, or have been, repositioned by these interests as private guard dogs rather than watchdogs for the public good as proposed by the liberal approach (Jhally 1989; Berger 2000).

In advancing this argument, some political economy advocates draw on Marxist conceptualisation of society as divided into base and superstructure. If the base is understood as the sum total of the productive activities of society, or the mode of production, which corresponds to the sphere of economic relationships, the superstructure consists of cultural ideas, or the ideological aspects of society including politics and cultural products. And if the superstructure is determined by the base, by implication, media products and content are determined by the economic forces at play, whose motivation is not necessarily to promote public interest as the liberals argue. On the contrary, the dominant ideas, or the 'common sense' of society, are those that work in the interests of the ruling class, to secure its rule and dominance. Since they own the means of production, they also own and control the means of producing and circulating the most important ideology in any social order¹⁰.

Marxist thinkers of the Frankfurt School in the 1940s, Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), argued that culture had been commoditised and that the rationale and techniques of the capitalist mode of production had penetrated the sphere of culture to the extent that mass production of cultural goods meant standardisation and uniformity, resulting in the elimination of difference and individuality. This, they argued, was part of the logic of domination by centralised forces. Citizens had become the passive victims of advertisers and a materialistic culture in which goods met 'false' needs rather than concern with social issues. This perspective attributed a deeply passive role to consumers, portraying them as manipulated, mindless dupes, rather than as creative beings (Mackay 1997)¹¹.

¹⁰ Marxist ideas have been contested and modified over the years by critics such as the Frankfurt School, Gramsci and Althusser, and applied in political economy approaches to the media by scholars such as Golding and Murdock (see for instance Garnham 1995). This analysis cannot be given attention given the limitations of this study

¹¹ Some cultural studies theories, however, disagree with this position, arguing that culture is a site of struggle and that while texts might have a preferred meaning or reading or ideology of the producer, there is no guarantee that the reader or consumer would 'buy' that meaning. That the media are, therefore, a site of struggle over the control of meanings and ideology that shapes social life. Hall, in *Encoding and Decoding*, proposed three possible ways in which texts are read: dominant, negotiated and oppositional (Hall 1980). Rather than focusing on the moment of production, the moment of consumption in the so-

A more nuanced perspective is taken by Jhally (1989). Besides promoting a materialistic culture that is said to divert citizens' attention from the underlying causes of their wretched conditions, news media have subsequently been argued to be more concerned about selling audiences to advertisers than merely the ideology of the powerful groups in society to consumers (Jhally 1989). Because of this, the power of the news media is not primarily to 'sell' ideology (of the powerful groups in society) to consumers but audiences to advertisers (Jhally 1989). Thus, commercial media organisations, it is argued, must cater to advertisers' needs and promote audience-maximising products as opposed to programmes that would be educative and informative for the public good (Jhally 1989). Media institutions that depend on ad revenues, therefore, might not be bothered about the quality of programmes as long as they can attract audiences, which they sell to advertisers (Jhally 1989). The media, it is said, manufacture compliant audiences that are ideologically tuned to consume the products of the corporations that own and control the media. Advertisers' considerations become the predominant factor shaping media structure and content, rather than the quest for the common good.

News media are thus implicated because they are industrial and commercial institutions, which produce and distribute commodities in the form of media products (Garnham 1992; Napoli 1997). While the media can (and do) influence public opinion, government policy and citizens' voting behaviour, media organisations simultaneously remain competitive as a business, are concerned about their sustainability and seek to maximise revenue and minimise costs. This is criticised for limiting the selection, the range, style and presentation of news content for public consumption as mediated reality (Napoli 1997). It is possible that these conditions are responsible for the tabloid form (that includes Red Pepper) and the sexualised or possibly pornographic content it seems to prefer.

called circuit of culture, is a complex process (see du Gay 1997). The circuit includes moments of production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity all of which are inextricably linked. Each of these is a locus where cultural processes are said to be taking place, and that these loci are not determined by the base or economic base that some say determines the superstructure in which the media and media products operate. This consumer is not a passive one, a dupe, but a more active one who uses the media product for various reasons, including for interrogational purposes. It is possible therefore that Red Pepper readers are active consumers of the publication's sexualised content.

At a global level, in order to consolidate their business interests and maximise revenue, news media are said to have taken to media convergence and cross-ownership to the point where now a few big companies own the world's major news media (Boyd-Barrett 1995). This situation is said to have a direct negative impact on news media practices, content and distribution of symbolic goods.

While media convergence may not be a central concern for Uganda at present, emphasis on profit raises fears of cross-promotion, similarity and predictability of content and the danger this poses to democracy. This focus on market logic is blamed for the prevalence of easily understood, popular, formulaic, un-disturbing, assimilable material that is cheap to produce and that is assured of market success (Jhally 1989). As a result, media programming is inclined toward familiar outputs which have been successful in the market before thereby constraining innovation, creativity and experimentation that could yield alternative representations and understandings to help citizens interrogate the social order (Golding & Murdock 1992). Although major media claim to give audiences what they want, they do so only within the range that they can maximise profits. "So all sorts of things people clearly want—like higher quality journalism and less advertising—are not provided because they are not profitable" (McChesney 2002:34).

Within this position, it is argued that news media do not substantially play a public service role but serve the corporations that own them (Jhally 1989). The idea of a free and private media serving a democratic role and creating a marketplace of ideas where the best ones take the day is now considered illusory as the structure and ownership of news media undermine these roles (Jhally 1989).

Defending Profit-Making Media

There is a counter view that profit-making media may be the solution to the problem of state interference and control by other vested interests on the grounds that private ownership of media can enable financial independence from the state and certain vested interests (McNair 1998). Only economically self-sustaining media, it is argued, can afford independence (Roach in Curran 1979). In discussing the development of the press in Britain, Roach argues that it was only with the growth of newspaper profits,

largely from advertising, that newspapers were able to free themselves from the state and to develop an independent organisation for gathering news (Curran 1979).

It is argued that since sales were inadequate to cover the costs of producing a newspaper, it was the growing income from advertising, which provided the material base for the change of attitude from subservience to independence (Curran 1979). The ability of the news media to financially support themselves enabled them to make less effective the chief methods by which governments could influence the press – a direct subsidy, official advertisements, and priority of intelligence because proprietors could afford to do without them.

The growth of advertising revenue was the most important single factor in enabling the press to emerge as the Fourth Estate of the realm (Historical Journal 1975:721, quoted in Curran 1979: 196).

It can be argued then that for any news media to perform the functions prescribed by some liberal approaches, such as surveillance, investigation, and information provision (Severin & Tankard 1992), it needs to have a strong financial backing and advertising revenue might be one solution to the problem in a country like Uganda where the state owns or has controlled the media.

Tabloidisation: Overview

Tabloidisation has been argued both as providing an alternative public sphere and as an economically-driven phenomenon, a position which has been variously contested and defended. Although there is no universally agreed definition of the term tabloid, certain ways of talking about tabloids tend to be included in their discussions. Generally, it is seen as part of a global and historical process, referred to as 'tabloidisation' of news media (Eide 1997). Fore-grounded in these debates of tabloidisation is its perceived difference to journalism or news media as conceived by the liberal approach, a difference frequently dismissed merely as bad journalism (Machin & Papatheoderou 2002; Ornebring & Jonsson 2004; Fiske 1992; Gripsrud 1992). For instance, it is argued that their primary function seems to be enjoyment and pleasure (Sparks in Machin & Papatheoderou 2002; Wasserman 2005), which is equated with the decline of 'serious' journalism and the erosion of rational-critical debate in news media in favour of

discursive practices associated with the trivial (Machin & Papatheoderou 2002:36). If this is true, tabloidisation is argued to be the tendency to turn all forms of journalism to be like tabloid journalism. This media form has been associated with three defining textual characteristics described as range, form, and style (Uribe and Gunter 2004).¹²

The term 'range' is used to refer to the perceived decreasing proportion of page space allocated to information as compared to entertainment; to foreign as compared to local news; and to 'hard' as compared to 'soft' news (sport, crime, celebrities, and entertainment) (Steenveld & Strelitz 2007). The word 'form' in relation to tabloidisation is used to refer to the preference for visual content representations in terms of full colour photographs, headlines and info-graphics (Steenveld & Strelitz 2007). Lastly, the term style refers to the practice of personalising the angle of coverage in highlighting stories that talk about ordinary people as well as the focus on the private lives of public figures (Machin & Papatheoderou 2002; Ornebring & Jonsson 2004; Uribe and Gunter 2004). Another aspect of the tabloid style is its conversational tone, which is said to mirror the colloquial language of readers, which creates a more egalitarian relationship between the tabloids and their audiences, rather than pontificating from on high (Fiske 1992 quoted in Steenveld & Strelitz 2007).

Some of these formal qualities of tabloids such as their 'sensationalism, emotionalism, personalisation, and focus on private concerns, are said to be akin to the main elements of melodrama which emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century (Grisprud 1992). The melodramatic can be understood as an attempt to externalise what is underneath the chaotic and uncertain surface of modern existence (Grisprud 1992). The use of the spectacular and the sensational in melodrama, it is argued, is intended to demonstrate the strength of the forces at play, their pervasiveness and the apparent impossibility of getting around them (Grisprud 1992). Indeed, melodrama had a didactic function and it is argued that today's tabloids also teach their audiences a lesson. These lessons are related to emotions of hate, love, grief, joy, lust, disgust and 'basic morality'

¹² The term 'tabloid' historically refers to a particular newspaper size and format, which started in Europe particularly in the UK. In the second instance it connotes a particular size, but also the content and styles of the British tabloid, *The Sun*, and Germany's *Bild*, where human interest stories and sleaze feature prominently in a sensational way. In Africa, *Red Pepper* of Uganda, the *Nairobi Star* of Kenya, the *Daily Sun* of South Africa are possible examples. Tabloids tend to be smaller than broadsheets and their objective is to condense news within one handy package which is described as ideal for today's fast-paced working people (Ornebring & Jonsson 2004).

which are said to be shared by all human beings regardless of their social standing (Gripsrud 1992). The reason, it is said, tabloids focus more on sex and death, is because they are the “two aspects of life that create the most intense emotions, so naturally they are the most heavily focused themes” (Gripsrud 1992: 87-88 quoted in Steenveld & Strelitz 2007). The ability of tabloids to foreground the emotional and the moral as opposed to the ‘rational’ which is the focus of the liberal press is said to be partly responsible for their popularity (Steenveld & Strelitz 2007).

This perhaps connects to another feature of tabloids namely; stories that deal with phenomena and situations that rupture empirically based understandings of the world. Such stories include alien abductions, impregnations by ghosts, and so on (Steenveld & Strelitz 2007). This enables a very different position for the readers from those produced by the mainstream press (Gripsrud 1992), that present information as objective facts selected from an empiricist reality. This ‘truth’ is communicated in a serious, official and impersonal tone from the position of one who knows to those who do not (Steenveld & Strelitz 2007).

In contrast, the stories of the extraordinary in tabloids are appealing and indicate approval for other versions of seeing the world. This practice has been described as a resistance against “centuries of subordination which the people have not allowed to develop into subjection” (Fiske 1992: 48). It is argued that readers laugh¹³ as they read the stories tongue-in cheek with the feeling of protest against the definition of reality under the dominant social order¹⁴.

This study draws on this as it looks at the possibility that Red Pepper either ruptures established ways of understanding sex and is a protest against the structural

¹³ Although this study seeks to establish if Red Pepper is a tabloid, it does not look at the pleasures its readers derive from the overtly sexualised content. Such a reception study is beyond this study’s scope

¹⁴ This protest is also said to be levelled at the mainstream press, and other societal institutions such as political organisations, alleged to have failed to address issues of vital concern to many members of the public. As a result, the majority of citizens have allegedly become apathetic (Ornebring & Jonsson 2004; Washington Jr. 1999). As a response to this state of affairs, tabloid content and forms are said to challenge hegemonic power bases in a popular resistance against abstract, theoretical ways of understanding society and history that fail to connect with people’s everyday life conditions, feelings, fears, anxieties and pleasures (Gripsrud 1992; Bird 1997; Fiske 1992). By reading tabloids, people are making a statement about their material conditions and protesting against the formal political and economic processes from which they feel expurgated

systems, or alternatively, entrenches the repressive and misogynistic discursive regimes related to the issues of sexuality and gender.

Another potential reason that perhaps explains the popularity of tabloids is related to their more fragmented identity. Tabloid journalism does not have a unitary identity, but it is a differentiated form (Steenveld & Strelitz 2007). Two broad categories have been identified: tabloids solely preoccupied with moral disorder and threats to everyday life and those that incorporate service and campaign journalism (Eide 1997). Service and campaign journalism is said to address readers as consumers, rather than citizens, and its purpose is to provide them with information and guidance that helps them obtain goods and services in their search for better and happier (material) lives (Eide 1997). In this type of tabloid journalism, the journalist acts as a hero, adviser and a helper. This helps the readers to build an alliance with the newspaper, while the civil servant, the government bureaucrat or the local councillor plays the role of the antagonist (Eide 1997).

Defending Tabloidisation

Tabloid journalism is said to have redefined what is politically and socially relevant and put on the defensive parochial definitions of the political and what constitutes an alternative public sphere. For this reason, "it is foolish to condemn tabloid journalism according to a limited set of values and limited conception of what politics is and should be" Onerbring & Jonsson (2004:294). This redefinition of democracy, politics and the public sphere, it is argued, has enabled tabloids to draw in participants who are ordinarily excluded. Tabloids, it is argued, provide their readers with adequate resources to participate outside the traditional political arena, which they would not do in the past (Wasserman 2005; Onerbring & Jonsson 2004).

Tabloids privileging of personalisation of narrative has also been defended as capable of making abstract concepts become meaningful by portraying them through the experience of an individual. This, it is argued, generates critical thought, self-reflection and general knowledge (Machin & Papatheoderou 2002).

Related to this is the argument that by covering issues related to the lived experience of their readers, tabloids have democratised the media and introduced into the public sphere hitherto neglected community issues such as lack of service delivery,

crime, drugs, prostitution, unemployment and corruption. It is further said that the perspective on society provided by tabloids is seemingly not that of experts or those in positions of power, but that of 'ordinary' people. Tabloids therefore break the "traditional dichotomy between highbrow and popular journalism" (Machin & Papatheoderou 2002: 36). Thus, tabloid journalism is not a threat to democracy and 'civilisation', it is argued, because it can serve as an entry point into the public sphere by participants who would ordinarily not join the debate (Machin & Papatheoderou 2002).

Critique of Tabloids

In contrast, tabloids are accused of running an entertainment market instead of the information market (Froneman in Wasserman 2005; Berger 2004). It is argued that a commercial agenda drives the publishers of tabloids. While they quickly argue that they serve ordinary people by giving them what they want, this happily coincides with their drive for profits (Wasserman 2006; Steenveld & Strelitz 2007).

The most serious attack on tabloids relates to the concern about the relationship between journalism and political life (Ornebring & Jonsson 2004). It is argued that tabloids underplay the normative role of the news media of providing information necessary for citizens to engage in rational-critical debate of issues of public interest. The tabloid shift towards 'infotainment' allegedly undermines this role, particularly as tabloids are accused of meeting complexity with dumbing-down (Ornebring & Jonsson 2004).

The 'dumbing-down' or 'superficialisation' of public discourse (Wasserman 2006) is reflected in tabloid reportage, which is said to titillate and arouse curiosity but falls short of pushing its readers to analyse the underlying economic and political structures of which their present life conditions are a part. The failure to engage audiences and stimulate critical reflection (Dahlgren 1995), it is argued, is responsible for the crisis in public life that erodes democracy and depoliticises the citizenry (Machin & Papatheodereou 2002). This depoliticisation¹⁵ is evidenced in the fact that tabloid readers

¹⁵ Due to limitations of this study, a cultural studies approach to media is not included. Generally, some cultural studies approaches celebrate audience power in the consumption of media texts. The media simply provide a potential of meanings (Fiske, 1987:269) and that audiences make own meanings from media texts that they incorporate into their world-views and lifestyles (Golding and Murdock, 2000). Consumers are

often are not aware of their status as members of a social class (Sparks 1992) and potentially end up as spectators rather than participants in the broader public sphere, while the owners of tabloids make a commercial fortune (Harber 2003; Wasserman 2006).

In relation to this study then, it needs to be established whether Red Pepper is preoccupied with highlighting moral disorder or involved in service journalism, or if it provides information that stimulates critical reflection. This can relate, in this framing, to issues of sexuality.

Pornography: Overview

To consider the allegations that Red Pepper is pornographic impels this brief discussion on pornography. The section first presents an overview of selected liberal and radical feminists' perspectives on pornography as both these feminisms give attention to this phenomenon. Selected debates on gender and sexuality are also discussed to help establish how Red Pepper frames actors. Thereafter, certain feminist post-structuralist understandings in relation to gender, sexuality and pornography are also reviewed.

Pornography is notoriously difficult to define while many people claim that it is possible to recognise it (Easton 1994). Pornography has been traced to ancient Greece and has Greek roots. In this setting, it signifies graphic depictions of women as the lowest, most vile whores (Russell 1993). Its derogatory connotation was picked up by a US Attorney General's Commission on Pornography in 1987, which noted that "pornography seems to mean in practice any discussion or depiction of sex to which the person using the term objects" (Final Report 1986: 227). It noted that while any conclusive definition of pornography is impossible, it refers generally to material that is predominantly sexually explicit, intended primarily for sexual arousal, and lacks any other apparent purpose. The difficulty in agreeing to a definition of pornography is compounded further because it is allegedly based on ever-changing moral values.

What is pornographic to one man [sic] is mildly risqué to another. Obscenity is in the eye (or groin) of the beholder. Because it is a variable concept this means that

seen as creative and always struggling to make sense of their situation, rather than as passive objects of a dominant production system (Fiske 1992; Sparks 1992).

its definition is mercurial and constantly shifting depending on the ever-changing times, tastes and morals as well as individual differences (Cline 1974: 3-5).

Another perspective on pornography is based on the Minneapolis and Indianapolis Ordinances (Easton 1994) drafted by radical feminists MacKinnon and Dworkin¹⁶. It defines pornography as sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or in words. Such depiction, it is said, presents women as dehumanised sexual objects, things or commodities or as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped. Alternatively, they may be presented in postures of sexual submission, servility or display and their body-parts—including but not limited to vaginas, breasts and buttocks—are exhibited, such that women are reduced to those parts (van Zoonen 1994).¹⁷

Soft-Core and Hard-Core Pornography

While a precise definition is illusive, pornography is often categorised as either soft core or hard core. In her discussion of pornography, Russell (1993) proposes that soft-core pornography tends to show naked women but not naked men and presents what maybe described as 'good' sex. Although soft-core pornography is purely about sex and sexuality that may be explicit, even arousing, it is argued to be constructive because it is said to take place between consenting adults, in a loving relationship (Russell 1993). It allegedly involves depictions of non-violent heterosexual relations free from sadomasochism, misogyny, buggery, and the use of children and animals (Easton 1994). In contrast, hardcore pornography is argued to be violent, explicit, masochistic, misogynist, dirty, mean, abusive, repulsive, and breaks taboos on sex and sexuality (Russell 1993).

¹⁶ Radical feminist Dworkin and her fellow women activists sought to make pornography a civil rights issue so that aggrieved participants could seek legal redress and compensation. The effort was, however, defeated by the court. As part of her radical critique of pornography, Dworkin and MacKinnon drafted the Minneapolis and Indianapolis Ordinances (Easton 1994) in 1992 that defined pornography as a civil rights violation against women. The law was overturned by an appeal court as unconstitutional

¹⁷ The definition adds that pornography depicts women as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or as sexual objects tied up or cut up or bruised or physically hurt; or penetrated by objects or animals; or in scenarios of degradation, injury, abasement, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual (van Zoonen 1994).

While the debate about what pornography means continues, some feminists propose that pornography is about much more than obscene representations of sexuality intended to titillate its audience (Richlin 1992). Instead, they postulate analogies or identities between the pornographic and the process of representation itself and propose that it relates to patriarchy and as such it connotes relations of power between the sexes (Loots 1994). They argue that women's sexuality can be exploited as a powerful tool for the social, economic, and political subordination of women (Loots 1994). Loosely speaking, three feminists' positions are relevant for this study: a liberal, a radical and a feminist post-structuralist position.

A Liberal Feminist Approach

Liberal feminists tend to posit that pornography can constitute free speech, ensures diverse (sexual) viewpoints in a democracy and need not be censored much in the same way soft-core pornography is described above (Loots 1994). They distinguish between erotica and pornography, whereby erotica is constituted as sexual exploration and potentially empowering, provided it is "loving" and "consensual" between "equal" partners (Segal 1997; Fedler 1996; Loots 1994). It is said to be empowering because in a patriarchal society, women's sexual experiences are subservient to those of men but erotica is educational and empowering for women. Erotica necessarily means that the materials do not bear the hallmarks of debasement, domination, violence against women, or any other form of abuse of women. Erotica is seen as harmless, in fact desirable, as it depicts the world of the sensual, 'normal' sexual activity in a pleasurable, positive and emotional relationship, and should, therefore, not be censored as it may (or does) liberate women to freely express and appreciate their sexuality (Loots 1994).

A Radical Feminist Approach

In direct contrast to liberal feminists' views, some radical feminists correlate pornography use with victimisation of women and children (Loots 1994; Osanka & Johann 1989). They consider it to be symbolic of women's oppression in a predominantly patriarchal society that objectifies and degrades women (see van Zoonen 1994; Russell 1993). Pornography is presented as the theory and rape as the practice, a claim that has

formed the foundation of the feminist anti-pornography movement (Osanka 1989). It is argued that there is a correlation between the use or consumption and making of pornography and the abuse of children and women through rape, molestation, battering, prostitution, and marital rape and incest. Pornography is also seen as the ultimate cultural expression of the hatred of men against women, simultaneously a source and a product of a deeply misogynistic society that perpetuates male dominance over women. In short, they argue, it is hate speech, and ought to be censored (see Loots 1994). Accordingly, pornography exists because men despise women and men despise women because of pornography (Dworkin 1980: 289).

A Feminist Post-Structuralist Approach

While there is no single meaning of the word post-structuralism (also referred to as constructivism (Hall 1997)), or feminist post-structuralism for that matter, most discussions of the concept include fundamental assumptions about the relationship between discourse, power, language, meaning and subjectivity. Generally, feminist post-structuralism is concerned to change existing power relations between women and men in the family, the school, the workplace, cultural practices, leisure activities, gender and in sexuality (van Zoonen 1994, Weedon 1987).

Some feminist post-structuralists consider the patriarchal structure of society to be the dominant means by which relations of power are organised. Through patriarchy, women's interests are said to be subordinated to those of men through a process of giving meanings to biological sexual difference. Consequently, the biological differences between men and women are presumed to make them suitable for different tasks. The role of women is to be wives and mothers, tasks that are represented as natural, commonsensical and not subject to improvement and change (Weedon 1987).

Some poststructuralists (drawing on Foucault's theorizing¹⁸) argue that patriarchy allegedly perpetuates itself through discursive means. Discourse has been defined as ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice, a cluster or formation of ideas, images and practices which provide ways of talking about,

¹⁸ Philosopher Michael Foucault has had an extraordinary impact on the way in which power and sexuality are understood in modern society. He is credited with an approach to representation referred to as the discursive approach, which entails three basic tenets: discourse, power and knowledge and the question of the subject (see for instance Hall 1997).

forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society (Hall 1997). The knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power relations in society, regulates conduct, constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about and studied (Hall 1980).

The key vehicle of discourse is said to be language which is connected to the exercise of power (Fairclough 1995). Accordingly, language is considered to be the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested and also where identity is constructed socially and in historically specific ways (Weedon 1987; van Zoonen 1994). Additionally, language is also related to knowledge and 'truth'. Although language does not reflect a pre-existing reality, it operates discursively and so proposes what counts as knowledge/truth. For instance, the particular conceptualizing of femininity, masculinity and pornography within a patriarchal frame normalises a version of female sexuality. This makes language, like sexuality, a site of social and political struggle. Like all social constructs, current understandings of sex are not natural and inevitable but historically positioned and subject to change.

Forms of patriarchal control are said to operate within relations of power broadly described as the gender order (Connell 1987). This gender regime is argued to permeate all institutions, including the media (Connell 1987). Gender is, therefore, understood as a social construct (Prinsloo 1999) that creates different identities for males and females but then privileges masculinity. This scenario, which is sometimes referred to as gender politics, takes place through discursive processes, which constitute relations of power within which actors are assigned subjectivities either as feminine or masculine subjects and, for instance, what sports they can participate in or jobs they can hold. Certain subject positions have become hegemonic. Accordingly Connell (1987) describes the gender order as constituting hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininities (and this frame informs my subsequent analysis). These two social constructs are argued to depend upon creating categories of inclusion and exclusion premised on bodily differences and processes of reproduction (Prinsloo 1999). These gender roles are not only socially constructed, but are also historically determined and so can be remade in new patterns

that might shift lines of advantage and disadvantage (Connell 1987). Pornography can thus be seen in that light—as hegemonic masculinity attempting to define female sexuality, gendered identities and then assign them roles that put them in a servile position to that of men. As such pornography is a social space where sexuality and sexual character are created but also where sexual politics is played out (Weedon 1994; Connell 1987).

Central to my analysis is this understanding of hegemonic masculinity which is shored up and complemented by a range of emphasised femininities. Hegemonic masculinity, or “what it means to be a man” as defined by “common sense and conventional morality” is contrasted with ‘emphasised femininities’ in which women are defined as subordinate to men and orientated to serving man’s whims and (sexual) desires (Prinsloo 1999). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity is constructed as aggressive, powerful, physical, rational, hetero-sexual and is located in the public sphere (Connell 1987; Prinsloo 1999; Lowe-Morna 2001). Features of hegemonic masculinity could include physical force and control, occupational achievement such as in technology and science and familial patriarchy (Trujillo cited in Prinsloo 2003). Heterosexuality, which is closely connected to the institution of marriage, is argued to be central to hegemonic masculinity. This form of masculinity is said to be motivated by fantasy, gratification and displaced aggression but also by the fact that men benefit from women’s subordination, which is why violence and misogyny towards females is condoned (Connell 1987). A key form of subordinated masculinity, therefore, is homosexuality but other minority sexual identities are equally suppressed. Hegemonic masculinity is argued to maintain ascendancy by suppressing alternative masculinities.

In contrast, Connell (1987) argues that women do not have a single dominant femininity and their eroticism is not clear-cut within the framework of a patriarchal society. Instead a number of forms of femininities exist. Emphasised femininities propose women’s subordination to men and compliance with this subordination and oriented to accommodating the desires and interests of men (Connell 1987). Emphasised femininities are marked largely by focusing on features such as physical looks (beauty), sexual desirability, the domestic sphere, maternity and nurturing (Prinsloo 1999). Women are expected to exhibit sociability rather than technical competence, fragility in mating

scenes, compliance with men's desire for titillation and ego-stroking in office relationships, acceptance of marriage and child-bearing and care (nurturance) and empathy (Connell 1987; Prinsloo 1999; Lowe-Morna 2001). For younger women they must be sexually receptive, while motherhood is assigned to older women. Like hegemonic masculinity, emphasised femininities are cultural constructs.

Although there are other contesting forms of femininity in play socially, emphasised femininities (Connell 1987; Lowe-Morna 2001) tend to be promoted in mass media (like Red Pepper). To maintain emphasised femininity, other models of femininity are prevented from gaining cultural articulation. Thus, media representations of spinsters, lesbians, unionists, prostitutes, madwomen, rebels and maiden aunts, manual workers, midwives and witches tend to be positioned as less desirable (Connell 1987).

Some feminist post-structuralist perspectives propose gender, sexuality and pornography as loci where various rival discourses and subjectivities assert themselves and are contested (van Zoonen 1994; Weedon 1987). Accordingly, feminist poststructuralist theorists critique liberal and radical views as being unable to interrogate pornography as a locus of power struggle as they present texts and practices that reinforce hegemonic masculinity (van Zoonen 1994). They argue that pornography tends to construct sexual difference, mainly from a patriarchal perspective and the forms of sexual desire inscribed within pornography tend to be constructed within a patriarchal frame and work to constitute the sexual subjectivity of women and often limits their sexual identity (Weedon 1987; (Loots 1994). The feminist poststructuralist approach is committed to disrupting this patriarchal ascendancy in an attempt to create oppositional discourses that can articulate areas of change for women (Loots 1994; Weedon 1987).

Consequently, sexuality is seen as a locus of power struggle, which is neither completely a source of pre-described domination, nor of resistance, but an arena of contestation (Loots 1994). Pornography, therefore, should not be considered as a mere representation of sexual fantasies, or a potentially liberating depiction of nudity and sexuality, but in relation to how it glorifies male power over women in a patriarchal framework (van Zoonen 1994). Pornography is then seen as negating the women's liberation struggle. It is further argued that the power struggle in pornography must be judged from the way it harms women's opportunities for equal rights, creates the

conditions for their harassment and private degradation, inhibits a just enforcement of the law and significantly reduces women's full participation in public life and exercise of their citizenship (van Zoonen 1994).

Some scholars of this approach also critique those reception studies of pornography that allegedly focus on how pornography functions for male consumers but ignore its degrading portrayal of women (van Zoonen 1994). Such studies are also said to exclude debate of how women might perceive sexuality outside the parameters proposed by patriarchy (Weedon 1987). Feminist post-structuralism, therefore, proposes a perspective that places pornography within a context of conflict and inequality so that corrective action is taken.

These scholars further argue that a core element of western patriarchal culture is the display of woman as a spectacle to be looked at, subjected to the gaze of the male audience. They further argue that pornography is the most obvious genre built on the exhibition of women's bodies as objects of desire and fantasy. This is why women's bodies have been incorporated as decorative ingredients in advertisements of tools, drinks and cars. To be looked at is the fate of women and the act of looking is reserved for men. Even if the women do the looking, they do not do so through their own eyes but through those of men (Berger 1972). This is said to have devastating effects on ordinary women who aspire for this "true" femininity sometimes depicted in terms of a slender woman (in the West) or an obese woman (in Africa). Either form of representation poses a medical risk (van Zoonen 1994). Thus, a feminist poststructuralist approach to this study is useful because it offers a way of considering the sexuality proposed by Red Pepper in relation to the nature of the power as exercised through discourses, which compete for subjectivities.

Conclusion

This chapter considered the theoretical framing for the study. It looked at a liberal approach to news media, its emphasis on the informational role of journalism and public sphere. It then considered a political economy approach to the news media. Given the substantial amounts of entertainment and sexualized content in Red Pepper, a discussion of the tabloidisation of news media and pornography as well as gender issues were included.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research takes the form of a case study and this chapter proposes its appropriateness for this choice in relation to the investigation of Red Pepper as a media phenomenon in Uganda in the 21st century. Case studies tend to employ a hybrid of techniques that may include quantitative and qualitative methods. This study similarly employs a range of research methods both of a qualitative and quantitative nature. In order to provide a snapshot of Red Pepper, the content is analysed from two broad perspectives namely, production and the text. The reception is addressed in general terms as part of the background to the study (see Chapter 1 & 2). The reason for this is two-fold: first, the study is limited in terms of length. Second, it covers the period 2001 - 2004, which makes it impossible to establish what pleasures Red Pepper readers derived at that time.

Research Problem

Red Pepper is registered as a newspaper under the Companies Act of Uganda. Its mix of news, entertainment, gossip and sexualised content has raised questions whether it plays a journalistic function. This study, therefore, sets out to investigate the phenomenon of Red Pepper as a case study in order to explicitly establish whether it is a newspaper as proposed by a liberal approach to the media, a tabloid, pornographic press or both. In addition, the study also seeks to establish how actors are represented, particularly women. To this end relations of power, the discourses and subject positions inscribed in Red Pepper are probed to establish if they are framed progressively (e.g. as free speech that liberates readers to explore their sexuality in less inhibitive ways) or repressively (e.g. echoes and entrenches the patriarchal worldview on gender and sexuality).

Research Assumptions about Red Pepper

When conducting research, it is useful to make assumptions about the research topic but remain open-minded to any surprises that come to the surface as the research moves forward (Bryman 1988). Such assumptions, according to Bryman (1988), can be affirmed or disproved after the research. Accordingly, the study assumes that Red Pepper:

- Is not a normative newspaper in the strict liberal sense;

- Could be a tabloid that plays a journalistic role of providing useful reporting as associated with the tabloid press such as highlighting moral disorder and threats to everyday life, providing service and campaign journalism, addressing readers as consumers and helping them find goods and services that could make their material conditions better (Eide 1997);
- Is potentially an alternative public sphere for non-political spaces and non-elite community concerns that are usually marginalised or absent altogether from the mainstream media, such as sex and sexuality, often considered a taboo topic in Uganda (Muyita 2003). (I allow that Red Pepper might draw in new participants, broaden debate beyond elite politics to provide a rational-critical appraisal of the social order within its entertainment and sexualised content (Fraser 1992));
- Might be pornographic given the level of sexualised content but sex, sexuality and the gendered relations are featured progressively (Fairclough 1995); and that
- Its form and sexualised content are impelled by economic imperatives.

Case Study

A case study focuses on a single case for analysis and turns attention to what specifically can be learned from a single case. Its focus is on optimising understanding of the case rather than generalisation beyond the case (Stake 1994). A 'case' has been described as a specific, unique, bounded system whose boundedness and behaviour patterns are key factors in understanding the case (Stake 1994). A case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning what some have described as the case record (Stake 1994). Case studies have been categorised as either intrinsic or instrumental. This study constitutes an intrinsic case study which is undertaken because one wants a better understanding of this particular case and because its particularity, in and of itself, merits research (Stake 1994). I undertake this case study not for generalisability, or for causal inferences, as in the case of instrumental case studies, but to simply better understand the case. My motive in this study is not to extrapolate the findings to a larger population as that objective would require me to study more than one case to come up with generalised observations about the cases (Stake 1995). Rather, my purpose is more modest and is restricted to Red Pepper and for that matter, the depth of

analysis is modest. The idea is to obtain a general or holistic view as opposed to a particular perspective of Red Pepper. A case study approach is appropriate to achieve this objective, particularly because it produces knowledge that relates to different fields. This is possible because a case study approach looks at the nature of the case, its historical background, its physical setting, its economic, political, legal, aesthetic contexts as well as informants through whom the case can be known (Stake 1994; Hamel, Dufuor & Fortin 1993). Not everything about the case can be understood (Stake 1994), but as the objective is to gain a more holistic view, the study applies a multi-perspectival approach to yield a description that facilitates understanding, here of Red Pepper, from two dimensions of media analysis: the text and production. These dimensions will be approached from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative and qualitative research differ in terms of philosophy and objectives but both traditions are argued to be useful in social, and, for that matter, media investigation and that the choice of one or a combination of them is argued to be dependent on the research goal (Bryman 1988). Quantitative and qualitative research, it has been suggested, may be viewed as competing views about the ways and means in which social reality ought to be studied (Bryman 1998). Quantitative research generally tends to focus on measuring and counting facts and the relationships among variables, and seeks to describe observations through statistical analysis of data. It has its roots historically within positivism and empiricism and tends to concern itself with developing scientific or law-like inferences and generalisations about how social events, or facts, relate with each other on a cause-effect basis (Deacon et al 1999). One way to isolate variables is through content analysis, which entails six stages, namely definition of the research problem (see the beginning of this chapter), sampling, deciding what to count or analytical categories, coding schedule or qualifying criteria, data collection and analysing results (Deacon et al 1999; Hansen et al 1999) as discussed later in this chapter.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, on the other hand, is seen as an approach to the study of the social world, which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of human beings and it often includes enquiry into the point of view of those being studied (Bryman 1998). Qualitative or interpretative research methods may include a focus on establishing what meanings or interpretations people attach to their world (Cohen and Marion, 1994), thus focusing on the “subjective world of human experience” (Bryman 1994:36). Arguably, this study also needs to understand Red Pepper from the position of those who produce it. For this reason, face-to-face interviews were carried out with the managers of the publication and a limited critical analysis of the headlines and two sample passages.

Interview with Managers

A fuller understanding of the nature of Red Pepper content requires insights into production (as the political economy approach insists) and needs to be evaluated against its producers’ and owners’ perceptions about their publication and the role they believe it plays. Therefore, I conducted interviews with two managers. The interviews were informed by the findings of the denotative account and the content analysis.

Interviews are considered to be a qualitative technique (Deacon et al 1999). I conducted interviews with the paper’s editors to supplement the findings and to enable them respond to the salient issue. The research interview “involves gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals” (Cohen & Marion 1994:72). Therefore, I opted for oral, semi-structured face-to-face interviews because I considered them to be the best way to understand Red Pepper producers’ and owners’ perceptions about their publication by involving them in a frank discussion about the findings. My assumption was that their answers / responses would be reasonably truthful (Hansen et al 1998) and provide explanatory data to enrich the findings of the content analysis and to contextualise them in relation to the production context.

Interview Sample

I opted for purposeful sampling to select potential interviewees whom I believed by virtue of their position had valuable information and understanding of the publication. Therefore, I handpicked the sample cases on the basis of their typicality. The process was

discretionary but I was careful to ensure that the interview subjects were relevant to the research question and useful to my specific needs (Cohen and Marion, 1994). I did not mind if the sample was small (two subjects) provided it was information-rich. Thus I chose the following officials:

- Editor-in-chief, Richard Tusime. I assumed that as the editor, managing director and founder member, Tusime was in a good position to respond to the salient issues arising from the content analysis and the descriptive account of Red Pepper
- Senior reporter / writer, Chris Obore. I assumed that a writer on Red Pepper is specifically briefed on the type of copy he should file, would have a good sense of the target reader, know the production constraints, including gate-keeping.

Planning and Executing the Interview

I contacted the subjects on telephone and briefed them about the study and formerly requested an interview. We agreed that the meetings take place at their premises because I believed this location would make them feel at home and feel free to talk (Kvale 1996) about their experiences and perceptions about Red Pepper.

Critical analysis

Critical analysis is said to stem from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice and as tied to specific historical and social contexts. Because of this, language is said to be socially shaped, but also socially shaping, or constitutive of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and beliefs (Janks 1997; Fairclough 1995). It is also said to be the means by which social relations are reproduced or contested, and different interests are served. Thus language use is said to be connected to relations of power (see Chapter 2). Three areas of critical analysis have been identified (Fairclough 1995):

- The text or the communicative event
- The discourse practice which entails consumption and production of the text.
Given its limitations, this study does not address the consumption context
- The socio-cultural practice. For the same reason above, this level is not addressed any more than it is in Chapter 1, which provides the background to the study.

The text refers to linguistic considerations, the vocabulary and the semantics and textual organisation above the sentence such as the meaning of words and sentences. The discourse practice involves the various and complex processes of producing and consuming the text (Dijk 1998).

Content Analysis

Within media research, content analysis serves as a common quantitative method. It focuses on identifying and quantifying what has been described as salient and manifest features of texts and the resulting statistics are used to make broader inferences about the process and politics of representation (Deacon et al 1999). Its value is seen in its ability to produce a holistic overview or “delineating trends, patterns and absences over large aggregates of text” (Deacon et al 1999: 117). The purpose of the method is to identify and count specified characteristics or dimensions of texts, and through this to be able to say something about the messages, images, and representations of such texts and their wider social significance (Hansen et al 1999). However, content analysis is not an exploratory method; it can only give answers to the questions asked. It counts occurrences and “by looking at aggregated meaning-making across texts, the method tends to skate over complex and varied processes of meaning-making within texts” (Deacon et al 1999: 117). Mindful of these shortcomings, because of this study’s concern with sexualised content and the possibility of pornography, content analysis was undertaken first, to generally identify the nature of Red Pepper articles, their central focus and the kinds of products and /or services advertised and second, to identify themes.

Accordingly, two forms of content analysis were undertaken: the first focused on counting the incidence of content categories, while the second sought to establish the meaning, the framing and relations of power in the dominant content categories, in this case the gossip and sexualised content.

Sampling

Because of the consistency and repetitiveness of Red Pepper content prior to 2004 when it refashioned itself, I selected at random two issues that were published on 10-16th, October, 2003 and on 17-20th, October 2003. This is a reasonable approach as a denotative or descriptive account at that time revealed that every issue of Red Pepper had

more or less the same content, or content focus. Therefore, I contend that this sample is credible and representative, especially so because the objectives of the study are modest and limited to obtaining an overview of Red Pepper.

Analytical Categories

I am looking for a snapshot of the content and its common themes so as to determine if Red Pepper is tabloid, pornographic or both or alternatively a newspaper as understood by the liberal approach to news media. To test the assumptions this study makes, and the claims made by the editors and managers, I count the incidence of the predefined content categories (see Chapter 2 and Table 1 below). This was extended to adverts and photographs as well, since one of the objectives of the content analysis is to establish the content that is included or excluded so as to be able to make conclusions about the character of Red Pepper.

| Category | Qualifying criteria |
|--|---|
| Politics & governance | Party activities, campaigns, manifestos, state house, parliament, the judiciary, the cabinet and ministry news |
| Disaster | Caused by human error or acts of God: earthquakes, floods, motor and aero accidents, starvation (famine), fire, epidemics (AIDS) |
| Business, finance & economic development | Inflation, taxation, national budget, new product launch or promotion, business pictorials, transport news (road, rail, water and air), energy/electricity, commodity prices, exchange rate, forex rates, export and import, etc |
| Agriculture | Commercial and subsistence, food security, agricultural research, pests and diseases, Genetically Modified Organisms, etc |
| Supplements, adverts | Articles targeting advertisers for PR value, and revenue sources; artworks for company products, jobs, deaths, meetings, etc |
| Sports | Sports activities (soccer, volleyball, golf, athletics, swimming, etc) news about sportspeople, fans, sports administration and funding, tournaments, etc |
| Education | Covering nursery school to higher institutions of learning, govt policy, student & teacher activities, exams, new schools, universal primary education, infrastructure, etc |
| Environment | Degradation, conservation, pollution, flooding, etc |
| Corruption/accountability | Misuse of public office/funds; bribery, embezzlement, influence peddling, management of public bodies. |
| Human rights | Rights violation by State agents: police, army, intelligence; torture, child abuse, wife battering or racial discrimination, etc. |
| Sexualised (or pornographic) articles | Sex news, semi-nudity, nudity, live sexual intercourse, fictional sex stories, explicit visual & textual content, ads for dates, titillating articles, sexual acts and advice, sexualised violence, objectification of women, display of their bodies for male gaze and voyeuristic purposes and display of products, etc |
| Gossip | Private lives & sexual relationships of celebrities and commoners, beauty contests, night life, drunkenness, new cars, fashions, house acquisition, broken sexual relationships, celebrities and public figures fighting/bickering, |
| Defence and military | National security, borders tension, LRA war and peace talks, deployment, police & military recruitment, intelligence agencies, local defence councils, armament, etc |
| Crime | Robbery, petty thieving, mob justice, murder, rape, defilement |
| Health | Medicine, patients, sanitation, donations to the health sector, HIV/AIDS and other diseases (malaria), technology & equipment |
| Foreign news affairs | News about other countries, bilateral relations, UN agencies |
| Others | Can't fit in the above categories e.g. religion, cultural institutions |

Table 1: Predefined content categories and qualifying criteria

The Process of Analysis

The analysis consisted of five phases. The first is a denotative overview of Red Pepper followed by the interviews with two editors. The third is a content analysis followed by a thematic content analysis. The fifth and last phase entails a critical reading of the headings and two passages. These stages are explained below.

The first phase of the analysis, the denotative or descriptive analysis, sought to simply describe Red Pepper in terms of structure and content. The outcome of this informed the assumptions I made about the publication, the content analysis and the interview with management.

The second phase presents the salient points of the interview with the managers, analytically as opposed to verbatim, in order to tease out the managers' understanding of the publication and to place the findings within the production context. Other arguments from the interviews, deemed relevant to the study, were woven into the discussion.

The third phase entailed a broad content analysis to establish the frequency or incidence of predefined content categories expected of the tabloid, pornographic and liberal press. The point was to establish if Red Pepper addresses diverse topics as proposed by the liberal tradition and as its managers claimed; is a tabloid and / or pornographic. Accordingly, newsbeats associated with the three formats were considered (see Table 1). Photos, including those in the advertisements, were counted and analysed to establish how men and women were represented so as to address concerns about misogyny and objectification of women.

The fourth phase, a theme-based content analysis, on the other hand, was intended to establish the potential meaning and framing of the dominant content categories of gossip and sexualised copy since the study assumed that regardless of its form, style and content focus, Red Pepper was potentially a journalistic publication. Accordingly, I designed new theme-based categories and qualifying criteria for the sexualised content and gossip (Figure 2).

| Category | QUALIFIER |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Nudity | No clothes, intended for sexual arousal or male gaze |
| Semi-nudity | Exposure of the breasts, buttocks or thighs in a voyeuristic, sexual context, in under wear, swimsuit, skimpy attire |
| Kissing | Heterosexual, consensual, public |
| Pornographic or titillating material | Stars sexual experiences/preferences, fictional sex stories, depiction of genitalia in seductive fashion, features |
| Sex education | Informational, scientific enlightenment, artistic literary value, marital, adolescent or gay sexual issues, STDs (HIV) care, etc |
| Live sex | Sexual intercourse, love-making by men and women, gays |
| Relationships/ Broken relations | Men/women end sexual relationships, falling in love; finding a mate/looking for love e.g. personal ads for partners/love |
| Beauty contests | Women paraded (some naked) for male gaze, 'judged' for beauty and awarded prizes—cars, TVs, phones, trips |
| New fashion, items | Car, house, fashion, phone, business launch, etc |
| Defilement of children | Adults/kids sexual affairs, teacher/student/pupil |
| Celebrity news, gossip and lifestyle | Drunkenness, drink-driving, brawls, nuisance such as public peeing; drink / fights or bizarre acts; babies born; acquisition of new cars; houses and clothes; pregnancies; weddings; parties; weddings; celebrity wealth; salary; broken relations/homes; marriages and family rows |
| Family rows, feuds | Husband/wife fights, beatings, divorce, property wrangles, cheating husbands/wives |

Table 2: Sub-themes in the sexualised and celebrity gossip and qualifying criteria

The fifth phase of the analysis entailed a critical reading (explained above) of the headlines and two purposively selected passages (see Appendix 2) to establish how social actors, particularly women, were represented in the sexualised (possibly pornographic) content and if in it, Red Pepper simply echoed and entrenched patriarchal dominance over women or challenged it as some feminist post-structuralists propose (see Chapter 2). I extended this to identifying the dominant imagery and metaphors and what they signified in terms of positioning the different subjectivities, and whose interests this positioning served. Since headlines provide the abstract, the actual or intended meaning as conceived by the headline writers (Dijk 1998, Thetela 2001), they reflect the ideology of the headline writer and the specific meanings meant for the reader (Thetela 2001). As such, I grouped them into sexualised and non-sexualised (see Appendix 1). To avoid misinterpretation, I read them alongside the stories they announced.

Because headings need to be understood within the context of the text (Dijk 1999), I carried out a limited critical analysis of two passages published on October 10-

16 and 17-20 (see Appendix 2), paying attention to language use and representation. Two aspects were singled out: sexual advice and the use of images and metaphors. The passages were selected purposively on the basis of their typicality as exemplifiers of the main findings of the content analysis. As such, in one passage a man describes his sexual experiences and in another asks the agony aunt questions about sexual orgasm. From the passages, I sought the denotative as well as the connotative or interpretative meanings.

Headlines were defined as sexualised if they referred to women as 'babes', 'cuties', 'juicy' or focused on their (sexual) body parts such as buttocks and breasts or referenced intimate relationships between men and women (see Chapter 3). The sexualised headlines yielded eight broad categories related to women's physical appearance, sexual desirability/appeal, mothering or nurturing abilities, women as lustfully sly, sexualisation of crime, obsession with penis size, homophobia and racism. The rest of the headlines featured the different facets of hegemonic masculinities which depict men as powerful and engaged in public and self-indulgence (debauchery).

These methods that were employed to undertake this case study of Red Pepper produced the findings contained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As the intention is to obtain an overview of Red Pepper by investigating different aspects of the publication, the discussion consists of five stages (see Chapter 3).

Descriptive Account of Red Pepper

The descriptive account that follows results from a careful scrutiny of Red Pepper and it provides the context for the study as a whole and for the critical and content analyses that follow. The descriptive analysis is carried on two random samples of Red Pepper of October 10-16 and October 17-20, 2003. The dimensions of structure and the content are considered. Content is broken down into 'hard' news, sexualised content and advertisements.

Structure

During the sample period, of the 20 pages per edition, three (15% of the total) are given over to 'hard' news, 13 pages or 65% of the publication present 'soft' news, and advertisements occupy four pages (or 20% of the total). Certain sections appear consistently, namely the op-ed, the leader, and the gossip section called *3am*, the personals in which men and women seek sexual and love relationships, a sex feature and the pinups of female models. These sections, however, do not appear on the same pages on the two issues sampled. Sexualised images consistent with Berger's notion of the male gaze (Berger 1972) accompany most of the 'hard' news stories although there are also stand-alone visuals which are apparently published purely for their sexual appeal.

'Hard' News

The hard news, here loosely defined as non-fictional, freshly breaking news stories, covers a variety of topics such as crime, marital wrangles, government, politics and the arts. Military deployment is also discussed as a response to the war in the north of Uganda. While some stories fall under the ambit of the liberal tradition (see Chapter 2), typically stories are given a sexual and humorous inflection, are either not attributed to a

source or have only a single source and are laced with comment and opinion.

Consequently, the stories pass off as entertainment or sexual titillation (see Chapter 3).

Advertisements

Generally, advertisements are spread throughout the publication. For instance, a strip advertisement runs across the bottom of Page 1, with “an earpiece” at the top right-hand corner of the same page. The advertisements, most with images, occupy the equivalent of four pages or 20% of the total, which is slightly more than the number of pages that contained “hard” news. Ninety per cent of these images are sexualised images of women, also constructed in ways that have been described as for the male gaze (Berger 1972). Typically, the women, in their late teens/early twenties¹⁹, look at the camera suggestively and, by implication, at the viewer who is presumed to be male. Advertised are perfumes, salons and boutiques which appear to target women. The adverts also feature places of adult recreation such as restaurants, hotels and lodges, and alcoholic beverages.

Sexualised or ‘Soft’ Content

The rest of the content, 13 pages or 65%, consists of sexualised content and gossip about people with a public profile and, as is common in tabloid newspapers, tends to be heavily pictorial. Short captions and narrational content, which are not necessarily linked to the images, anchor the pictures. In addition, Red Pepper’s pictures and infographics are sexually explicit (see the coding criteria in Chapter 3). Typically, news items in this category feature a personality or celebrity (generally a woman) and are sexualised in some way whether by exposing a person’s intimate relations (or perceived lack of them), or alluding to their (sexual) body parts, again constructed in ways consistent with what Berger described as the male gaze (Berger 1972). Surprisingly, the traditional tabloid beats of sports, crime, superstition, and myths are absent.

This descriptive overview allows the sense that Red Pepper is not only a tabloid, but possibly pornographic, considering that the incidence of sexualised content and

¹⁹ This is said to be the favoured age for pornographers. For example, when Playboy was searching for a model for its 40th anniversary issue, the oldest prospects were in their mid-20s, while the youngest looked as though they had only recently completed high school. (http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4155/is_20030418/ai_n12497703, accessed on January 2, 2007).

gossip is 65% but this evaluation needs further analysis to establish. Considering this proportion, it is clear that the editorial focus is on entertainment. However, given its three pages of 'hard' news, I still held the possibility that Red Pepper content could be both entertaining and informative, both in the liberal tradition of diversity of topics and as an alternative public sphere that engages new participants to talk about non-elite issues, and that this should be explored in this study.

If this examination of Red Pepper enabled a denotative or descriptive account, these were of necessity broad-brush strokes. The key question for my research then related to the way Red Pepper frames issues and how it represents its actors, particularly women. Specifically, I wanted to establish whether Red Pepper discourse was creative (did it problematise the commonsensical understandings particularly around gendered relations) or conventional (did it affirm the status quo, which often constitutes patriarchal power relations that subordinate women (Weedon 1987)). If the former, then Red Pepper could be considered to be an alternative public sphere which features the hitherto less heard voices and issues and to be extending the watchdog role beyond the elite political realm to the social and private (sexual) level, and democratising the media by bringing into the public sphere people's lived experiences (Machin & Papatheodoreou 2002). If the latter, Red Pepper could be considered to be in the business of 'dumbing-down' and superficialising public discourse through titillation that lacks analysis of the underlying economic and political structures of which it is a part (Bourdieu in MacDonald 2003).

Interview with Managers: Introduction

Due to the constraints of this research, I present a brief outline of the salient points from the interviews with Richard Tusime, proprietor/Editor-in-Chief, and Chris Obore, junior editor and writer. I include only the points that are I believe pertain to the editors' sense of purpose and which provide the context within which I draw conclusions about their intentions. Accordingly, I highlight thoughts related to the manager's conflict of interest, news coverage, tabloidisation as a business strategy, and Red Pepper's claim to be waging a moral crusade. However, other points, not necessarily part of this summary, are also blended in the overall analysis later.

Conflict of Interest

While the managers insist that Red Pepper is a journalistic publication as conceived by liberal approaches to media, they do not mind the conflict of interest that their dual role as owners and editors presents. As owners and managers they would need to balance the quest for profit with that for journalistic principles. Instead, the editors admit that ethical practices like fairness, accuracy and balance recommended under liberal models of journalism are absent. While claiming that Red Pepper is an independent defender of journalistic principles, the managers admit that certain stories are spiked if they are deemed to be damaging to vested interests both corporate and governmental.

News Coverage

Such vested interests, therefore, curtail Red Pepper's the freedom to write investigative news about top and prospective advertisers. Both Obore and Tusiime admit this: "The money they (advertisers) give is more than what you get from the sale of 1000 copies. We have to be courteous. You just cannot write about anyone if they are your strong advertiser" (Tusiime, 2006).

Related to this, the coverage of news meets elite interests and those of people with the ability to buy the product. Justifying such a strategy, Tusiime asserts:

You must target people who are going to buy everything. When weighing stories for example there is one about a street child who needs an operation because of a heart problem and a sleazy story about an MP dating somebody's husband. Of course you opt for the latter. If the content does not sell it does not take precedence. Only stories that sell copy, and increase circulation, will make it to the paper. The core values come in later. You must target (content that appeals to) people who are going to buy—businessmen and politicians—because they have the money and buy copies (Tusiime interview).

Ironically, the managers insist that Red Pepper is not just a tabloid which is entertainment-orientated but that it also empowers citizens to hold their leaders accountable as recommended by the liberal approach to news media.

Tabloidisation as a Business Strategy

To elaborate the view that Red Pepper is a tabloid, the editors cite its range, form, and style, the “heavy doze” of sexual content, the sensational headlines and the lack of rigorous factual accuracy and balance. Like Gripsrud (1991) and Bird (1984) who attribute the same qualities to tabloids, Obore adds that Red Pepper uses a story-telling approach to news writing, which heightens its entertainment value. The decision and the reason to position Red Pepper as a sexually explicit tabloid that focuses on gossip and celebrity news was deliberate. Tusime says: “The overriding motive was to create jobs for ourselves and we were encouraged by the liberal economic and legal environment” (Tusime interview).

In order to maximise the economic benefits of the tabloid approach, the managers deliberately did not invest resources to ensure the accuracy, fairness and balance of their content. Thus, they turned to the Ugandan intelligence and security services for news items, even though they recognised that the intelligence services were using them for propagandistic causes. In the same spirit, the managers were ready to bribe news sources for ‘exclusives’. Tusime says:

Why should anyone risk his or her job (to leak information) for nothing? We have people in high-ranking places that give us information but we facilitate them if there is need (Interview).

Moral Crusade or Misogyny?

Despite their questionable positions, the editors construct their actions as socially and morally defensible on the grounds that they were merely reflecting moral corruption in Uganda. They also argue that the public appreciated their publication which it considered to be a moral policeman. For instance, within the first year of operations in 2001, Red Pepper sold 5,000 copies weekly. While some may describe the content as misogynistic, Tusime says there was no deliberate policy to disadvantage women perhaps because as subjects of a patriarchal regime, such a stance against women is naturalised for the editors. Perhaps that is why they did not problematise this kind of representation of women and tried to avoid offending public sensitivities in their reporting of sexualised content by introducing new imagery to talk about sex and gender issues packaged as entertainment.

In order to further probe the managers' claims, a content analysis of two samples of Red Pepper of October 10 – 16 and 17 – 20, 2004 was undertaken, and incorporates the salient points of the interviews.

Content Analysis

The quantitative content analysis focuses on three areas, namely the verbal text, the photos and the adverts. It seeks to quantify the news items dedicated to the various newsbeats or content areas proposed by the liberal tradition, tabloid and/or pornographic press so as to establish if Red Pepper is a normative newspaper, a tabloid and/or pornographic. This responds to the managers' claims that the publication combines entertainment and liberal ideals of diversity of topics and voices and the ability to empower citizens to hold their leaders to accountability. Accordingly, I confine the analysis to topics included as newsworthy under the liberal frame. Within the context of Uganda, these beats are related to business, economics and finance; politics; defence and the military; corruption and accountability; crime; disaster; sports; education and careers; environment; agriculture; health and foreign affairs (Rwomushana 2004). To factor in the tabloid content, I created categories of 'celebrity news' and 'sex' since my denotative analysis of Red Pepper revealed the absence of tabloid beats of sports, crime, superstition, and myths (see Chapter 2).

The table below summarises the findings of the quantitative analysis of Red Pepper of October 10 and 17.

| CATEGORY | Frequency | | Total | % |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| | Oct. 10-16.03 | Oct. 17-20.03 | | |
| Celebrity news (gossip) | 43 | 42 | 85 | 55 |
| Sex related items | 20 | 24 | 44 | 29 |
| Business, finance & economics | 3 | 6 | 9 | 6.0 |
| Politics / governance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1.9 |
| Defence & the military | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1.9 |
| Corruption & accountability | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1.9 |
| Crime e.g. murder, robbery | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1.9 |
| Sports | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1.3 |
| Education | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.6 |
| Others | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.6 |
| Disaster | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Environment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Agriculture | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Human rights | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Foreign affairs | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Health | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 73 | 81 | 154 | 100 |

Table 1: Frequency of news items in October 10 – 16 and 17 – 20, 2003

Of the 154 items sampled, 55% were classified as gossip relating largely to showbiz stars and mostly public figures. Twenty-nine percent of the items were classified as sex-related. The least covered newsbeats, which paradoxically rank high in liberal conceptions of the press (Kassoma 2000, Ocitti 1999 & Berger 2000), were political news, defence and the military, corruption and accountability, and crime which constituted 1.9% each. This is significant for a publication whose editors claim it is a watchdog for citizens' rights in a country in which economic growth has bred corruption and other moral disorders (see Chapter 1). Although sports as a form of entertainment, is a favourite tabloid newsbeat (Machin & Papatheodereou 2002), surprisingly its incidence was just 1.3%. That foreign affairs, disaster, environment, agriculture and human rights beats did not feature except as absence is similarly significant.

These figures indicate that Red Pepper is more orientated towards entertainment of a salacious kind at the expense of newsbeats and the diversity of topics proposed by liberal approaches. Because it privileges entertainment, rather than information, which citizens need to make decisions, particularly political decisions, Red Pepper can thus be described as a tabloid not least because it marginalises and in some cases excludes newsbeat favoured by the liberal press (see Chapter 2). It is also highly significant that

close to a third (29%) of items were categorised as sexualised content and links to how the managers envision it as a sales strategy. It is notable that Editor-in-chief and proprietor Tusime admitted in the interview that “sex sells.” It is evident that the sexualised, (possibly pornographic) content along with the celebrity news provides Red Pepper readers with superficial entertainment unlikely to provoke them to think critically about issues affecting them personally or as a community (see Chapter 2). Under these conditions, Red Pepper does not play the normative role of a newspaper expected to represent diverse viewpoints on a range of newsbeats that enable citizens make (political) decisions (see Chapter 2).

The next stage of the analysis seeks to establish the potential meanings of the dominant content areas of gossip and sexualised copy (see Chapter 3).

Theme-based Analysis of Celebrity Gossip and Sexualised Content

If the above conclusions are based on the quantitative content analysis as to topics only, the following qualitative content analysis identifies the main themes in the gossip and sexualised content, the two dominant categories. The purpose is to determine these categories’ focus, their discourses and subject positions and how actors are represented and to test the degree of pornography and misogyny (given that nearly a third of the content was categorised as sexual) and the possibility that regardless of its form, style and content focus, Red Pepper was potentially a journalistic publication, for instance, an alternative public sphere on which issues of gendered relations and sexuality are treated progressively or creatively (see Chapter 2 and 3).

To organise the theme-based textual analysis of the celebrity and gossip content, after familiarising myself with the content I devised broad categories that related to the celebrities’ negative and social behaviours, their general lifestyle and relationships and counted their incidence or frequency (see Table 2 and Chapter 3).

| Theme | Frequency | | Total | % |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------|--------|
| | 10-16.10.03 | 17-20.10.03 | | |
| Negative behaviours: Fights, drink habits, anti-social actions | 22 | 18 | 40 | 47% |
| Social: weddings, pregnancies, babies, parties, beauty contests | 13 | 12 | 25 | 29.48% |
| Lifestyle: Latest cars, new houses; fashions & jobs, etc | 6 | 9 | 15 | 17.64% |
| Relationships: Broken love or homes; marriage & family rows | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5.88% |
| Total | 85 | | | 100 |

Table 2: Themes in celebrity news items in October 10 – 16; 17 – 20, 2003

While celebrities—here broadly interpreted to include figures with a public profile—were depicted in a number of ways, interestingly they were most frequently portrayed (47%) in relation to their negative behaviours. The coverage also focused on their social life (29.48%), which, for the purposes of this study, encompasses weddings, pregnancies, baby news and parties. The incidence of news about celebrity lifestyle, or material possessions such as cars, new houses and fashionable clothes, amounted to 17.6% of the total of 85 articles. The incidence of articles about relationships—broken love, and family rows—was close to 6%.

These figures are significant. First, they further confirm that Red Pepper is a tabloid as it focuses on the private lives of individuals while marginalising newsbeats considered under liberal approaches to be more important for a form of government described as democracy (see Chapter 2). Second, Red Pepper does not problematise the personal or private lives of individuals as subjects operating within the larger social structures whose actions might signify corruption or the inequitable distribution of economic benefits. Allowing that this is a tabloid, one could expect particular kinds of reporting arguably of a different social value such as the so-called human-interest articles about successful individuals—the rags-to-riches stories—or campaign/service journalism and a preoccupation with moral disorder. Instead, Red Pepper articles focus on the self-indulgence of celebrities in a way that does not necessarily generate critical reflection (see Chapter 2).

Having established that Red Pepper does not comply with those aspects of tabloidisation that have been argued to be valuable, I turned the focus of the theme-based

content analysis to considering the sexualised articles to probe elements of pornography and/or misogyny, and how actors were represented (was it liberating or interrogative of the patriarchal construction of gender and sexuality, one that privileges male supremacy, or did it simply echo and entrench it (Prinsloo 1999)).

Consequently, I identified broad categories in the sexualised content to get an overview (see Chapter 3). Accordingly, the articles were organised loosely into five categories. The first category included articles that speak of intimate or love relations such as dating, sexual intercourse and broken love affairs. The second was about (fictional) sexual narratives or essays that speak of the art of sex and individuals' experiences of sex-related activities. The third category was about penis size since this appeared to be a recurring theme in *Red Pepper*. The fourth category related to sexually 'educational' articles on sexual hygiene, HIV/AIDS prevention and how to improve romance between men and women. The last category included articles that speak of sexual crimes such as defilement, rape, prostitution and promiscuity generally (see Table 3 below).

| CATEGORY | FREQUENCY | | TOTAL | % |
|--|---------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| | 10 – 16.10.03 | 17-20.10.03 | | |
| Intimate or love/sex relations | 13 | 10 | 23 | 52.27% |
| Sexual narratives of individual experiences | 4 | 7 | 11 | 25% |
| Penis size | 1 | 3 | 4 | 9.09% |
| 'Educational' articles e.g. agony aunt column and advice | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6.82% |
| Sex crimes such as rape | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6.82% |
| TOTAL | | | 44 | 100 |

Table 3: Themes in the sexualised content of October 10 - 16 and 17-20, 2003

The overview enabled by this analysis is informative in assessing the possibility of *Red Pepper* as progressive. It is significant that more than half (52%) of articles in the sexualised content were about sexual activities, and intimate physical relations. The second-highest category and a quarter (25%) of the total was about sexually graphic narratives arguably designed for sexual titillation. The third-highest category at about 9% was related to penis size, a pet theme of the pornographic press (see Chapter 2). (This will be discussed further later in this chapter.) Reference to sexual minorities, such as

gays, did not occur. Articles about sexual education and crime accounted for only about 7% each. This kind of focus is characteristic of pornography and representations of hegemonic masculinity both of which interpret gender and sexuality from the perspective of males and privilege heterosexuality at the expense of other sexual desires and identities (see Chapter 2).

The study had allowed that the sexualised content, even if pornographic, could constitute a locus where male supremacy is challenged and oppositional discourses established that might articulate areas of change for women (Weedon 1987). Further, it conceived of Red Pepper as potentially a countervailing agency subjecting to scrutiny the exercise of power beyond the political realm to the private (sexual) sphere (see Chapter 2). Instead, the findings confirm that titillation and superficial entertainment and other content not admitted by a liberal paradigm predominate at the expense of rational-critical debate possibly because the managers are solely motivated by economic imperatives and are therefore less bothered about the liberal ideals (see Chapter 2 and 3). Arguably this explains the range, style and form of Red Pepper that is limited to sexualised content that meets the managers' economic agenda. It is not surprising, therefore, that the frequency of articles considered sexually educative, scientific or artistic, and those that expose sex crimes amount to a mere 6.82% each, the least times in this category. Arguably the managers' claim that Red Pepper plays a moral policeman's role is untenable not least because of the absence of any particular focus on sexual crimes such as rape, defilement and prostitution that are also rampant in Uganda as a result of the economic 'revolution' (see Chapter 1 & 2).

Photographs

As stated in Chapter 1, photos were central to Red Pepper's managers' business strategy. Given that Red Pepper is a highly visual publication as is the case with tabloids, an analysis of photos provides an insight into the ways in which actors are represented. This section aims to do two things. First, it counts the photos used both in news items and adverts. To this end, photos are organised into two categories namely women's and men's photos to establish who is represented more frequently and in what way, and also who is absent. Second, it checks the nature of the photos and their potential meaning. To achieve this, the photos are grouped broadly as sexualised and non-sexualised. The

sexualised photos are further categorised as nude and semi-nude (see Chapter 3). The rest of the photos are described as ‘Others’. Counting and identifying the nature of sexualised photos addresses the possibility that Red Pepper is pornographic and misogynistic.

| Sex | Frequency | % |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|
| Females | 127 | 72.15 |
| Males | 027 | 15.34 |
| Others (group photos) | 022 | 12.5 |
| Total | 176 | 100 |

Table 4: Distribution of photos in terms of women, men and group photos

| Sex | Full Nudity | Partial Nudity | TOTAL | % |
|---------|-------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Males | 01 | 000 | 001 | 0.56 |
| Females | 12 | 100 | 112 | 63.5 |
| Total | 13 | 100 | 113 | 64.2% |

Table 5: Distribution of sexualised pictures by sex out of a total of 176 photos

Of the 176 pictures used in the two sample issues either to illustrate copy or as stand-alone visuals, 127 (72%) were of women, ten times more than those of men, which numbered just 27 photos (15%). Group pictures and others depicting other situations numbered 22, about 13% (see Table 4). A total of 113 photos (64%) and nearly two thirds depicted actors as partially or completely naked. This category was dominated by women’s pictures. For instance, men had only one picture categorised as fully naked, while women had 12 pictures. There was no picture of a partially naked man, while 100 photos of women fitted this category. Although only 13 pictures (about 11%) depicted totally naked men and women, this is significant in a country where right wing Christianity predominates (see Chapter 1). The fact that only women were depicted in semi-nudity and 12 out of the 13 totally naked pictures were of women indicates a particular gendered tendency that focused on women’s sexual body parts in particular their breasts, buttocks and thighs (see categorisation in Chapter 3). All women outside of sexual relationships, for instance, women as workers, professionals, parents and friends were absent. More importantly the women who were featured were probably below 30 years of age. The pictures are captioned with words such as ‘babes’, ‘cuties’, ‘gorgeous’, ‘sexy’ or ‘chicks’ revealing a particular construction of emphasised femininity which

foregrounds women's sexual appeal in ways that are argued to be for the male gaze (Berger 1972 and see Chapter 2) and that glorify male power over women. Not surprising, therefore, 22 photos or 13% of the total were published as stand-alone visuals included simply for the viewing.

Photo Use in Adverts

There were 124 adverts in the two sample issues of Red Pepper of October 10 and 17, making them the most frequent item in the publication (see Table 5 below).

| Sex | No of photos | Percentage |
|--------|--------------|------------|
| Female | 50 | 83.4 |
| Male | 10 | 16.6 |
| TOTAL | 60 | 100 |

Table 5: Distribution of male and female images in adverts

The advertisements also had mostly sexualised images of women, used to advertise beauty products such as cosmetics and salons and boutiques or adult leisure places like bars, restaurants and hotels. The use of sexualised images of women for advertising products associated with adult leisure and recreation links women to entertainment and male pleasure in particular.

Critical Analysis

The analysis that precedes this section provides evidence that the Red Pepper managers' claim that their publication plays a democratic function is presumptuous and arguably calculated. Although the content analysis indicates how relations of power and gender are represented in Red Pepper, a critical analysis was undertaken to enable a more nuanced understanding of these constructions (Fairclough 1995; Janks 1997).

Accordingly, I limit the critical analysis to the themes that have emerged so far, while at the same time allowing for the inclusion of other themes associated with the gender order such as domesticity, docility, passivity and motherhood which up to now were absent (see Chapter 2 for the discussion of emphasised femininities). Generally, my focus was twofold. The first was on headlines and the second on two passages from the October 10 and 17 issues of Red Pepper (see Chapter 3 for rationale). The next section describes briefly each of the headline categories as listed in Appendix 1 and outlined in Chapter 3. This is followed by an interpretation that incorporates the interview with management.

Women's Body Parts (Item 1 of Appendix 1)

The sexualised headlines include a clear focus on women's body parts such as the buttocks (or the ass as Red Pepper referred to them), the breasts, the vagina, the bellybutton and the thighs. Typical headlines in this category are 'City cutie shows juicy bum cheeks at Nile Hotel', 'Kandahar (vagina) moments' and 'Oh! What an ass' .

Sexual Desirability Of Women (Item 2 of Appendix 1)

Then, consistent with the form of emphasised femininity that foregrounds sexual desirability of women, several of the sexualised headlines focused on women's physical looks and sexual appeal captured in headlines that use words like 'sexy', 'super sexy', 'babe', 'cutie' or 'girl'. Such headlines include: 'Sexy Epenu learns French to perfect bed matters'. 'Charlie, who is that sexy girl?', 'Gorgeous behind see but don't touch'. 'FANTASTIC! This is what we call a smashing beauty.

Women As Mothers/Nurturers (Item 3 of Appendix 1)

Occasionally sexualised headlines constructed women as mothers, nurturers and homemakers, for instance, "Kasyate to marry Kazini's babe (daughter)". (Note the woman is only mentioned as regards her relationship to the men, father or husband and she is not named; she's a 'babe'.) This headline points towards marriage, the domestic and private sphere. Kasyate is a celebrated local TV and radio journalist, while James Kazini is a former commander of the Ugandan armed forces. The second example is "Nabunya sighted in Kikuubo shopping nappies". Nabunya is a former Miss Uganda who had disappeared from the public. The story itself insinuates that she has found her place at home as a housewife who is now shopping for the family.

Women as Lustful and Sly (Item 4 of Appendix 1)

If marriage is seen as what women naturally aspire to, Red Pepper also perpetrates the stereotype that women desperately desire this state, are sly and will do anything to get a man. Accordingly, Red Pepper portrays women as loose, seductive, tricky, dangerous and on the prowl for men, a notion that it ramifies through the use of such verbs as 'hook', 'get', 'land' and 'trap' in such headlines as 'Emily Katungu hooks an Indian' and 'Another Ugandan babe lands Mzungu jajja (old white man).

Sexualisation of Crime (Item 5 of Appendix 1)

Sexualisation of crime and violence against women and children is also evident from the headlines as seen in 'Mbale headmaster accused of shafting'. This article is about the head of a primary school for under 13-year-olds and his sexual liaison with one of the female pupils. The use of the word 'shafting' as opposed to 'defiling' fails to criminalise the act. The second example is 'Horny policemen shag suspected prostitutes (FUNNY!)'. The headline implies that it is funny for policemen to take advantage of inmates and sexually abuse them, describing the policemen as 'horny'.

Penis Size (Item 6 of Appendix 1)

Red Pepper places emphasis on penis size in headlines such as 'Indian man displays his ka-thing'. The prefix 'ka' comes from a local dialect, which signifies an extremely small penis. This idea of a tiny male organ is contrasted with a 'whopper' as in the headline: 'Dramatic battle for top city lawyer's whopper', and 'I opened Suzan's skirt with a whopper'.

Homophobia (Item 7 of Appendix 1)

Since hegemonic masculinity is dominant in the worldview represented by Red Pepper, non-heterosexual men and women are presented as deviant. This idea is seen in the headline: 'Editors' note: No homos please'. Therefore, it is not surprising that although the publication is dominated by sexualised content, there is no deliberate promotion of homosexuals and their interests. Neither are transsexuals or elderly men and women featured.

Racist Overtones (Item 8 of Appendix 1)

If homosexuals are depicted as deviant, non-Ugandan men are presented as 'Other'. Often they are not mentioned by name but by their race, colour or nationality. An example of such a headline is 'Kagingo lands muzungu jajja (Kagingo is a former guild president), 'Emily Katungu hooks Indian', 'Another Ugandan babe lands Mzungu jajja'. Muzungu is a generic word for all white people.

Non-sexualised Headlines (Item 9 of Appendix 1)

Generally, the non-sexualised headlines referred to forms of hegemonic masculinity in which men are constructed as macho, engaged in public and prestigious careers in business, politics and the military but also in self-indulgence (debauchery) (see Chapter 2 and 3). This idea is exemplified in headlines like, 'Cardinal Wamala opposes third term', 'Museveni orders internal URA probe,' 'Kyanda tipped to command Mechanised Regiment' and 'Karim's TV getting ready'. Both Karim and Kyanda are male subjects. Wamala was the head of the Catholic Church in Uganda and this story refers to his criticism of President Yoweri Museveni's change of the constitution to allow him to stand for office for a third term.

Celebrity Debauchery (Item 10 of Appendix 1)

Besides macho and public representations, men are also depicted as playful, violent and debauched or self-indulgent. This idea is seen in headlines like: 'Smashed! Chameleone beats up Bukumunhe in fierce battle'. In keeping with masculine debauchery are headlines: 'Weazzle bathes in booze' (the man drunk too much) and 'Mr Kampala munches whole chicken' (an extreme case of gluttony).

Critical Reading of Passages

This section deals with a critical reading of two passages to supplement the analysis of headlines (Item 10 of Appendix 1). Two aspects were significant: the sex advice and the use of metaphors as explained below. A man describes his sexual experience with his girlfriend in an article headlined: 'I opened Susan's skirt with a whopper'. In another article, a woman asks her grandma to help her achieve orgasm, which she fakes to please her man by peeing in the bed during sexual intercourse. She is miserable and lives in fear of being found out by her lover and claims she is asking the question on behalf of many other women whom she says fake orgasm to save their relationships. 'Grandma' replies and says, "Prepare your-self by indulging in a lot of foreplay. During the foreplay talk a lot of dirty language" (see Item 2 of Appendix 2).

Language Use

The other significant aspect of the passages was the use of language. Generally, tabloids are distinguished from mainstream journalism partly by their use of hyperbole and slang (Gripsrud 1997). Similarly Red Pepper uses many metaphors when talking about sexuality. The words and metaphors are drawn from a diverse range of human experiences, including the military, sports and political life. For instance, words like “bonking”, “shafting”, “shagging”, “whopper”, “Kandahar” and “offside” are common. These words are used in such headlines as ‘10 hours of sex. Miss MUK (Makerere University Kampala) shafted trans-nite’. However, given this study’s limitations, only two verbs, shag and bonk, and two metaphors, whopper and Kandahar, are discussed.

Interpretation of the Data

The statistics indicate that the gendered constructions are consistent with those identified in the discussion of the gender order. Red Pepper foregrounds a particular sexualised construction of women as sex objects, which has been described as emphasised femininity. This particular construction of femininities and feminine beauty is limited to particular body parts: the thighs, buttocks, genitals and the breasts, etc. This representation features women in rather limited roles, which disallows other aspects of their being. For instance, career women and mothers are absent. Significantly, the women appear to be predominantly below 30 years of age and many appeared to be in their late teens, the age of presumed sexual hyperactivity that porn magazine Playboy features (Dworkin 1983). Such youthful passion and desirability constitute qualities not associated with older women (van Zoonen 1994). Such portrayal of women is typical of the pornographic press and patriarchal framing of gendered relations and sexuality.

This argument is strengthened further considering the level of objectification and dehumanisation of women, said to be common in pornography. By foregrounding women’s physical appeal Red Pepper displays them as a spectacle to be looked at by men as objects of fantasy and desire (see Chapter 2). While this study had allowed that Red Pepper’s depiction of ‘nakedness’ and sexuality might be liberating, instead it glorifies male power over women, degrades them by equating them to their sexual body parts in the process of which inequalities between the sexes are masked and potential corrective action delayed (see Chapter 2).

Related to the treatment of women as objects is their depiction as cunning or sly and as craving sex all the time, a theme said to be the basis for justifying violence and sexual crimes levelled against women in pornography (Russell 1984 and Chapter 2). If this is true, Red Pepper can be argued to echo and perhaps entrench the patriarchal understandings of gendered relations and to be pornographic. The management admitted as much. Asked if he thought Red Pepper was pornographic before 2004 when it refashioned itself, editor Chris Obore answered in the affirmative. Ironically, in the interview, the management said this representation of women and sexuality was not deliberate. Arguably, as subjects of a patriarchal regime, a misogynistic stance against women was naturalised for the editors, which is why they did not find it necessary to problematise this kind of representation as liberal models of journalism propose. Instead, blinded as it were by their subject positions, the editors published sexualised content which has been described as pornographic and which arguably masks entrenched structural disadvantages that women face under patriarchy.

In contrast, men are constructed in relation to the notion of hegemonic masculinity in which men are depicted as macho, strong and engaged in prestigious public engagements in the military, politics and economics. They also appear to have a licence to engage in violence, debauchery and self-indulgence as they are constructed as powerful and capable of defending their own territory. A generous phallic endowment is also projected as a must for a 'real' man. For instance, the caption on the only picture depicting a totally naked man describes his penis as a 'tiny ka-thing', (Red Pepper October 17, page 14). The prefix 'ka' from a local dialect is a derogatory reference to the 'smallness' of the penis. A real man must have a 'whopper', as the penis is frequently referred to in Red Pepper. Arguably, the penis here connotes strength, prestige, manliness, power and sexual prowess and it fits the image of a man as conceived under hegemonic masculinity (see Chapter 2). This explains why reference to penis size runs throughout the publication, and appears to be a justification for aggressive behaviour towards women and sexual unfaithfulness by men. For instance, women are depicted as fighting for the man's 'whopper' for which they crave insatiably (see Appendix 1). Again the underlying social problems associated with polygamy and sexual unfaithfulness are glossed over.

Related to the glorification of phallic size is the promotion of heterosexuality, which has been argued to be the hallmark of hegemonic masculinity. As such, Red Pepper labels other forms of sexuality as deviant. Thus, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people are absent in Red Pepper, which can be argued to articulate a homophobic discourse and acts as a platform on which certain sections of society are expurgated (Thomson 1995). Contrary to the managers' claims, the publication is not an alternative public space which champions the interests of groups ordinarily excluded from the mainstream media (see Chapter 2).

Moving from sexuality to issues of power, it is evident that Red Pepper fails to expose abuse of power, neither in the public domain as liberal standards require, nor in the private domain as the radicals have it. Instead, in keeping with the pornographic press, Red Pepper sexualises crime and violence against women and children. For instance, although the police officers' assault on female suspects in their custody constitutes gross abuse of office and violation of the women's rights, Red Pepper describes the officers as 'horny' and their action as 'funny' (see Appendix A). The police officers' actions and the plight of the women are not problematised, which would have enabled a discussion of the underlying causes of prostitution such as economic inequality under the patriarchal economy, which is essentially capitalist. This is not surprising. Tabloids are often accused of presenting a superficial reflection of social realities in the process of which they fail to generate informed debate that could enable the search for corrective action to social ills (see Chapter 2). If this is true, Red Pepper falls short of the watchdog role of journalism. By associating sexual crimes with sexual pleasure, Red Pepper abets crime and can lead to attitudes that are more accepting of violence against women such that over time, people perceive sexual aggression as normative²⁰ (Malamuth 1986).

Implicit in this construction are racist attitudes that conceive of blacks as sub-human and monsters to be checked. According to Russell (1994), the race of the subjects in pornography determines the kind of sexual degradation, violence and abuse meted on

²⁰ According to literature not in this study due to space constraints, pornography predisposes some males to want to rape even though they had never thought of it. It is also argued that there is a high correlation between deviant fantasies and deviant behaviours and that some men decide to perform certain sexual acts on women after seeing them in pornography (Russell 1994)

them. Equally, in Red Pepper, men of non-Ugandan nationality are referred to as “other”. For instance, when Ugandan men are mentioned in sexual relations, they are addressed by their name but the non-Ugandans are addressed by their race. In addition, Indians, though reputed to be wealthy businessmen, are ridiculed as having small penises (derogatively described in the local language as “ka-thing”). White men in love relations, on the other hand, are stereotypically portrayed as reprobate pensioners who take advantage of their economic power to exploit local girls sexually. The Ugandan women, do not date ‘foreigners,’ they ‘hook’ and ‘land’ them, suggesting moral bankruptcy on their part. In pornography, such women are stripped of their human rights and dignity and treated as animals (bunnies or chicks)²¹ as it is assumed that they invite violence and rape against themselves. This explains why women in Red Pepper are equally referred to as ‘chick’ and their genitalia as ‘Kandahar’, which connotes war and defeat.

The tendency to reduce women and sexual relations between men and women to a relationship that lacks human emotion and respect is further evident in the choice of verbs and metaphors in Red Pepper. While it may pass as just tabloid jargon, the language reveals a preference for pornographic material and the privileging of patriarchal understandings of sex and gender. For instance, the word ‘shaft’ to refer to sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, is used in an attempt to avoid offending morals as the editors revealed in the interview, but instead this gives sexual relations animalistic and military connotations. A shaft denotes an arrow (primitive weapon of war), or a long narrow rod that forms the body of a spear (another crude weapon of war) or other projectile. It may also refer to a vertical passage, especially one in which a lift travels or one that gives access to a mine, or either of the two parallel bars by which an animal is harnessed to a cart or wagon²². Arguably, the word ‘shaft’ gives the sense that women are simply an innate object, a piece of machinery, a “passage” that leads a man to sexual pleasure. The man owns the ‘rod’, ‘arrow’ or ‘spear’ with which he assaults and vanquishes his victim (woman). While the use of the word is intended to help Red Pepper avoid the moral outrage that, for instance, the word ‘fuck’ might provoke, it ends up

²¹ According to literature not included in this study, when women are equated with animals, their abusers treat them as animals, without the least sense of remorse (Russell 1984)

²² This is Oxford English Dictionary definition, Third Edition

representing sex in the discourse of war, industrial production and mining, thereby reinforcing the objectification of women and sexual violence against them.

The same effect is achieved by the words 'bonk', which means to administer a sharp blow, typically in the head, and 'shag' which carries animalistic connotations of roughness and brutality. In a culture that tolerates violence against women, these terms may be argued to perpetuate that culture, raising men who view raw masculine force and brutality against women as sexual. Thus, instead of playing the role of a "moral policeman" or of a defender of the oppressed, Red Pepper may actually perpetuate sexual crimes by men against women, thereby failing to interrogate patriarchal stereotypes that entrench raw sexual oppression of women.

As if to complete the 'militarisation' of sexual and gender relations, the Afghan city of Kandahar is used to reference female genitalia and sexual activity generally. Following the September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Centre, America attacked the Taliban regime in power at the time, accusing it of sponsoring the terrorist attack. Once ejected from the capital Kabul, the Taliban forces retreated to the outlying towns including Kandahar, which consequently attracted the wrath of the American forces. Kandahar suffered some of the fiercest bombing during the war. Coincidentally, it was in the same year that Red Pepper launched itself. Local newspapers covered the war widely and Red Pepper readers were familiar with the fate of Kandahar which came to symbolise resistance against the American occupation of Afghanistan but also the might of the American military and power. Red Pepper cannibalised the name and gave it a sexual meaning. It came to symbolise womanhood and a battle-ground for control and power between the sexes. By giving a sexy twist to a brutal war in which thousands were killed, Red Pepper's readers were neither enabled nor challenged to interrogate the discourse of war, in particular, the so-called war on terror²³, the underlying injustice and conditions of oppression that may have led to the attack on the World Trade Centre. Then, of course, it also masked (if not perpetuated) the sexual violence meted on women by males generally. Thus, although Red Pepper's application of language may pass as just tabloid jargon, it echoes and perhaps entrenches the notion that sex between a man a

²³ After the attack, President George W. Bush declared war on terror as part of the strategy of pre-emptive attacks on suspected terrorist bases or backers. Under this policy, America attacked and deposed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and plunged that Middle East country into unprecedented mayhem

woman is some sort of war in which the man is the victor since he ‘bombs’ Kandahar which eventually fell to Americans.

I must reiterate that in approaching this research, I had held the possibility that Red Pepper might produce an alternative discourse around sex and sexuality outside of the narrow conservative framing of patriarchy that has been normalised in the Ugandan public domain. In that case, I had assumed it would provide an alternative public sphere in the Frasian conception (Jonsson & Onnerbring 2002), or one that features sex, sexuality and gender issues in progressive ways that are absent from the mainstream media (see Chapter 2).

On the surface, Red Pepper appears to do exactly that. For instance, one may argue that it brings to the limelight sex and sexuality, up until then a taboo topic, from the private to the public domain. One might further argue that it radicalised the debate about sexuality when, for instance, it suggests foreplay for men as one means to sexually satisfy their female lovers and presents sex for its own pleasure rather than as a function for procreation, a view grounded in patriarchal discourses on sex and gender relations (Connell 1987). Additionally, it calls on women to step out of culturally-imposed passivity in lovemaking, take charge and enjoy sexual intercourse, proposing oral sex as an option. If this might not please conservatives, nevertheless it seems to be an attempt to understand love-making from a perspective that includes that of women.

However, these apparent radical gestures are obliterated, for instance, by Red Pepper’s vehement opposition to homosexuality²⁴. In addition, while it claims to provide sex education, it peddles male sexual fantasy in the form of non-scientific advice. For instance, it suggests the use of lubricants for women during sexual intercourse but does not address the causes of dryness such as un-readiness for sex, the fear of HIV and other STDs, and abusive male sexual partners. It then advises the woman to drink booze, which it claims enhance sexual libido and talks of the G-Spot with no scientific evidence to prove its existence (see Appendix B). Requesting women to talk dirty and sing their way to orgasm is male fantasy, which is common in pornography, intended to massage the man’s ego.

²⁴ On the personals page, the editors strictly prohibit gays from placing their ads for partners

Conclusion and Summary

My assumption had been that Red Pepper did not satisfy liberal notions but most probably was a tabloid and / or pornographic press whose managers were solely motivated by economic rather than journalistic ideals. However, I allowed the possibility that despite this, Red Pepper still played a journalistic role. As a potential tabloid, I expected it to feature non-elite issues, expose moral disorder and threats to everyday life and to be preoccupied with campaign and service journalism (see Chapter 2). I also allowed the possibility that Red Pepper would constitute an alternative public sphere and play a watchdog role by problematising sex, sexuality and gendered relations, and so treat the issues progressively (challenging the patriarchal framing of them). The findings of this chapter compel me to recognise that Red Pepper does not fulfil these terms and this is dealt with in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study set out to understand the particularity of Red Pepper as a potential normative newspaper that plays a watchdog role as espoused by a liberal paradigm, or a tabloid and/or pornographic publication. The first objective of the study, therefore, was to establish the extent to which Red Pepper qualified to be a normative newspaper as expected by liberal approaches, specifically in relation to diversity of topics and provision of information. Second, it also sought to establish if the publication constituted an alternate public sphere that featured non-elite non-political issues (see Chapter 2). Therefore, I allowed the possibility that Red Pepper might be a platform for a less inhibited discussion of sexuality and gendered relations. Third, the study sought to establish the level of tabloidisation and / or pornography. Finally, it sought to understand how social actors, particularly women, were represented given my suspicion that emphasised femininities played a central role in the sales strategy of the managers. A brief summary of my findings on these objectives follows.

Red Pepper as a Normative Newspaper in a Liberal Sense

Liberal approaches posit that a newspaper constitutes a public sphere that features significant interests in society. But in the case of Red Pepper, the extreme scarcity, or total absence of coverage of politics, governance and accountability, education, defence and the military, disasters, environment, agriculture, human rights, foreign affairs and health issues, which are considered within the Uganda context to be important (see Chapter 1 and 2), suggests that the publication largely fails to meet the need for diversity of topics and the provision of information, as espoused by this tradition. For instance, 55% of the content was about celebrities, 29% of it was sex-related and just 1.9% constituted politics, the military or education (See Table 2).

Moreover, the publication also lacked the basic tenets of journalism as defined by some liberal approaches. Its managers admitted that journalistic considerations were subordinated to market imperatives. The managers' claim in the interview that their publication polices public morality was fallacious not least because Red Pepper

deliberately stayed away from a critical appraisal of the state, corporate elite and other power centres. This conclusion is summed up by one of the managers:

My understanding of journalistic aggressiveness is that you pursue the truth, fairness, correctness and you report without fear or favour but within the principles of journalism. We are not there yet but beginning to bring in the other side of the story. A paper in Uganda should be more concerned about critical areas like politics, economics and health (Obore interview 2006).

Red Pepper is also not an alternative public sphere since it fails to address the issues of gendered relations and sexuality in a creative way, one that challenges the patriarchal framing (see Chapter 2). As an alternative public sphere, it is expected to include non-elite, non-political issues that appeal to ordinary members of society and to provide entertainment that reflects the cultural values of all or the majority of citizens. There is no evidence that Red Pepper tried to do so. Its content constituted mostly sexualised entertainment and gossip which did not represent cultural diversity, contrary to the concept of all-inclusiveness, a key characteristic of a public sphere according to both liberal and radical traditions (see Chapter 2).

Evidence of Tabloidisation and the Role of Market Forces

This study established that Red Pepper is a tabloid as seen in its range, form and style (see Chapter 2). In the interview, sub-editor and writer Chris Obore said Red Pepper was a “pure tabloid” and cited the “heavy doze” of sexual content, the sensational headlines, the lack of rigorous factual accuracy and balance and the massive space dedicated to gossip and celebrity news at the expense of other types. Arguably, Red Pepper was conceived and designed for the entertainment market, as opposed to information provision, and was not interested in covering ‘elite’ topics such as democracy and foreign news. Although I had allowed that as a tabloid Red Pepper could still play a useful journalistic function, it fell short on two main functions associated with tabloids: highlighting moral disorder and threats to everyday life and incorporating service and campaign journalism to provide consumer information and guiding readers to find goods and services that potentially make their lives better and happier (Eide 1997; see Chapter 2). None of these featured in any significant way (see Table 2) because Red Pepper was

preoccupied with sexualised content and celebrity gossip. The publication offered its readers little, if any, value beyond superficial entertainment. Inspiring stories, personalised narratives and self-help advice and agony columns associated with some tabloids were absent. The only agony column featured unscientific and titillating content that was pornographic in as far as it objectified women and was meant for sexual arousal (see Chapter 2). Founder and managing director Richard Tusime argues:

The overriding motive (for beginning Red Pepper) was to create jobs for ourselves and we were encouraged by the liberal economic and legal environment. We focused attention to entertainment, crime and scandal (Interview, 2006).

Moreover business considerations determined the content and how it was presented. As a business strategy, the tabloid form, embellished with dozes of sexualised copy, created an entertaining mix that attained instant popularity in the market at the expense of journalistic standards. The managers admitted this.

What makes us unique in the market is we run Red Pepper, first and foremost, as a business. The core values come in later... Business is the overriding factor and it largely determines the content we get into the newspaper. If the content does not sell, it does not take precedence (Editor Richard Tusime interview 2006).

This quest for the 'dollar' at the expense of civic duties means that Red Pepper is primarily in the entertainment business and not necessarily committed to journalistic ideals. The study had argued that media entertainment is not necessarily uninformative, uncritical or irrelevant to democracy. It also allowed the possibility that Red Pepper had democratised the media by covering issues related to the lived experience of its readers and introduced into the public sphere hitherto absent community issues such as lack of service delivery, crime, drugs, prostitution, unemployment and corruption (see Chapter 2). However, Red Pepper entertainment can be argued to be superficial, presented in a way that did not challenge stereotypes, for instance about women as sly, loose and good for nothing else but their sexuality. While entertainment is expected to reflect the diversity of culture (Severin & Tankard 1992), or as 'a way of talking about the processes of our common life' (Raymond Williams in Curran 1991: 126), Red Pepper instead

restricts its focus to salacious entertainment framed in a patriarchal discourse. Perennial social stories of ordinary people who experience electricity cuts or children dropping out of school and of women who cannot access water, antenatal care or education were excluded. Thus, it does not incorporate those aspects that the liberal press neglects nor redefine the notion of the public sphere, from being a predominantly bourgeois space to include other ordinary citizens. It can be argued that the market logic is to blame for Red Pepper's popular, formulated and un-disturbing material. By opting for the familiar sexual content that had gained success in the market, Red Pepper avoided experimentation and innovation which could have yielded alternative interpretations and understandings that would have helped its readers to interrogate the social order, particularly the gendered relations and sexuality which dominated its pages (see Chapter 2). As it turns out, Red Pepper fails to engage its readers to generate critical reflection (Machin & Papatheodereou 2002).

Representation of Actors, Sexuality, Gender and Evidence of Pornography

Gendered relations and sexuality in Red Pepper generally reflected patriarchal framing. As a result, emphasised femininities and hegemonic masculinity were the two dominant ways in which actors were represented.

In the former case, women's physical beauty and sexual appeal and desirability were fore-grounded (see Appendix 1). The images of women consequently focused on their sexual body parts. In addition, younger women, the sexually hyperactive, were mainly featured. Older women, those in careers, mothers, business women or lesbians were absent. In short, women did not exist outside of their sexuality and physical beauty and were consequently represented in limited roles.

In the latter case, however, men are aggressive, powerful, physical, rational, hetero-sexual, located in the public sphere and pursue careers in the military, business and the church. This is evident in the non-sexualised headlines discussed earlier in this chapter (see Appendix 1). Men are also described as 'guys' as opposed to babes or chicks for women (see Appendix 1). In keeping with the patriarchal framing of gendered relations and sexuality, only heterosexual men were featured and penis size was central to the definition of a 'real' man (see Chapter 2).

Despite the managers' claim to have radicalised the way sex, sexuality and gendered relations are talked about, Red Pepper upheld a misogynistic discourse in which women are constructed as men's sex toys, objectified and presented in ways argued to be for the male gaze (see Chapter 2). Consequently, sexualised images of women were used to advertise goods such as beer and places of adult leisure such as bars, restaurants and solons. Generally, while it brought sexuality into the public domain, Red Pepper did not problematise the patriarchal understandings of it but affirmed them. The sexual content, including nudity, a defining feature of pornography (see chapter 2), were intended for sexual titillation, and not for educational, scientific or artistic value. By interspersing sexual (and pornographic) material with 'hard news,' Red Pepper acted as a typical pornographic magazine. For instance, in the 1970s, Playboy applied a mix of very topical stories in a form of journalism that reached out and grabbed the reader (Thomas 2003).

However, having said this, it was impossible to say in absolute terms whether Red Pepper is a pornographic publication since the term cannot be defined with precision. But a focus on women's sexual body parts and their looks fits the current understanding of pornography (see Chapter 2). Sexualising injustice and demeaning portrayal of women is argued to be another element of pornography (Dworkin 1981). If that is true, Red Pepper in the period under analysis constituted pornography. Asked if Red Pepper was pornographic prior to 2004 when it refashioned itself, Obore said:

I think so because our law is weak; it doesn't give a description of a pornographic publication (otherwise it was pornographic) (Interview 2006).

This study had allowed the possibility that the sexualised content in Red Pepper had potentially liberating discourses, it assumed that even though it was pornographic, it would not necessarily make it a source of domination or of resistance but a locus where various rival discourses and subjectivities assert themselves and are contested (Weedon 1987, Zoonen 1994). However, Red Pepper's sexualised content, like pornography does, constructed sexual difference from a patriarchal perspective and limited women's sexual identity. Red Pepper focuses on emphasised femininities and hegemonic masculinity, which glorifies male power over women as seen in the metaphors of military conquest to reference sexual activity and gendered relations (see Chapter 2).

This study had also allowed that pornography could play a cathartic role, that is, act as a safety valve that helps to prevent rape and other forms of sexual assault, particularly in societies that are not open about sex, and therefore availability of pornography for men in those societies to consume could serve to lower the rate of rape. The study also left open the possibility that pornography could be educative, broadening the consumer's experience in sexual activity beyond the understanding defined by his or her society (Strelitz 2000). Alternatively, pornography might encourage imitative actions (although this is contested), that it is the theory, while rape and other sexual abuses constitute the practice (Diana Russell 1993). In spite of this, the effect of Red Pepper on its readers cannot be established in this study—that would require a reception study to establish what meanings people get and how they negotiate these meanings against their lived experiences (Fiske 1992; Strelitz 2000). This and other recommendations are the subject of the next section.

Conclusion

Red Pepper has been the subject of much discussion in Uganda, with some accounts describing it as a liberal mouthpiece, and others as pornography. This study set out to respond to this media phenomenon and to understand this better.

To this end, Chapter One prescribed the background to the study in terms of the media and political landscape. In particular, it noted that the liberalisation of the media, reflected partly in the proliferation of both print and electronic media landscape in Uganda since the late 1980s, did not only bring about a measure of media freedom, some media practitioners, faced with the resultant cutthroat competition, resorted to tabloidisation and, as in the case of Red Pepper, content that has been described as outright pornography to expand their market.

Chapter Two provided the theoretical frame through which Red Pepper was investigated. As the objective of the research was to gain a general insight, or an overview, into Red Pepper, it was necessary to apply a variety of theoretical lenses to achieve this. The first was a liberal approach to journalism. The second strand of theory was related to the political economy approach to the media. This necessitated a discussion of tabloidisation which is said to be characterised by entertainment and

sensational reporting, which serve popular demand. This study was careful, however, not to conflate tabloidisation with bad journalism, or to assign to journalism only a political role. Finally, debates around the issues of gender, sexuality and pornography were presented because Red Pepper's content is heavily sexualised. Therefore, the research sought to establish if Red Pepper was pornographic and the discourses, relations of power and the subject positions inscribed in its content.

Chapter Three discussed the research methodology, which combined quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method used was content analysis. The qualitative methods, on the other hand, incorporated a limited critical analysis of two randomly selected samples of the publication and interviews with management. The critical analysis of the text focused on the headlines. The findings from that process needed to be understood in relation to Red Pepper's managers' point of view. Two managers were interviewed for this reason.

Chapter Four provides the data and analysis in relation to the research topic: an investigation of the Ugandan publication Red Pepper in the 21st century—a case study from 2001 to 2004. The study had assumed that while Red Pepper was not a newspaper in some specific ways recommended by liberal approaches, it was journalistic and potentially an alternative public sphere. However, a content analysis returned interesting results. While it constituted an alternative public sphere in as far as it introduced sexuality to the public domain in ways absent from the mainstream media, Red Pepper failed to interrogate the entrenched patriarchal framing of these issues. Instead—and perhaps because they were constituted by the same discourses—the managers reinforced gender stereotypes by focusing on entertainment of a salacious nature. As a tabloid, one would expect Red Pepper to feature stories on crime, family, marriage, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, drugs, prostitution and malfunction in government structures that directly affect ordinary citizens (Eide 1997). However, these issues were largely absent.

Recommendations for Further Research

Red Pepper had never been researched although the number of Ugandans consuming, or alarmed by, its content was growing. Thus, this investigative study was both timely and

necessary for a better understanding and as a basis for raising critical questions for further research in the Red Pepper phenomenon in Uganda.

However, this study was confined in scope and was consequently unable to probe the issues of concern in greater detail. Had it been confined to only representation or production, as moments in the circuit of culture, this would have resulted in greater depth in terms of one but would have sacrificed the richness of understandings enabled by including both. As such, more detailed research is desirable on both the representation of actors in Red Pepper and how the production constraints, including newsroom practices, impact its potential as an alternative public sphere.

Also reception analysis is desirable to establish what pleasures Red Pepper readers derive from it, particularly because it refashioned itself in 2004. In the interviews, junior editor and writer Obore attributed the lack of professionalism at Red Pepper to ill-training and poor motivation of journalists. Therefore, further research into the relationship between journalists' motivation and the quality of editorial content is desirable. It has been argued that tabloids are successful because they articulate the everyday needs and aspirations of the majority of people, and broaden the topics of debate beyond those of interest to the elite members of society. It is also argued further that tabloids represent resistance against formal social and political processes from which they feel expurgated (Fiske 1987). Thus, a full critical discourse analysis of Red Pepper is desirable to investigate if its market success and popularity is related to failures in the mainstream news media and elsewhere in the society to meet people's expectations.

Finally, this being a single snapshot of Red Pepper (based on two copies selected at random), there is a possibility of arbitrariness and non-representativeness, which calls for similar snapshots or an analysis of more copies over a longer period to track changes and trends (Prinsloo 2003). This becomes even more desirable given that Red Pepper refashioned itself in 2004. Such a study would establish what, if at all, has changed in terms of content, style and professional standards, and why.

Summing up the Study

This was an investigation into the Ugandan publication Red Pepper in the 21st century as a case study. It sought to understand Red Pepper but also to generate data about it as a

potential basis for research into the broader phenomenon of tabloidisation in Uganda and globally. While Red Pepper was not the first paper in Kampala to focus on sex and gossip²⁵, it was the first English newspaper in Kampala to do so, making it a potential alternative public sphere. But this sphere was tainted by the misogynistic representation of women that served the sexual fantasy of men. Arguably, it was also undemocratic as it interpreted the (sexual) world through the eyes of men. Women aged 18 to 25 featured most in Red Pepper while the elderly people and children were excluded, making the publication a forum for the sexually (hyperactive) only. It was also counterproductive in that at times it gave false, unscientific information such as the existence of a G-spot²⁶. It also did not live up to its responsibilities of addressing, in a significant way, crimes associated with sexuality. In some cases, it 'eroticised' sexual crimes thereby masking the criminal element in such incidents and letting off the perpetrators who in most cases were men. Such a superficial and depoliticised way in which issues were represented undermined the credibility of Red Pepper, as a newspaper of any kind. It was clear that Red Pepper was a business entity which took advantage of a society desperate to talk about sex a hitherto taboo topic in Uganda²⁷.

These findings were consistent with theories presented in Chapter Two, for instance, a political economy approach which suggests that commercial imperatives have displaced journalistic ideals and that the quest for profits has driven news media to publish mainly 'light' information that attracts more readers (audiences) whom they can sell to advertisers (Jhally 1989). While it has been suggested that profits and the public's right to know can be compatible (Hickey 1998), there is need to evolve a journalism that both entertains and stimulates audiences to outgrow apathy and become active citizens. Instead, Red Pepper promoted some of the worst gender stereotypes. If Red Pepper was

²⁵ Orumuri and Bukedde, both local language newspapers in the New Vision stable, had sex columns in which various issues related to family, sexual intercourse and relations were featured. Tusime (op. cit) was the editor of Orumuri whose *Swenkazi* (explicit sex) section often attracted censure from the authorities. There had also been sex magazines before, which folded in their infancy (Parliamentary Report on Pornography 2002)

²⁶ In her article, debunking myths about female sexuality and reproductive health, Dr. Donnica Moore argues that although many women and sex researchers say the G-spot exists, the current consensus is first that we still haven't fully understood female sexual anatomy or physiology. The G-spot or Grafenburg is said to be a highly sensitive, highly erotic "zone" located 2.5 to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches) inside the vagina on the front wall (<http://www.drdonnica.com/today/00008732.htm>, accessed September 30, 2007).

²⁷ A reception study is needed to establish this

interested in issues that affect ordinary people, about moral disorder, as its editors claimed, then why was it silent on teen pregnancies and the high school dropout rate for girls, a few examples of the numerous social ills plaguing societies across the globe? Its presentation of gays as “other,” further erases any claim of objectivity, inclusiveness and neutrality. Rather, their actions were motivated by commercial interests.

However, a question may be asked if economic motives should be the sole basis of media production. Given the volatile political history of Uganda, Red Pepper needs to act as a public forum, regardless of the form this takes, so as to prevent powerful individuals and institutions from exceeding their authority. The newspaper must continue to lift a standard against which both leaders and the led can fashion their actions.

Right now, the worldview that Red Pepper proposes defines women as sex objects with limited human traits and rights. This can prolong the advent of corrective actions needed to accord equal opportunities to the sexes (Weedon 1994). By foregrounding monetary gain as its sole motive, Red Pepper is abandoning the public to the mercy of interests that are not always in the public interest. In such a case, Red Pepper entrenches injustice, indeed the undesirable status quo, which, ironically, it purports to challenge.

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Appendix 1: Headline Categorisation (Sexualised and Non-sexualised)

1. Women's Physical Appearance

City cutie shows juicy bum cheeks at Nile Hotel
Oh! What an ass! (This babe has a perfect behind that makes you wana touch)
The belly moments
The Kandahar (vagina) moments²⁸
The thigh moments

2. Sexual Desirability of Women

Charlie, who is that sexy girl?
Gorgeous behind see but don't touch
Girls you must meet before you die (super-beautiful and sexually irresistible)
These babes are smashing. One is from Ghana and the other is from Botswana
FANTASTIC! This is what we call a smashing beauty

3. Women as Mothers, Wives, Homecare Providers, and Docile

Nabunya sighted in Kikuubo shopping nappies
Kasyate to marry Kazini's babe
Dad admires Stuart's bride
The ladies' men. We bring you the men who really treated their ladies fine at Steve Jean album launch

4. Women as Sly, on the Prowl for Men and Good for Nothing Else Other Sex

Desiree tightens around Gaetano
Emily Katungu hooks Indian
Sanyu's Belinda hooks up guy
Another Ugandan babe lands Mzungu jajja
Halle Berry dumps sex addict man
Super Sexy Kagingo gets Congolese guy
Sexy Epenu learns French to perfect bed matters
Jackie causes cold war (dates different men at the same time in her workplace, which leads to confusion a situation Red Peeper describes as cold war)
Monitor babe causes sexy stampede in Jinja
10 hours of sex (Miss Makerere shafted transnite after show flop)
WBS' Lillian texts sex to Nathan
I love to shaft in my own bed
I love chocolate G-strings
Badu talks bonking

5. Sexualisation of Crime and Moral Disorder

Offside (Dramatic battle for top city lawyer's huge whopper. Married lawyer smoked out of another babe's house)

²⁸ Kandahar, the Afghan city that bore the brunt of the US bombing following September 11, 2001 attack, represents the female genitalia. But it also signifies how Red Pepper views sexual activity in terms of military warfare in which the male participants emerge victors

Gae's brother and 3 boob feast
Horny policemen shag suspected prostitutes (FUNNY!)
STEAMY! We swapped our girls and they had no clue
Horny girl bites off Red Banton's nose
Mbale headmaster accused of shafting

6. Penis Size

Hullo I opened Suzan's skirt with a whopper!
Indian man flashes his tiny ka-thing
Offside (Dramatic battle for top city lawyer's huge whopper. Married lawyer smoked out of another babe's house)

7. Homophobia

LOVE CONNECTION. Welcome to the most famous page. Editor's plea: No under 18s
no homos no lesbians

8. Racist overtones

Emily Katungu hooks Indian
Another Ugandan babe lands Mzungu jajja
Super Sexy Kagingo gets Congolese guy
Indian man flashes his kathing

9. Non-sexualised Headlines (Men Engaged in the Public Domain and Professions)

Cardinal Wamala opposes third term
Balunya phobia! Why Makerere will not have a VC soon
Museveni orders internal URA probe
Col Kyanda tipped to command mechanised regiment
Butcher: Scribe knifes Tororo teacher with sharp panga (machete)
Tipsy Jinja cop collapses
RDCs (Resident District Commissioners) fight for chair
Bageya jailed over phone theft
Red Pepper launches Pepper 2
Red Pepper's second child
Karim's TV getting ready
The campus carnival that went to hell
Katatumba buried in sh25m coffin
Kony opens three camps in Sudan—Mayambo
Victory: The Red Pepper now comes twice a week
Mushega acquires an S Class Mercedes

10. General Sex Talk and Advice

TROUBLE! Babes now fake orgasms
Glorious finger! Don't suffer locally: SMS our super sexpert on 077 88 28 66. She is hot
and will help you whatever the problem

11. Celebrity Gossip and Debauchery

Reagan acquires wheels
(Red) Pepper boss crashes car
Weasle bathes in booze
Mushanga lifted out after causing fracas
Miss Makerere gives slang speech
Bebe Cool fidgeting with fresher
Mariah Carey can't use a credit card
JLO's wedding gown debt
Mr. Kampala munches whole chicken
Celebrities raid party
Medi Nsereko falls off ladders
Smashed! Chameleone beats up Bukumunhe in fierce fight
Bitama dodges buying meat for the ladies
COLD WAR! Kamukuzi babe knifed over Bukeni's call
Kronno loses babe to Silk DJ
Muwenda's sex in the forest

Appendix 2

Item 1

Dear grandma,

I just tried fingering my girlfriend a few days ago to stimulate her but she did not get impressed. I thought I was about to perforate her and yet I was less than an inch inside there. Any tips please?

Glorious Finger

Ahah....tips? Quite funny! Well what you were doing to your girlfriend is some form of oral sex. The man's fingers can be used to assist in a number of ways. One is to spread the lips of the Kandahar to gain more complete access to her "Twin Towers." Massaging the pubic region by lightly squeezing it in one hand with a pulsing motion can also be stimulating. The woman may like it when the man brushes his fingertips lightly over her lower abdomen, up and down and side to side, particularly just above the pubic hair line, extending to the pelvic bones and toward the navel. A very light touch is recommended. His fingers may be used inside her Kandahar to stimulate both the internal and the twin tower from behind. There are many different areas to touch, starting at the very outside of the Kandahar lips themselves. A very light presence there can give a woman a sensation similar to that of your whopper entering her. This can be very exciting at the right time without the distraction of too much penetration. For most women, the clitoral area responds best at least at first, when very little activity is happening on the side. This is because internal stimulation often distracts clitoral sensation. It is best to start slowly with one finger touching the Kandahar's lips in a circular motion and then slowly penetrate, with the finger nail (always cut short, no sharp edges, and clean) down and the fingerprint side up. Curl your finger a bit when you are inside her to touch a soft spongy organ - the G-spot, and tickle it a little. It is not necessary to penetrate her with

your whopper if you can perfect the finger job. Good thing, you cannot catch HIV/AIDS by simply fingering someone. Just make sure you do not have any cuts on your body.

Item 2

I opened Suzan's Skirt With A Whopper!

Gentlemen, congratulate me because I had a steamy sexy weekend and would like you to know about it. I had a blast on Friday night and so you can imagine the amount of hangover I had that Saturday morning. So I moved to the Canteen down in her Bukoto Flats and when I was still waiting for my order—a cold coke and mineral water—a cute babe I have always eyed with 'sinful' intentions came over to buy herself a snack. Susan, for that was her first name, said hullo to me and my hunger over-stricken voice helped me to reply, in a romantic manner by the way. I never thought that for once sexy Susan would like to listen to my state of health, apart from a simple 'hullo'. Now, here I was with Susan standing next to me showing concern on my state of health. I asked her to sit down with me as I was feeling lonely. She told me that she had work to do at home and it would be a good idea if I escorted her to her house – then we would talk from there. My mind started browsing like Microsoft Windows because I never dreamt I would get attention from this extremely sexed up babe. How? The rest is a short story about what we bought at the canteen Fast forward to her floor apartment on flat No. 4. As we climbed the staircase she opted to lean on my back. Oh my God the adrenaline was all over me. I started thinking that maybe Susan was sexually-starved but hold on; you can't know what God plans for you as I will tell you later. Susan stays alone. And since there was no furniture in the house, I suggested that we cool on the floor. She said we could sit on her BED in the BEDROOM. My temperatures were beyond normal and I was simply replying YES and NO to her every question. She asked why I wasn't talking and I told her I was a quiet guy. Then, by and by she popped the question. "Would I mind staying with her for some time?" I put my hand on her thigh which was half covered in a purple wrapper. Susan held her breath and looked into my eyes for about two minutes and as I was to retreat my hand in shame she asked me "Michael do you know love?" As I was arranging my mind to answer "yees...ssss!" she pulled my head with her tender hands and kissed me deeply on the mouth. Her sweet saliva dripped incessantly from the corners of her mouth and as she had a huge tongue. I returned the favour and kissed her lovely lips; her chin went up again. I kissed her eyes and nose. She moaned and gasped and held me tightly. Then finally, in a faint voice I heard her plea. It was like a whisper at noon. "Pleaseeee, Michael, give it to me....." she pleaded. She pulled off my T-shirt, I helped myself on the trousers and my best part was undressing her. Fellow countrymen always help your babes to undress, you know what I mean. I'm saying that I loosened her wrapper using my whopper. She was NAKED inside, and without wasting time I started appreciating God's unequalled talent in sculpture, navigating Susan's contours deliberately. Susan told me she wanted it SLOW and SEXY. "Take your time honey," she said. I romanced her upwards again as my colleague, I mean the whopper, made his own way and I made sure I did slow as Susan had asked. Susan was so WET. So her juices started dripping out of her 'honey pot' every time I intensified 'romantic' pressure on her. I positioned my shaft like an auditioning "blue movie star", and slipped into her supersonically. SHAGGED, we LICKED, we RUBBED and we were happy. Then we lost ourselves in a frenzy of LUST before passing out in a heap of satisfaction.