

Will the mass media learn anything from Covid-19?

 By [Chris Moerdyk](#)

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In South Africa, TV and radio stations as well as newspapers and online news platforms have all found themselves happily cooperating with the government on the Covid-19 pandemic because they really had no alternative. They were being kept informed straight from the shoulder and regularly. Hopefully now, government ministers as well as provincial and municipal leaders will have learnt the immense value of regular contact with the media. And that not trying to skirt around and lie about issues will always be best in the long run.

Hopefully too, our mass media will have learnt some hard lessons for this pandemic. And that is to stick to facts. Report on news instead of indulging in ill-considered speculation and guesswork. The team of scientists and medical specialists advising the government and now making themselves available to the media, has proved to be a trustworthy source. Pulling no punches and making no promises.

As a consequence, I am convinced that future media research will show that the public of South Africa places a lot more trust in their news sources.

And, most importantly, with government threatening retribution on anyone spreading false information on social media platforms, many South Africans have started to think twice about forwarding information they receive on social media just because it happens to appeal to their prejudices or hopes and desires. Taking a deep breath and checking a source before forwarding information has become the order of the day among many South Africans but certainly not all. Punitive measures against anyone spreading false information on social media is welcome because only a few months ago social media conversations reached extraordinary high levels of utter bullsh*t.

The much vaunted 'citizen journalism', which was supposed to have completely changed the face of news delivery, has been found to be seriously flawed and untrustworthy. Hopefully, one of the positive side effects of this pandemic will bring a return to consumers trusting professional news platforms and restricting social media to facts and not fables.

I sincerely hope that both the government and the news media learn from their new relationships forged out of necessity by the pandemic. If they maintain this level of cooperation both will prosper.

But both government and the media will require constant mentoring to ensure they do not forget these valuable lessons

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

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