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### 2008: Trends to watch

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A "rather rocky year" owing to the erosion of media freedom and a year in which regulatory agencies could increasingly gear up to meet their challenges. These are some of the trends to watch in 2008, according to local media commentators.

Dr. Jane Duncan, executive director of the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI), said the erosion of media freedom in South Africa had been a "fairly long-standing trend".

"Reputed monitoring groups, such as Human Rights Watch, Reporters sans frontières, the African Media Barometer, Freedom House and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Misa), have concluded (in their respective latest reports on the issue) that media freedom is being eroded.

"We are concerned that these trends may deepen.

"Given the noises out of Polokwane, (particularly) the disturbing resolution about a [media tribunal](#), we are set for a rather rocky year," Duncan told TheMediaOnline.

Duncan said this trend needed to be checked by ongoing advocacy work. Journalists should take the defence of media freedom "a lot more seriously".

Wadim Schreiner, managing director of the media research institute Media Tenor, said he would watch regulatory agencies' performance with particular interest in 2008.

Schreiner said it was evident from media coverage that some of these agencies were suddenly "building momentum".

He said the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa's (Icasa) pay-TV subscription licensing process was a case in point.

#### More predictions

Trends analyst **Dion Chang**'s list of lifestyle trends to watch in 2008, as reported by *The Times*, includes:

- The trend of "giving away things for free"; also in the media and not just online.
- Concern about the "dangers" of living in a virtual world including the impact on especially young people's physical and psychological health.
- The response to technology fatigue, including the "small but growing resistance movement of people who are trying to claim their lives" by stepping away from the machines so to speak.
- Purposefully "playing hard to get" to limit stress caused by the accessibility afforded by email.

Some of **Duncan McLeod** of *Financial Mail*'s "big bets" for the new year:

- Telkom will sell its stake in Vodacom to Vodafone; MTN will buy Telkom's fixed-line assets.
- Sentech will get funding to build a wireless broadband network, but it will "squander this money by yet again failing to make a meaningful impact on the market".
- A content war between the new pay-TV players and MultiChoice.
- Sony Blu-ray will triumph over the HD-DVD disc format.
- A new version of Apple's iPhone.

Media and marketing analyst **Chris Moerdyk** predicted in *City Press*:

- Hard work for media and marketers as the fight for a share of the adspend intensifies. Tough decisions for vulnerable media such as magazines that may eventually have to consider closing down.

and

**Colin Daniels**, digital business development manager of Avusa Media, told *Sunday Times Magazine* he expected:

- A possible shake-up in the online search industry brought on by the introduction of [Wikia Search](#), a "transparent" search engine, by Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales.

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