
SMF
THE MEDIA HEREAFTER

FUTURE

OPINION

By William Brederode & Tim Malinzi

THINKING THE FUTURE

There is always a level of uncertainty and complexity about the future, says Clem Sunter, stalwart South African futurist.

For this reason, Sunter avoids predicting or forecasting the future. Rather, he adopts a more flexible approach.

Sunter advocates for a method known as "scenario planning" – a process of identifying the most important uncertainties about a topic and producing possible future realities.

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

Bronwyn Williams, a futurist with experience in the media industry, identified a few key trends that are important for the future of the sector.

"The media used to be a place or a person and now the media really is everyone. The line between what is media and what is a consumer of media has been irrevocably broken," says Williams.

We're also likely to see a fragmentation of the idea of truth, she says. "The idea of a single truth, which has always been non-sensical whether we are talking about the past, the present or the future, is going to continue to be challenged," says Williams.

THE FOURTH ESTATE

Based on Sunter's approach, *SMF* has created a scenario plan (see next page), looking at the possible future of the news media as the fourth estate.

Some factors are unavoidable, like the impact of increased technological disruption on the media industry. Other factors are best described as "key uncertainties" – significant factors that are difficult to call.

The two key uncertainties in this scenario plan are: The public's level of trust and the level of government involvement in the media. ●

GRAPHICS: Jean-Marie Uys

SPECTIVE

INVISIBLE SHACKLES

The public cannot see the barriers that hold back the news media's ability to write freely.

POLITICIANS, WATCH YOUR STEP!

With a high level of public trust and journalistic freedom, the media can hold those in power accountable.

TRUSTED CONTENT

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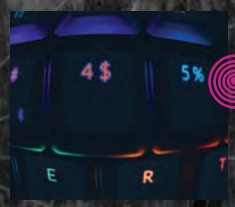
Subscriber-based funding models boost the public's trust in the media, because of the high quality content the media are pressured to produce



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While courts remain open to the press, irreponsible reporting threatens the media's credibility.

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The public's discerning eye for highly restricted content means they don't trust it.

PUBLIC SCEPTICISM

INFORMATION BANKRUPCY

Without trust, the media will essentially be airing stories to deaf ears.

GRAPHICS: Jamie Venter

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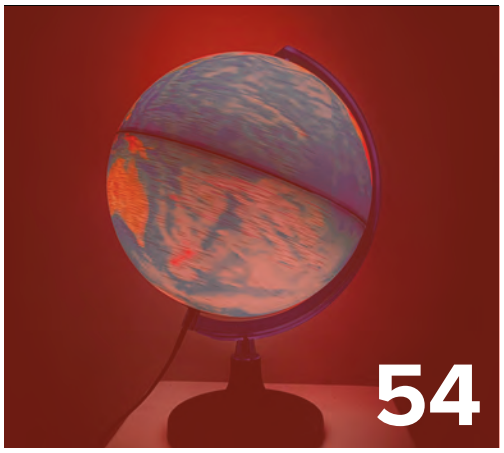

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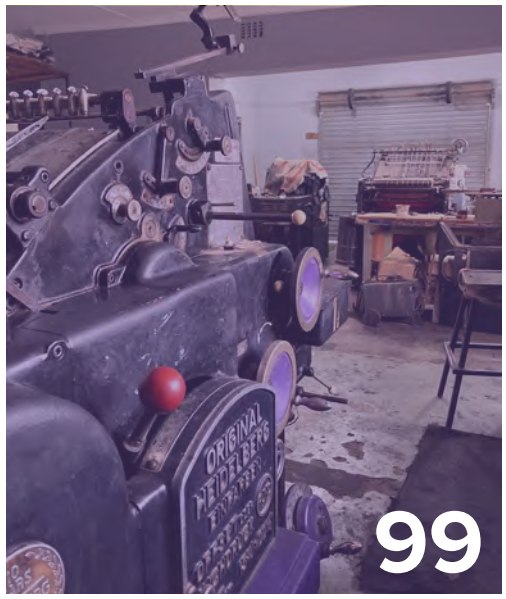

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THE EDITOR'S LETTER

I MIGHT BE WRONG...

Radiohead's "I Might Be Wrong" is one of my favourite songs. The lyrics "think about the good times and never look back" hold a special place in my heart.

On paper, this seems like an obvious oxymoron. But I think Thom Yorke, lead singer of the band, was instead expressing optimism about the future when he wrote those lyrics – think about the good times yet to come.

In the same song, Yorke sings "I used to think there was no future left at all". A relatable sentiment for many young journalists who may be weary of the future of the industry.

Smaller newsrooms, failing business models, and laws which could limit our capacity as conveyors of the truth may all be reasons for this.

Yorke doesn't make any assertions throughout the song, hence the track's title.

In the same light, *SMF* 2022 should not be viewed as a crystal ball indicating how the media industry is definitely going to be. But rather how the industry could look.

The future holds many uncertainties. *SMF* 2022 is not about predicting the future, rather telling stories about the future.

Each article highlights an uncertainty in the media and aims to address them by looking at what our industry could look like in the coming years – whether it be the state of said newsrooms, business models or laws.

As journalists, we tend to examine, analyse or report – focusing on what has already happened. Doing this, we neglect the value to be found in what has not yet happened.

Tomorrow holds so many answers that we passively receive, but what would happen if we could get ahead of that curve? What would happen if we could actively look to the future and anticipate what is in store?

Janus, the two-headed Roman deity of the past and the future, acts much like the journalists of this publication.

By looking at the past and the current trends of today, we can effectively tell stories about the future. It's important to analyse yesterday, but just as important to focus on tomorrow.

As young professionals stepping into an uncertain industry, we believe there is a mountain of untapped wealth to be found in a future-focused publication.

Whether it be to highlight the possible bright lights ahead, or the dark shadows that could be heading our way.

I personally prefer to look at the future in a positive light. Not knowing what tomorrow holds means that every day could be better than the one before. Perhaps newsrooms get bigger, successful business models are established, and the laws we abide by allow for free journalism.

But then again, I might be wrong.

By Tim Malinzi
SMF editor-in-chief

A LOVE LETTER TO 26 CROZIER STREET

It's been 22 years since I walked, as Head of Department, through the front doors of our lovely Edwardian building housing the Department of Journalism, in January 2001.

What am I saying … ? It has been 44 years since I walked through that front door in January 1978 to start a career in journalism, fortunate to be selected as one of the very first cohort of honours students.

Shortly before, when 26 Crozier Street was renovated to house an academic department, the first HoD, Piet Cillié, famously shouted after a huge explosion in the loft* – with the victims stumbling out, burning and gasping for air – not "Call the ambulance!", but "Call the newspaper!"

Such was the atmosphere 26 Crozier Street breathed since then: News! Over all these years one of the privileges of my life was to have studied in 26 Crozier Street (with classmates whom I can still call comrades), and to have worked in 26 Crozier Street (with colleagues who will remain comrades).

Most of all: To have had the honour to accompany just more than two dozen journalism students each year to great futures, whatever routes they chose to take after leaving our department for the last time. May I add: Thank you. I have learnt so much from you.

And yes, I know, sometimes you were more inclined to refer to Crazier Street rather than Crozier. But you will agree, this place has a unique aura.

There is a special sense of being, of belonging, to our beautiful building, what with her own crest and motto. And, of course, her very own resident ghost. Since the first years housing our department, she has undergone huge changes. The loft has never been used until the powers-that-be were convinced about our space issue.

The department, starting off with 20 honours students, were bursting at the seams with Master's and PhD students.

Plus, to accommodate our digital universe, the raw clay brick walls threatened to implode on us whenever another cable had to be installed. In the renovation/restoration processes, first the one half of the loft was modified to accommodate human beings instead of squirrels, and then the other half.

Still, it was not enough. The loft's audio and video production facilities were inadequate (#understatement). Eventually, the annual "Strategic Plan", desperately submitted every year, landed on fertile ground.

Our Annexe could be built, specifically designed for multi-platform, multimedia news production. Today, our 26 Crozier Street is still the elegant Edwardian building from the front, but boasts our super-modern Annexe from the back, almost literally personifying the double-headed Roman deity Janus, the god of doors, gates and transitions. Janus, also the name of our annual newsletter, represents the dualities of beginnings and ends, of looking to the future, while looking to the past. Exactly the work of journalists, the scribes of today, who record today's events against the realities of the past and the promises of the future.

Since 1978 our planet has tilted under our feet and has morphed into a 24/7 media merry-go-round. The possibilities are endless, and I do hope all who enter 26 Crozier Street will embrace all those limitless opportunities. Indeed, become agents of change to empower communities through whatever form journalism will take in future.

May our beautiful building continue to bless all those who find themselves fortunate to study, work, play, laugh, cry – and grow – inside her walls.

* The explosion was caused by highly flammable gas that escaped when barrels with glue were opened – it was not the right time to light a cigarette.

By Lizette Rabe
Chair of the Department of Journalism at Stellenbosch University

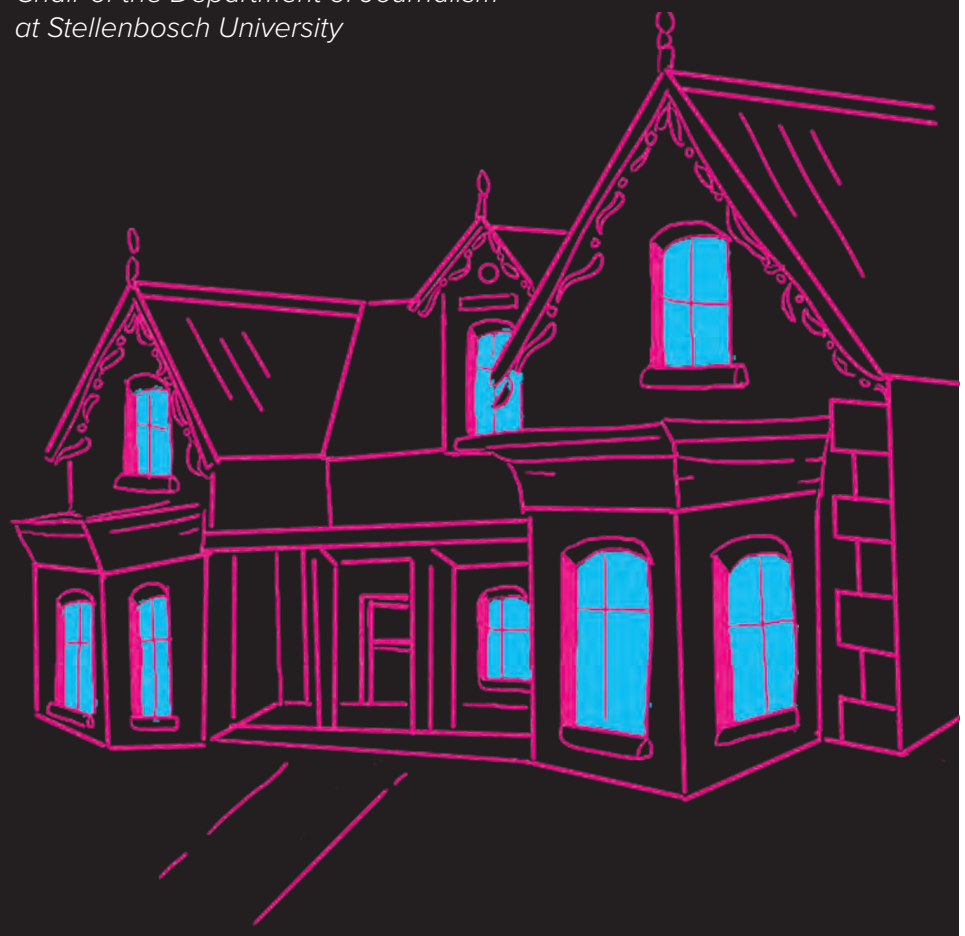

ILLUSTRATION: Jessica Hillier

AGENTS & AUDIENCES

JOURNALISM IS ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE. CURATING STORIES THAT ACCURATELY REPRESENTS PEOPLES' PERSPECTIVES IS NO LESS THAN A JOURNALIST'S DUTY – AND AN HONOURABLE DUTY AT THAT.

CATERING FOR CURIOSITY **9**

JACK OF ALL TRADES **13**

DIVERSITEIT: SÓ VERANDER DIE GESIG VAN DIE MEDIABEDRYF **16**

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PRESERVING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST **22**

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CATERING FOR CURIOSITY

Creating children's content is difficult for media houses in South Africa, as it often comes with financial constraints and a higher duty of care. However, media houses need to focus on producing content tailored to kids to build a culture of excitement for reading, and ensure they still have a readership base in the future.

BY **WILLIAM BREDERODE**

Producing news for children should be a priority for media houses as it ensures that they will still have a publication in the future, says Antoinette Beck, academic head at Teneo International School, who has 27 years of experience in language teaching and education management.

Beck says she finds the standard of news content tailored for children's consumption by South African media houses disappointing. She uses news resources tailored to children from the *New York Times* as she does not find local content adequate.

She says that the *New York Times* has an online teaching section where some content from the main site is adapted for children, and a variety of resources are produced specifically for children.

"I don't believe that media houses in South Africa have the time, probably, and money at this stage to build those teaching assets," she says. Despite making up 34% of the South African population, children are only mentioned in 7% to 8% of news stories, says William Bird, director of Media Monitoring Africa.

From there – children's voices are only included in 8% of articles written about them."When children are covered, they generally seem to be silent," says Bird. The difficulty of reporting on children may be a reason that journalists avoid writing about them, he claims.

However, various media professionals say that it is important to tailor content specifically for children to develop their media literacy skills and build a culture of news consumption while young.

SEEING FACT FROM FICTION

Accessing and engaging with news is crucial for children as it builds critical thinking skills, says Beck.

Exposure to news ensures that children get "a wide diet of information" – as children are exposed to different perspectives, styles, and lines of questioning, which contributes to a well-rounded education, according to Beck.

Suzaan Hall runs Huisgenoot Junior and Young YOU, which are both segments tailored to children within their respective magazines. Both *Huisgenoot* and *YOU* have almost two million weekly readers, making them the biggest English and Afrikaans magazines in the country, according to the Media24 Website.

Hall says that exposure to news sources empowers children to contribute in discussions about current affairs. "It [is] for kids who want to sound smart around adults as well. So they want to be like, 'Okay, but I've actually read that'," she says.

Huisgenoot Junior tries to pair quirky content with more serious news to entice curious children to engage with news stories, says Hall. So, for example, a side-box about someone who ate an absurd amount of Marmite may be featured next to a story about the Zondo Commission, she says.

It is important that children are empowered to be agents of their own future by growing up with an awareness of what is going on in the world, says Nicky Cox, editor of *First News Children's Newspaper. First News* is a weekly newspaper aimed at children between the ages of 7 and 14 in the United Kingdom that is read by 2.6 million people weekly.

Cox is also the CEO of Fresh Start Media, the production company for *FYI*, a news segment run on Sky News which is presented by children. There was a time when children had limited access to information, says Cox. "But at least they didn't have misinformation."

EASY AS ABC

While it is necessary to explain things and add extra context when writing for children, it is also important not to talk down to

SOURCE: William Bird

them and be condescending, says Hall.

She says that when explaining a story related to the interest rate, there is an extra layer of explanation required for children. This is so they are able to understand what they read. A clever choice of language can stop the extra explanation from feeling patronising, says Hall.

Having an opportunity for tactile engagement with children's media content is also important as it can get children excited about reading, says Heather Robertson, editor of *Daily Maverick 168*.

Daily Maverick release a four-page children's segment called MavericKids, as an attachment to their weekly newspaper. It features writing tailored to children to try and build a culture of excitement about reading, according to Robertson.

"They can actually make it very interactive. They can cut out, they can draw, they can puzzle," says Robertson, adding that this personalises content for children.

It is important to think about how children will be interpreting the world and to write with that in my mind, says Cox.

"If there's been a big terrorism attack, for example [...] what will they be thinking? What will be their fears? What will be their worries?" she asks.

Cox adds that being crisp, clear and respectful, while creating the feeling that readers are on a shared journey of discovery with the writer is critical.

WORM IN THE APPLE

Although media houses in South Africa may have desires and plans to make more comprehensive and impactful children's news content, there is currently a lack of resources to do this.

This is according to Reginald Witbooi, a news reporter at the South African Broadcasting Corporation, who often covers stories involving children.

Media houses are reluctant to commit resources to children's content – partly due to difficulties in monetising the content, says Hall. Parents make the final decision when it comes to purchasing media content, she says.

Advertising revenue for children's content is generally poor, says Bird. He says the type of organisations that want to target children are generally not wealthy, which means they offer low rates to media houses.

"It's not necessarily a very lucrative area – children's news. I think it's easy for media companies to kind of not bother, but they need to bother, because it really is crucial for the future," says Cox.

RESPONSIBLE WRITING

Legal considerations are also a stumbling block for journalists looking to amplify the voices of children in stories, claims Witbooi. Anyone under the age of 18 is a legal minor, and the

GRAPHICS: William Brederode

media requires permission from a legal guardian to interview them and use their image. Although it can be difficult, it is important for the media to use their platform to cover stories about children, says Witbooi.

Rather than writing about what is interesting to the public, journalists should balance what is in the public interest against what is in the best interest of the child. This is the ethical tightrope that Bird believes journalists must walk when writing about children.

"The number of ethical issues that you will encounter in the reporting of children will be significant, and the harm that you can cause is very clear," says Bird.

An extra duty of care also needs to be applied when dealing with child presenters, says Cox.

However, she says that children are generally more robust than adults give them credit for.

"With Ukraine, we flew Scarlett, one of our [*FYI* presenters] who was 13 at the time, out to Poland to meet the children – the refugees that were coming over the border," says Cox.

FYI has a counsellor available for the children if they are distressed or worried about something. But so far, that has not really been necessary, says Cox.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE FUTURE

Beck believes that unless children are exposed to news content, they will likely remain on social media spaces – engaging with vlogs and blogs rather than news.

An added bonus of producing high-quality children's content is that it can build a positive brand association with a publication. This could transcend to sustained readership when they are older, says Hall.

"They know it as a part of their home. They know that they've found interesting facts in it before and then they'll hopefully grow up as a reader of this brand," she says.

Hall believes that there is currently no real media product in SA that takes news sources and decodes them for children.

While there are segments attached to adult content that children can engage with in SA media, it is important to create a product that specifically caters to children, which they can access on their own terms, says Cox.

When content is specifically tailored to children, they feel that "people have thought enough of them that they have bothered to actually create something especially for them", claims Cox.

Evidence suggests that the way a society treats its youngest people is what determines its future, says Bird.

Bird says that, according to research, good early child development is linked to lower levels of violence, higher literacy rates, more equality, better employment, and better security.

If the evidence regarding the benefit of early childhood development is so clear, Bird wonders why this is not paid nearly enough attention. ●

"CHILDREN ARE 27% OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLE, BUT THEY'RE 100% OF THE FUTURE

KIDS NEWS FIRST

The United Kingdom's (UK) leading children's newspaper is read by 2.6 million people every week.

The scope of their readership can compete with some of the UK's biggest publications, claims Nicky Cox, editor of *First News Children's Newspaper*, a weekly newspaper aimed at children between the ages of 7 and 14.

However, when Cox left her job at the British Broadcasting Corporation in 2006 to start *First News*, she says she was ridiculed by other journalists. "The adult newspapers all said that there was no market for a children's newspaper – that children weren't interested in news. And, if they were, they'd read it online," says Cox.

"But we persevered and we're still here 16 years later." Nearly half the schools in the UK are subscribed to *First News*, says Cox. An independent study conducted by the National Literacy Trust found that children making use of *First News* made faster progress in developing their literacy skills than other kids, she explains.

Cox is also the CEO of Fresh Start Media, which is the production company for *FYI*, a news segment run on Sky News which is presented by children. *FYI* was started four years ago and has been the highest-rated show on Sky News on multiple occasions, says Cox. The children of *FYI* have exceeded all expectations, Cox tells *SMF*. "We thought that it would be a lot more of us kind of spoon feeding them, and it's not at all. They're well read and interested," she says. "It really is their show that we help them with," says Cox, adding that children growing up online and in front of a camera means that they are often more comfortable in front of a camera than adults are.

The commercial success of *First News* and *FYI* is proof that children's content has marketable value, and should not be an afterthought from publications, says Cox. "Children are 27% of the world's people, but they're 100% of the future."

JACK OF ALL TRADES

Young journalists of today are carving out a career in a digital era. And to succeed in the ever-changing workplace, they are required to be multi-skilled individuals.

BY **CHELSEA BURNELL**

With the rise of the digital era in the 1990s came an increase in disinformation and distrust in journalism, according to Dr Jeanne du Toit, senior lecturer of journalism and media studies at Rhodes University. As newsroom resources have been depleted, there has been an increased need for dependable information around the globe, states Du Toit.

The survival of quality journalism is ultimately dependent on younger journalists entering the industry, and this will be an increasingly difficult task because of the expansion of online media, she says. Journalists now form only a part of the extensive ecosystem producing knowledge, instead of serving as the main providers of information, Du Toit explains.

There is now an "increased understanding of the importance of journalism", which has heightened the responsibility that young journalists have, she says. "In some ways, it's not fair, because that pressure should not be on the individual [journalism] graduates, but it should be on the [media] institutions themselves to recreate journalism properly," says Du Toit.

'JACK OF ALL TRADES'

In the past, journalists could primarily focus on the stories they wrote, whereas these days journalists entering the industry are expected to have a diverse set of skills, according to Alex Mitchley, a journalist for *News24*.

"When I started in 2012, which was not that long ago, I was a scribe. My job was to

Lwazi Maseko, journalist for *Jamlab*.
PHOTO: Supplied/Hyacinth Nhlumayo

write stories. I was not mandated to take photos or videos, or to use social media," says Mitchley. "Now that has all changed."

Working remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic allowed journalists to develop the skills required to work independently, but it also challenged them to be flexible in a working capacity, says Ané van Zyl, a journalist who started working for *Netwerk24* in January 2019.

Van Zyl says during the pandemic, she had to be more self-reliant and adapt to working from home, while also finding ways of reporting on important stories without putting her own life or the lives of others at risk.

Journalists need to have a multitude of skills to flourish in the dynamic environment of the modern journalism industry, states Van Zyl. Some of these skills include "versatility, adaptability, creativity, exceptional skills in storytelling (whether it be through video or writing) and the ability to work in high pressure environments", she says.

These days, journalists are required to be a "jack of all trades", says Mitchley. "[This] is problematic, because if you are a jack of all trades, you are a master of none."

IS LESS MORE?

Mitchley worked at a newspaper about ten years ago. At the time, the paper employed between 8 and 10 journalists full-time. Now there are only three or four, he says. But while the number of journalists has more than halved, the overall workload remains the same, he explains.

Young journalists need broad skills that will enable them to successfully submit multiple elements for a single story, but must also be able to write multiple stories at the same time, says Mitchley. If they are not equipped to do this, the result will be a "loss of quality in journalistic output", he says.

Van Zyl agrees that producing quality content, and in multiple layers, has become an important skill for journalists.

In addition to being able to write well, journalists who enter the industry will "need to have the willingness and knowledge to adapt to a more digital environment", she says.

They will also be required to have the technical skills to record "high quality content in different formats", as well as the ability to distribute it online quickly, says Van Zyl. Familiarity with the social media sphere is necessary to promote journalistic content and to make it easily accessible to the public, she adds.

NAVIGATING A CHANGING INDUSTRY

At the core of a journalist's vocation is the collection, preparation, and distribution of news, says Lwazi Maseko, a journalist for the *Journalism and Media lab (Jamlab)* at the University of the Witwatersrand. Although, from here on, the way in which journalists go about completing their job requirements will be different, she says.

"Journalists will be expected to be more innovative and forward-thinking, and find new ways of engaging with their audience," according to Maseko. Additionally, journalism professionals within the industry must also become creative in the fight against fake news that has come with social media, she says.

Alex Mitchley, journalist for *News24*.
PHOTO: Supplied/Jacques Nelles

For future journalists to be able to cope with an increased workload, and to combat the constant critique they receive, there will need to be a "revitalisation of the mentorship programme" in journalism, Mitchley believes.

"Senior journalists need to take juniors under their wings," he says. "Mentorship is a big part of ensuring that we don't lose quality journalism."

Overall, the responsibility to be guided in the journalism industry under strong mentorship lies with the young journalists themselves, according to Carla Visagie, a journalist for *Huisgenoot* who joined the newsroom at the end of 2021.

To ensure both the future success of their own journalism careers and of the

Carla Visagie, journalist for *Huisgenoot*.
PHOTO: Supplied/John Briers

"MENTORSHIP IS A BIG PART OF ENSURING THAT WE DON'T LOSE QUALITY JOURNALISM.

industry as a whole, journalists need to ensure that they gain newsroom experience, shadow professionals in the workplace, read the work of good journalists, network, and make their own contacts with people in the media, Visagie explains.

"You must go knock on doors," she says. "Make your own opportunities for yourself."

EDUCATIONAL COMPENSATION

Many universities and journalism schools have undertaken the task to ensure that the training journalism students receive will equip them in aiding a struggling media industry, according to Du Toit.

"One part of that has been that [journalism schools] have set up what is known as the "hospital model of teaching," she explains. This is a teaching structure that incorporates a practical working component along with regular journalism studies, so students are prepared for the working world, says Du Toit.

One way universities have done this is by running student publications, says Visagie. Working at a student publication will lay a solid foundation for a career in the media, she adds.

This is because, through peer-learning, students are able to bounce ideas off of each other while having the opportunity to be creative with their work, states Visagie.

By working practically, journalism students will "learn how to navigate that world, even if they can't assume there will be secure employment for them", says Du Toit. As newsrooms are different to what they used to be, universities should teach students the ability to freelance, network and create their own job opportunities, she says.

To ensure the true essence of journalism remains untouched, media organisations and schools have also started experimenting with new journalism strategies, explains Du Toit. One of these is known as participatory journalism, which she believes is the ultimate key for the survival of journalism in the future.

Dr Jeanne du Toit, senior lecturer of journalism and media studies at Rhodes University. PHOTO: Supplied/Mia Louw

Participatory journalism refers to "the shift away from the assumption that journalists are professionals who report objectively on the news for the benefit of the public", to a more socially purposive and participatory style of journalism invested in progressive social change, says Du Toit.

Through this journalistic form, participants become empowered to transform their own circumstances, she says.

WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

Due to technological advancement on a global scale, the journalism industry will have to continue with a digital approach to remain relevant, according to Maseko. "[Journalism] is now more online-based with social media platforms," she says. "Now you have to be everywhere. That's where we are heading."

Newsrooms have already begun to incorporate artificial intelligence, such as augmented reality, into the journalistic working space, opening the gateway into further journalistic experimentation, Maseko explains. With this, the human component that once formed the foundation of journalism, is at risk of being eliminated, says Mitchley.

"I think newsrooms are going to get smaller as budgets get tighter," he says. "And as the newsrooms get smaller, they cut staff compliments."

The journalism industry is dependant on readers, so if the public is suffering financially, socially or economically, then journalists will also suffer as a result, according to Visagie. "[As journalists] we are not immune to the economic circumstances," she says.

Ultimately this matter falls into the hands of the management of media houses, who have the responsibility to "figure out a way to increase profits, and maintain and create a larger newsroom", states Mitchley.

The journalist's sole duty should be reporting the truth, he says.

'GOOD JOURNALISM'

Truth telling, verification, reliability and upholding ethical standards are the basics of good journalism, according to Du Toit.

Despite financial constraints, these factors should always be at the "heart of what journalism still needs to be", she says.

For Van Zyl, practising authentic journalism also means highlighting relevant stories for a target market.

In essence, regardless of external changes, future journalists should strive to contribute towards social development, democratisation, and empowerment, Du Toit believes.

"That is ultimately what journalism is," she says."If it's not that, then it's not journalism." ●

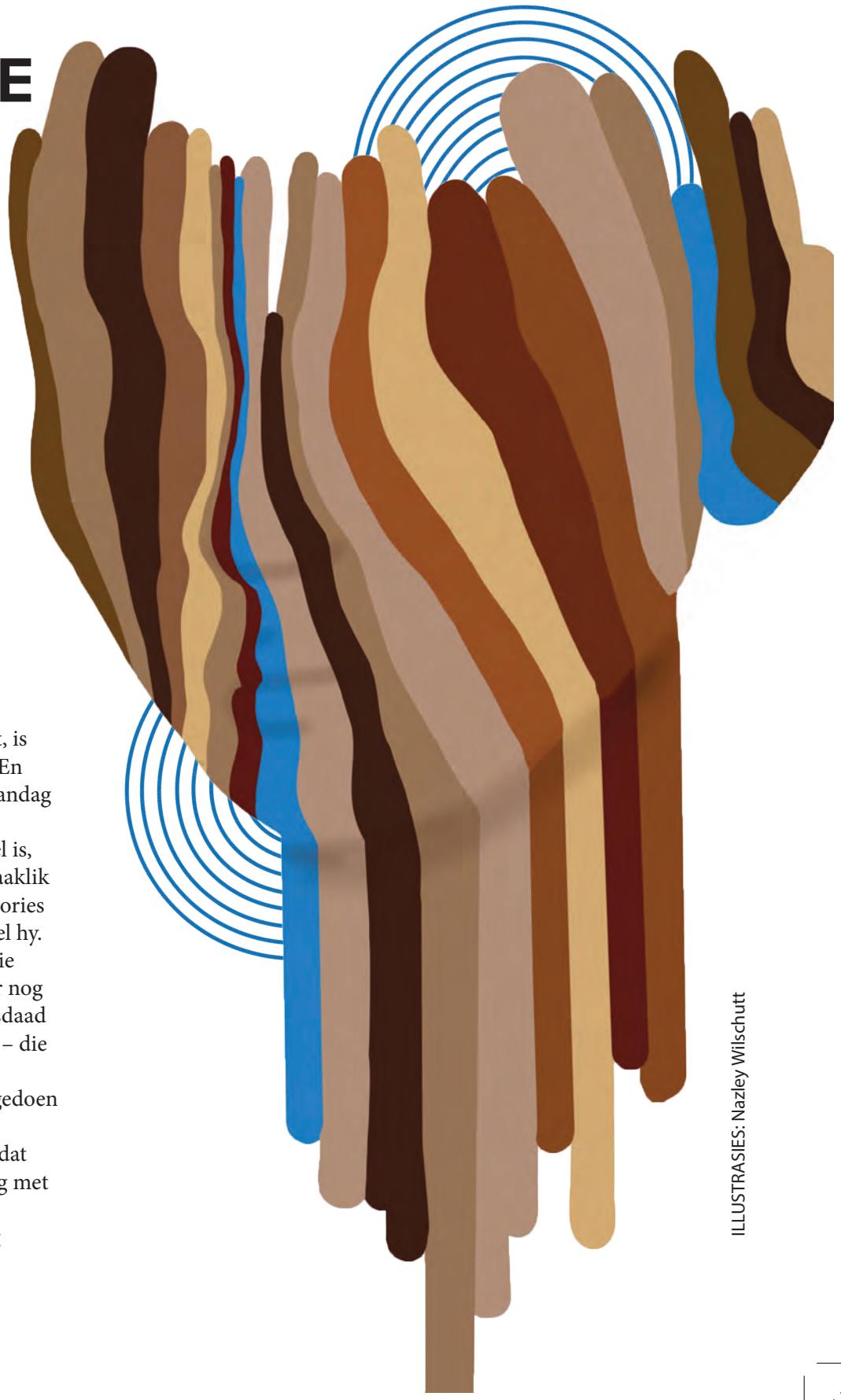
Ané van Zyl, journalist for *Netwerk24*. PHOTO: Supplied/Jaco Marais

DIVERSITEIT

SÓ VERANDER DIE GESIG VAN DIE MEDIABEDRYF

Suid-Afrikaanse nuuskantore was ’n paar dekades gelede hoofsaaklik wit en manlik, maar die gesig van dié nuuskantore is – letterlik – besig om te verander. Baie rolspelers in die bedryf meen dat daar egter steeds ruimte vir verbetering is.

DEUR **NAZLEY WILSCHUTT**



ILLUSTRASIES: Nazley Wilschutt

“Toe ek oor die 30 jaar gelede joernalistiek betree het, is Apartheid nog openlik in die werksplek toegepas. En nuuskantore is dit nie gespaar nie,” sê Neil Scott, vandag die redakteur van *Son*.

Toe hy vir die eerste keer as ’n voltydse joernalis aangestel is, is dit aan hom duidelik gemaak dat hy daar was om hoofsaaklik stories uit die Kaapse Vlakte te dek. Met ander woorde, “stories deur ’n bruin verslaggewer oor bruin gemeenskappe”, vertel hy.

“Daar was ook ’n *black African*-joernalis wat stories uit die swart townships moes dek. Behalwe vir ons twee, was daar nog net een ander bruin joernalis, ’n vrou, wat hoofsaaklik misdaad en die hof gedek het. Verder was die hele nuuskantoor wit – die meerderheid wit mans,” sê Scott.

Dinge is vandag aansienlik anders, maar daar kan meer gedoen word, veral op bestuursvlak, meen hy.

Inge Kühne, die redakteur van *Rapport*, sê die realiteit is dat daar waarskynlik steeds meer wit joernaliste in vergelyking met swart joernaliste in die nuuskantoor is.

Volgens die mees onlangse *State of the Newsroom*-verslag

wat in 2021 deur die Universiteit van die Witwatersrand (Wits) se joernalistiekdepartement saamgestel is, is daar wel 'n verandering in die aantal swart en bruin redakteurs wanneer dit vergelyk word met die stand van sake 'n paar jaar gelede.

Die verslag het na 39 van die nasionale en streekgebonde kommersiële koerante gekyk en statistieke is vanaf middel 2021 geneem. Daarvolgens het 20 swart mense verlede jaar 'n redakteurspos beklee, terwyl nege wit mense, ses bruin mense en vier Indiese mense dié posisie beklee het.

Dit is teenoor die *State of the Newsroom*-verslag van 2013 toe altesaam 24 van die 30 koerantredakteurs wat in daardie verslag opgeneem is, wit was.

Alhoewel daar intussen 'n toename in die aantal bruin en swart redakteurs was, weerspieël dié getalle egter nog nie die nasionale demografie van die land nie, lui die verslag.

"Dinge lyk beslis beter as wat dit 20 jaar terug gelyk het toe die nuuskantoor baie wit was," sê Kühne. Die nuuskantoor reflekteer volgens haar egter steeds nie die gebruikers van die medium ten volle nie.

DIVERSITEIT VAN ONSKATBARE WAARDE

Die land se sosio-politieke omgewing kan nie van die diversiteit in die nuuskantoor geskei word nie. Aangesien die land so divers is, in terme van tale, kos en ander praktyke, is dit van kritieke belang dat die nuuskantoor dié diversiteit weerspieël, meen Amos Mananyetso, redakteur van *Daily Sun*.

Mananyetso meen dat almal op die redaksie 'n bydrae kan, en behoort te lewer, om vir lesers 'n goeie prentjie te skets oor dit wat in die land aan die gebeur is.

"Ons by *Daily Sun* dek byvoorbeeld nuus vanuit al die nege provinsies. En omdat die kulturele diversiteit van hierdie provinsies groot is, moet ons verseker dat, wanneer ons wel joernaliste aanstel, hulle in staat sal wees om iets [na die nasionale tafel] te bring wat vir alle lesers van waarde sal wees," sê hy.

Mananyetso verwys byvoorbeeld na die joernaliste in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) wat gereeld stories oor die Zoeloe-koning skryf.

"Omdat ons joernaliste van KZN is, kan hulle stories oor die Zoeloe-koning met gesag skryf en ook waardering daarvoor hê. Dit word dan 'n opvoedkundige reis vir al ons lesers van die ander agt provinsies," sê Mananyetso.

Carl Thomas, 'n junior joernalis van *Netwerk24,* stem saam dat diversiteit in die nuuskantoor van kardinale belang is. Volgens hom help diversiteit dat verskillende stories vertel kan word.

"'n Diverse personeel beteken verskillende geleefde ervaringe. Dit dra by tot 'n diverse nuuslys," sê hy.

Volgens Thomas is dit belangrik en "altyd goed" vir publikasies om "elke tipe gemeenskap gehoor te laat voel".

"By *Die Burger* het ons mense wat in die Kaap bly en mense wat in die Kaapse Vlaktes bly. Ek bly in Atlantis. Ons bly tussen verskillende rasse, bou verskillende bronne en wen verskillende persone se vertroue wat bydra tot diverse stories," verduidelik Thomas. "Ek het al stories geskryf oor mense en

> **"DIVERSE PERSONEEL BETEKEN VERSKILLENDE GELEEFDE ERVARINGE. DIT DRA BY TOT 'N DIVERSE NUUSLYS.**

slagoffers van Atlantis, Darling, Sir Lowry's Pass, Mosselbaai, Kaapstad, Bonteheuwel, Kraaifontein, Delft, en selfs oor mense in die Noord-Kaap!" Thomas sê hy skryf gereeld oor 'n wye verskeidenheid onderwerpe. "In een dag het ek geskryf oor twee kinderlyke wat in Paarl-Oos en Philippi gevind is, oor 'n matrikulant van Bonteheuwel en ook kinders van Mitchells Plain wat deur 'n man gered is," sê hy.

Vir Scott is dit belangrik dat nuuskantore die samelewing weerspieël, want "dis tog waarvandaan ons nuus daagliks kom". Hy is dit eens dat joernaliste juis ook 'n groot rol daarin speel om diversiteit aan te moedig en te bevorder.

"So as daar nie diversiteit in ons nuuskantore is nie, hoe kan ons objektief oor gebeure skryf uit die diverse samelewing waarin ons ons vandag bevind?" vra Scott.

Scott gee die voorbeeld van een van hulle joernaliste, Basil Davids, wat in Robertson woon. Weens Davids se betrokkenheid in die gemeenskap is hy ingelig dat 'n vrou wat op die kerk se perseel gebly het deur die kerk uitgegooi is. Hy het toe daaroor berig, vertel Scott.

Volgens Theresa Olivier, adjunkredakteur van *Netwerk24*, verseker 'n diverse nuuskantoor meer inklusiewe inhoud. Sy meen dat dit op die lange duur sal bydra tot die lewensvatbaarheid van media-huise en -platforms.

Verder help dit om die perspektiewe van joernaliste sowel as lesers te verbreed.

"Hoe meer divers en inklusief jou nuuskantoor is, hoe beter sal jou dekking en aanbieding van al die samelewings in jou gemeenskappe wees. Met diverse nuuskantore en diverse nuusdekking kan jy vertroue by jou gehoor bou," sê Olivier.

Kay Karriem, uitvoerende hoof van Kay Karriem Media en die redakteur van *Kuier*, sê dat die bedryf aansienlik verander het wanneer dit by diversiteit kom, maar meen ook dat mense dieper moet delf en nie net na die oppervlak moet kyk nie.

"As jy net dieper delf en die korrelasie in diversiteit en besluitnemingspaaie volg, sal jy sien hoe hoër op jy gaan, hoe witter en nog manliker is dit steeds. Dit is steeds die geval – veral in Afrikaanse nuus en nuuskantore. Dit is hoofsaaklik wit," beweer Karriem.

Kühne sê dat diversiteit vir haar ongelooflik belangrik is. "Wat my betref, as jy met tieners of jongmense wil praat, het jy jongmense in jou nuuskantoor nodig. As jy met swart mense wil praat, het jy swart mense in jou nuuskantoor nodig. Ek sien dit elke dag. Jou eie belewenisse speel tog in in dit wat jy skep,"

verduidelik Kühne.

Die lesers kan van die publikasie vervreem word indien daar nie diversiteit is nie, sê Kühne.

"Hoe bly jy *connected* met die lesers se belewenisse en se leefwêreld as jy nie hulle leefwêreld reflekteer nie? As ons nie bruin verslaggewers het nie, gaan daar 'n afstand wees tussen ons en die bruin lesers. So dit is absoluut belangrik, dink ek," sê Kühne.

NUUSKANTORE IN 'N VERANDERENDE WÊRELD

Scott sê die *Son* se redaksie glo daarin dat diversiteit binne én buite hul nuuskantoor bevorder moet word.

"Hoewel ons 'n teikenmark het, weet ons dat ons 'n plig het om nuus uit alle gemeenskappe te dek, maar daar is definitief nog plek vir verbetering. Veral as dit by die opleiding – hetsy indiensopleiding of by opleidingsinstansies – van joernaliste kom, moet diversiteit by die leerplan ingesluit word," meen Scott.

Mananyetso sê dat daar altyd plek vir verbetering is. "Die enigste manier hoe ons kan weet wat en waar ons moet verbeter, is om dít wat ons doen voortdurend te evalueer," sê hy.

Die *Daily Sun* se nuuskantoor is so divers as wat jy kan kry, volgens Mananyetso.

"DINGE IS VANDAG AANSIENLIK ANDERS, MAAR DAAR KAN MEER GEDOEN WORD – VERAL OP BESTUURSVLAK.

"Ons het joernaliste en subredakteurs gehad met uiters uiteenlopende agtergronde, insluitend hul gesinsagtergrond, kwaliteit van onderwys, woonadresse, ensovoorts," sê hy.

"As jy 'n eendimensionele span het, sal jy 'n vervelige publikasie produseer wat net deur een afdeling van jou potensiële gehoor gelees sal word," meen Mananyetso.

Volgens Olivier moet nuuskantore die veranderende en diverse wêreld waarin ons vandag leef, weerspieël om te verhoed dat hulle agterbly en die gevaar loop om "uit te sterf".

OOPKOP JOERNALISTE, HOË GEHALTE

Terwyl diversiteit in nuuskantore verbeter moet word, meen Thomas dat joernaliste nie net ter wille van diversiteit aangestel moet word nie, omdat dit die gehalte van stories kan benadeel.

"Die wêreld verander elke dag. Maar met diverse joernaliste moet jy ook seker wees om oopkop joernaliste aan te stel sodat elke storie deur enige persoon met die nodige respek en deeglikheid aangepak word," sê Thomas.

Volgens Karriem, gaan dit met nuwe aanstellings by *Kuier* nie daaroor om bepaalde diversiteitsteikens te haal nie. "Jy moet die regte mens, instelling en karakter hê om ons mark te bedien," sê sy.

Kühne sê dat sy graag meer bruin verslaggewers by *Rapport* wil sien. "Daar is baie keer praktiese probleme. Een daarvan is wanneer jy jou diversiteit probeer verbeter en 'n syfer of persentasie moet probeer haal. Ek wil nie hê ons moet gaan na daai syfer van byvoorbeeld 80% swart, 10% wit en 10% bruin nie. Dit sal nie noodwendig ons lesers dien nie, want dis nie hoe ons lesersmark lyk nie," sê Kühne.

Sy meen verder dat daar in die Afrikaanse media, veral by Afrikaanse koerante, nie "'n geweldige breë basis van ervare joernaliste is wat by koerante wíl werk nie".

"Ek sien diversiteit as 'n uitkoms wat jy wil hê om jou lesers behoorlik te bedien. Dis iets waaraan jy altyd aandag moet gee en dis iets wat ek dink in die breë media aandag moet kry. Dis 'n projek waaraan almal moet werk. Dis beslis 'n projek waaraan *Rapport* voortdurend werk," sê Kühne.

ALTYD PLEK VIR VERBETERING

Samewerking is belangrik wanneer dit by diversiteit kom, meen Scott. "As almal – die joernaliste, bestuur en opleidingsinstansies – saamwerk, kan ons in die toekoms baie meer diverse nuuskantore verwag," sê hy.

Vir Mananyetso kan diversiteit net verbeter as en wanneer dit, oor die algemeen, regoor die land ook verbeter.

"Nuuskantore en baie ander instellings in die land, is 'n weerspieëling van die land. As daar geen insluiting by sport is nie, sal dit in die nuuskantore wys. As daar geen diversiteit in besighede is nie, sal daar geen in die nuuskantoor wees nie," sê Mananyetso.

Olivier voorsien dat nuuskantore in die toekoms oor groter diversiteit sal beskik.

"Lesers is nie meer net in harde nuus geïnteresseerd nie en daar word ook nie meer van joernaliste verwag om net oor harde nuus te skryf nie. Daarom het lesers toegang tot 'n verskeidenheid berigte wat veral aanlyn gevind kan word," sê Olivier.

Nuuskantore wat in die toekoms sal oorleef en groei, is nuuskantore met joernaliste wat divers is en oor verskeie vaardighede beskik, meen sy.

Vir Kühne is diversiteit iets wat joernaliste én individue moet "aanhou doen" en beter moet doen.

"Een manier om na die toekoms te kyk, is om 'n bietjie na die verlede te kyk. As jy gaan kyk waar Suid-Afrika 10 jaar gelede was, waar ons 20 jaar gelede was en waar ons nou is, dan skep dit vir my baie moed vir die toekoms," sê Kühne.

"Dit sê ons het eintlik geweldig vooruitgang gemaak en ons kan net daarop voortbou." ●

QAPHELA UMSANTSA

There is a gap in the South African mainstream media landscape – sufficient outlets in the media for South Africans who speak indigenous, African languages. From rural Eastern Cape to Limpopo, community newspapers and digital publications are trying to fill this gap by telling the stories of their communities in their mother tongue.

BY **NA'ILAH EBRAHIM**

Every month, Mbali Dhlomo drives to her hometown of Umbumbulu in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). In her car are 400 copies of the monthly issue of *Intuthuko Newspaper*, a community newspaper written in her mother tongue of isiZulu.

The week before, Dhlomo compiled, fact-checked and edited every article in the newspaper. She also did the layout and made sure it was sent to the printers on time.

In Umbumbulu, Dhlomo's arrival at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) pay point was met with excitement. She watched as people standing in the SASSA line took their copies and sat down again.

A security guard told her that people had been asking when she would arrive.

He spoke with her about a newspaper article that he had read months prior, about the locust plague in the Northern Cape at the time (March and April).

He therefore knew about the plague two months before it aired on television – all thanks to *Intuthuko Newspaper.*

'GIVING A VOICE TO THOSE UNHEARD VOICES'

Dhlomo is the editor of *Intuthuko Newspaper*, which operates in the iLembe Municipality and other semi-rural and urban areas in KZN. She also serves as the chairperson of the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP).

The association, which aims to advance the interests of grassroot publications, is home to 226 independent publications nationwide. Of these publications, 141 are written in indigenous, African languages. This is according to Dr Kate Skinner, executive director of the AIP.

"This shows that there is a need for such publications to be on the market and in circulation," says Dhlomo. People may not know about these publications because of their lack of resources which means that these community newspapers cannot advertise widely, she says.

"We need to have these publications [in indigenous African languages] in circulation because they serve a greater need in this country," says Dhlomo.

> "OUR PAPERS AT AIP SERVE THE PURPOSE OF BEING A CHANNEL OF THOSE UNHEARD VOICES.

She claims that although a majority of South Africans speak indigenous, African languages, they do not have access to a media source in national mainstream media in their mother tongue.

Out of South Africa's population of 60.6 million people, about a quarter speak isiZulu, according to Statistics South Africa.

"Our papers at AIP serve the purpose of being a channel of these unheard voices," she says.

Yet, Dhlomo could name very few mainstream isiZulu newspapers in KZN, one of them being *Isolezwe*. In the second quarter of 2022, the total circulation for *Isolezwe* was 30 197, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Isolezwe is owned by Independent Media, and has to be distributed to accommodate isiZulu-speaking individuals in the province, she adds.

Tshivenda is another language that has been "sidelined" in the mainstream media and by the government, claims Phumudzo 'Percy' Makharamedzha. He is the founder, editor and publishing editor of *Ngoho News*. Makharamedzha says that he is not aware of any other publication in the country that produces news in Tshivenda.

LEFT OUT

By relying on one dominant language in the media, the majority of South Africans are being left out, claims Tembisa Mjiba, the editor-in-chief and owner of i*Dike-lethu News,* an isiXhosa and English community newspaper in Alice, Eastern Cape.

Mjiba says that not publishing stories in traditional, African languages can lead to fake news spreading within communities.

There is a possibility of spreading misinformation when being told a story in a language you do not understand, according to Mjiba.

If you write a story about a local community and more than half of the people do not understand what it is about, they will be forced to get the facts elsewhere, says Lebogang Tlaba, group editor of *Rekord* in the Free State.

There is value in writing news in indigenous languages, says Tlaba. Thus, it is important for media companies to cater for indigenous African languages or "vernacular", he says.

"Let us try and embrace all our languages and tell our people their stories in their own mother-tongue," says Mjiba.

THE LOSS OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE

The role of *Ngoho News* and other community newspapers is not restricted to informing communities about news in their mother-tongue, says Makharamedzha.

For him, promoting and upholding the preservation of the Tshivenda language and culture forms part of the business plan of *Ngoho News*.

With most people speaking and being taught in English, there is a fear that the Tshivenda language and culture will die out, says Makharamedzha. These days, many children born in Tshivenda households cannot speak the language with their grandparents, he claims.

There is a clear lack of news in Tshivenda, especially on television, he says. The SABC's Channel 2 has a 30 minute slot for either Tshivenda or Xitsonga news, five times a week, according to the channel's television schedule.

This is something which worries Makharamedzha. The preservation of the Tshivenda language and culture is not looking bright, he says.

"The truth is, nowadays, we are using a different language [English]," says Mjiba.

"If we maintain the trend our culture is going down the drain, our language is going down the drain. The true meaning of our language is where we are lacking."

Mjiba says she has felt the consequences of this trend in her own family.

Mjiba recalls speaking to her son in isiXhosa and explaining that she was going to an interview, but he did not understand. "He only knows [the English word for] 'interview'. Can you see that he is losing his [isiXhosa] identity?"

"We are losing our identity bit by bit," she claims.

THERE ARE STRUGGLES BUT THERE IS PASSION

"If it was up to me, I would say that every single community should have their own paper in their own language," says Anton van Zyl, publisher of the *Limpopo Mirror* – a weekly, English publication.

Van Zyl believes this would ensure that newspapers speak to their readers in a way they can clearly understand. "You communicate better and you can also have better feedback," he says.

Although the newspaper is predominantly English, the publication has Tshivenda and Xitsonga legal notices and advertising, said Van Zyl.

Costs are a major concern when it comes to printing papers in indigenous, African languages, he says. Printing costs account for 40% of the *Limpopo Mirror's* expenses after the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Van Zyl.

The newspaper prints 7 500 copies weekly and has a readership of between 40 000 and 50 000 people, he says.

The *Limpopo Mirror* cannot currently afford to have journalists and sub-editors for articles in indigenous, African languages, says Van Zyl, but he hopes the newspaper can publish in Tshivenda in the future.

"In an ideal world, people should have access to journalism in their own language. But, in the world we live in now, publishers battle to find a model that pays just for basic journalism – even in an English medium," he says.

Surviving as a community newspaper and publisher is difficult, says Makharamedzha. *Ngoho News* has struggled to find funding from businesses and government, he says.

"Sometimes you even think about throwing in the towel," he says.

When looking at the new generation who barely speak Tshivenda, Makharamedzha admits that it makes him question whether *Ngoho News* will be financially sustainable going forward.

"We need [the new generation] to buy newspapers so that we can also get advertising," he says. Businesses want to advertise in newspapers that are going to sell, instead of stay on the shelf, he adds.

Makharamedzha knows that if he throws in the towel, his community won't be able to read news in their own language any longer. So he continues with *Ngoho News,* because of his passion for journalism, and the need to preserve the Tshivenda language within his community.

> **"IN AN IDEAL WORLD – PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO JOURNALISM IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE**

SERVING A GREATER NEED

Dhlomo remains committed to her publication because she believes that there is a "greater need" for publications such as *Intuthuko Newspaper*.

"We are creating a platform for people to listen, for people to talk. People do write back [and] they send SMSes about what they have read in the newspaper. Even if it's just one comment or 10 comments, it makes a huge difference because it means people are reading the publication," says Dhlomo.

Mjiba explains that she enjoys hearing people discuss *iDike-lethu News* in the supermarket. "Our people [in Amathole District] want to see themselves and read the newspapers in their own language," says Mjiba. "I know they appreciate the newspaper and they even call us to give us news. They email. They write to us. We do get support."

Mjiba says she and her team are not producing the newspaper for money. "We are doing this because we love it. We love our job," Mjiba says.

Despite the fact that many publications closed down during the Covid-19 pandemic, community newspapers like *Intuthuko Newspaper* have survived, says Dhlomo.

"The question is: Why? And my response to that is that we have always operated from a point of disadvantage or shortage," says Dhlomo. A key to *Intuthuko Newspaper's* survival is the fact that the publication has always operated from a limited resources point of view, she explains.

While there might be a lack of news available in indigenous, African languages currently, Mjiba hopes that this will change in the future.

"If we can manage to get the much-needed support and promote [and preserve] our languages, we can go far," says Mjiba.

For Dhlomo, meeting the security guard in Umbumbulu gives her hope for the future of *Intuthuko Newspaper*.

"That security guard, for me, was the cherry on top," says Dhlomo. "The type of articles that we feature, talks to those people who actually read, and that security guard proved to me that *Intuthuko* is on the right track." ●

GRAPHICS: Na'ilah Ebrahim

PRESERVING IN THE BELLY

South Africa's young, up-and-coming journalists will play a crucial role in re-establishing a healthier working culture for the future of journalism, say mental health professionals. The increasing pressure from shrinking newsrooms means that the journalism industry needs to make the psychological wellness of journalists imperative.

BY **JESSICA HILLIER**

With 15 years of media industry experience under her belt, Jana van der Merwe, investigative editor at *Netwerk24*, calls the newsroom "a beast of its own".

Van der Merwe says that, in her experience, while exciting and engaging, the newsroom is an environment which fosters extreme stress.

An example of this is the fact that a journalist may receive backlash and threats from the public after writing a controversial story, Van der Merwe says. Additionally, South African journalists are often exposed to "horrific crime scenes", are dealing with unreasonable managerial expectations, and face the pressure of deadlines, she adds.

Like Van der Merwe, Cassey Chambers, operations director of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), refers to the media industry as a beast.

In a job as stressful as being a journalist, Chambers says South African newsrooms are performing reactively instead of acting to preserve journalists' mental health.

MORE THAN *JUST* MENTAL HEALTH

"When you're looking at preserving, you're trying to avoid trauma [and] you're trying to avoid stress," says Chambers, adding that the nature of the "beast" that

MENTAL HEALTH OF THE BEAST

is the corporate world, often means that stress and trauma are unavoidable parts of the job.

"You're often reporting on really heavy, traumatising stuff," says Chambers. Preserving one's mental health would entail not reporting on such stories, which is against the nature of the business, she says.

Understanding mental health holistically is complex, as the needs of individual human beings differ vastly from one another, says Chambers. But, being mentally healthy is a prerequisite to being able to perform well at any job, not just as a journalist, she adds.

There is no "one size fits all" approach regarding how a newsroom should respond to matters relating to mental health, says Chambers.

"Mental health is not just your mental state – it's also your behavioural and your emotional [state]," says Lucinda Valentine, a registered social worker in private practice.

Valentine emphasises the importance of mental health specialists, such as social workers, in assessing the holistic nature of mental health intervention. In the field of journalism, considerations such as a journalist's work and home environment, and the stressors and traumas they are subjected to regularly, must be factored into their mental health assessment.

In terms of maintaining good mental health, "there's a corporate responsibility and there's an individual responsibility", says Valentine.

It is the responsibility of corporate environments to provide supportive mental health resources to their employees, and it is the responsibility of the individual journalist to actually utilise the resources provided, says Freddie van Rensburg, the in-house counsellor at *Daily Maverick* (*DM*).

ARE NEWSROOMS DOING ENOUGH?

"People who utilise the service of journalists, can do, and need to do, a hell of a lot more to support their journalists," says Van Rensburg.

Karabo Mafolo, a former journalist at *DM* and now public relations account executive for Hook, Line & Sinker digital agency, says her editor at *DM* used to push staff to take days off to tend to their mental health. Having Van Rensburg available for debrief sessions was "amazing", says Mafolo.

Van der Merwe also believes that Media24 does a sufficient job of providing its employees with mental health services, which are offered for free and advertised through awareness campaigns.

However, the attitude that the middle management of a company holds toward the preservation and maintenance of mental health plays a massive role in how seriously it is taken, says Van der Merwe.

This also affects what systems, if any, are put into place, she says.Van Rensburg and Van der Merwe both assert that for the future of journalism in SA to be successful, newsrooms need to take the mental health of journalists far more seriously.

"I think more can be done to support them, and I think more can be done to raise their awareness of the support offered, and I think more can be done to create a space where journalists feel comfortable to take up that support," says Van Rensburg.

> **Knowing your own capacity comes from a place of strength.**

By nature, the relationship between employees and employers in any work environment is exploitative, says Van Rensburg.

"It sounds awfully dark. It sounds like the industrial revolution," he says. "But it's literally still like that. Because we're looking at a company who wants to achieve the maximum output from every single person working there, at the minimal price."

He adds that in order for newsrooms to become truly successful environments,

ILLUSTRATION: Jessica Hillier

journalists' employers "have to accept that they are dealing with human beings. They are not dealing with machines."

What should newsrooms do better? "Everything," says Van Rensburg.

In early 2021, SADAG collaborated with the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) to establish a sub-committee which focuses on the mental health and well-being of South African journalists.

Chambers says that while the establishment of this task team was incredibly positive and made her hopeful for the future of how the media industry deals with the mental wellness of journalists, it was merely "a step in the right direction".

While Chambers is optimistic that some newsrooms across the country have begun to offer mental health care services and skills programmes, she concurs that this does not mean much if the services being provided are not utilised.

"The harsh reality, however, is that the newsroom is a beast of its own, and many journalists don't make use of these services as often as they should, if at all," says Van der Merwe.

Awareness needs to transpire into action, and individuals need to be willing to be booked into therapy, says Valentine.

"But, as South Africans we are quite hardcore, and we just want to get on with it. So we neglect ourselves and we don't invest in our mental health to the point where we're breaking down completely and can't hold our jobs – or are suicidal," she says.

Chambers says more needs to be done to increase mental health interventions at workplaces. "To make it okay to talk about these things, and to normalise that getting help is a good thing," she says.

Without much dispute from mental health professionals, it becomes evident that the culture of the newsroom is overdue for change.

STOP SUFFERING IN SILENCE

In SA and across the world, specialists have noticed that there is very poor help-seeking behaviour among journalists, says Chambers.

Research conducted by the Journal of Mental Health found that globally, journalists are more likely to rely on informal support networks, such as family and friends, than to seek professional help, and that they are generally hesitant to seek "managerial or organisationally sponsored support".

Of the various factors which influence journalists' lack of engagement in actively seeking help, Van der Merwe says time, stigmatisation, and the pressure to perform at a high standard influence and exacerbate the enormous pressure journalists operate under daily.

Van der Merwe reckons that the 'beast-like' newsroom creates the impression that there is simply not enough time in the day to sit down and talk about mental health.

"We are always very busy and then you put it off," says Van der Merwe. She explains that when it comes to asking for help, some journalists are afraid of being seen as weak, while others are not aware "of the red flags" that they may need help.

However, this does not have to be the case, says Chambers.

"Young journalists have such a power in changing what this new newsroom culture will look like, and they are integral role players in making mental health a priority," says Chambers.

Van Rensburg believes that human nature convinces journalists that they can tackle things on their own, but they forget that operating as a "pack" is essential for human survival.

"We think that by asking for help we are weak, and that's a culture that we are not going to change overnight," says Van Rensburg. "All we can do is make sure that the journalists know that their responsibility is to take the opportunity that is presented to them."

Chambers says that, in her experience, the culture created in newsroom environments is one where dismissing mental health for the sake of being "tough" is not unusual.

"You're going to work long hours. You're not going to sleep. You have to do this, and it is what it is. Pull up your socks and get on with it. This is how we were taught. It's tough, but toughen up," she says.

But this mentality is completely burning journalists out, says Chambers. "How do we change that? Because it's absolutely not okay. We have a lot of people who are simply not coping."

TAMING THE BEAST

Van Rensburg's solution to this issue lies in the re-establishment of firm boundaries, one of which is sticking to the terms of your employment contract.

"I believe a lot of journalists experienced burnout following Covid as the shift to working from home erased a lot of boundaries," says Van der Merwe.

Van Rensburg agrees, adding that the current competitive conditions of the newsroom make it difficult to navigate these boundaries, which creates the potential scenario where journalists "sell their souls for a paycheck".

"When we come from a place of insecurity and fear, we start working overtime, and we do more than what we are supposed to do, creating the picture for the manager that we've got things under control," says Van Rensburg.

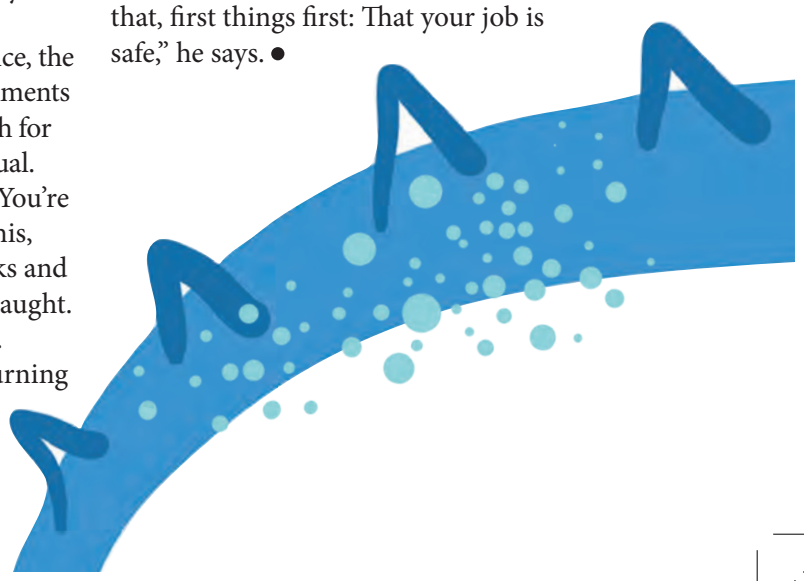
Knowing your own capacity comes from a place of strength, he says.

To him this relates to being able to say: "I know who I am. I know what I'm worth. I know what I'm willing to do for the paycheck I earn at the end of the month."

"That's incredibly important," he says.

Furthermore, Van Rensburg stresses that the onus is on media companies to truly emphasise that they will honour the agreements stipulated in their employment contracts, and not push their employees to overexert themselves out of fear of losing their jobs.

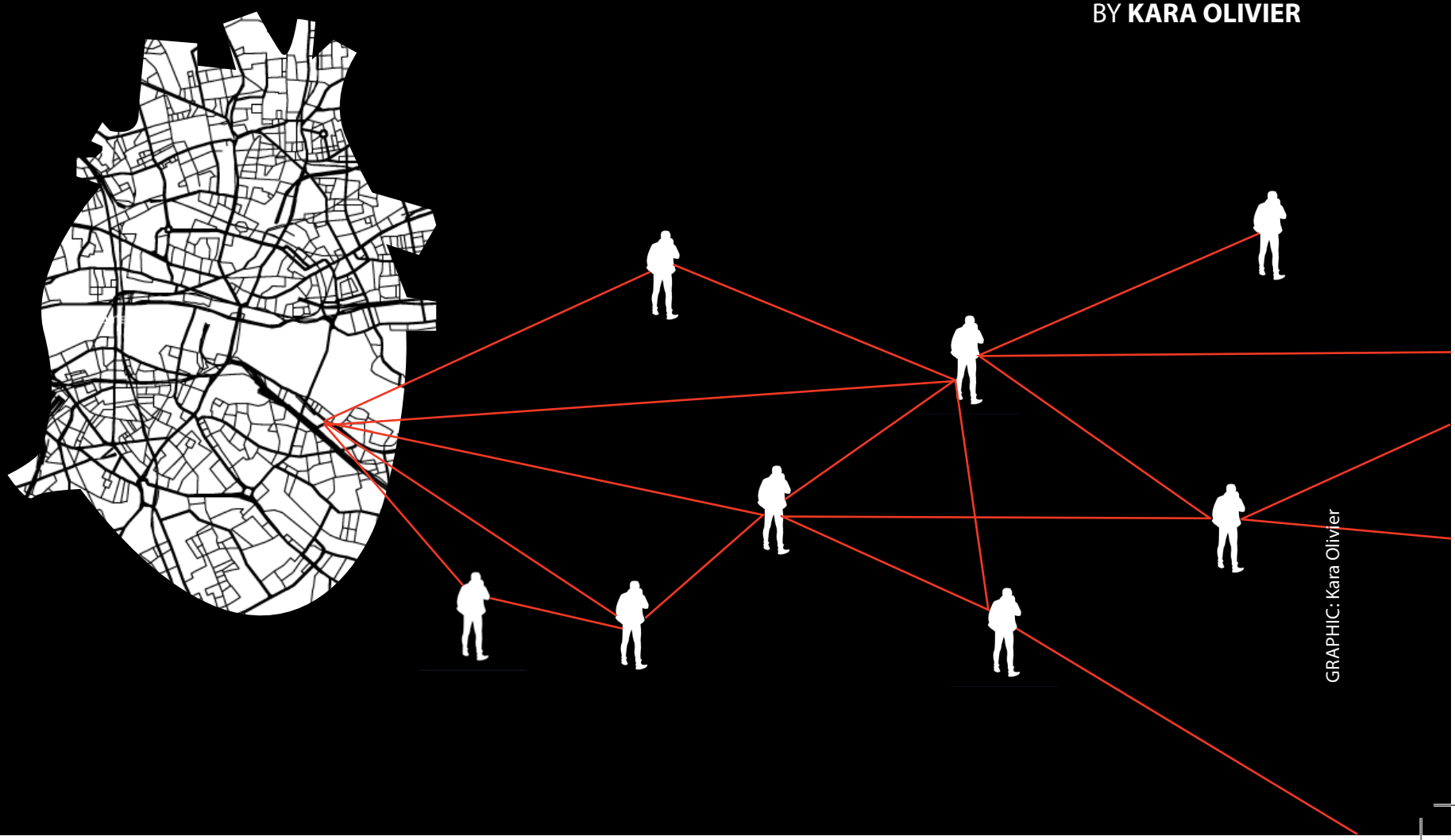
"The [news industry] needs to make their staff feel safe. And that safety implies that, first things first: That your job is safe," he says. ●



DIASPORA

Despite an increasing number of South Africans crossing national borders to live and work in other countries, there remains a vested interest in locally produced news content amongst them. This growing cohort of transplanted citizens has presented itself to the South African media as a novel demographic, and yet remains largely unexplored.

BY **KARA OLIVIER**



GRAPHIC: Kara Olivier

It's half past five on a Friday afternoon in Mbombela, and Irma Green, the editor of *Saffa Mag*, is doing a final read-through of the magazine's fifth edition. Once published, the interactive digital magazine will appear worldwide almost instantly.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic Ocean in San Francisco, 17 152 km away, Henriette Botha has just started her day. As part of her morning routine she spends a few minutes scrolling through Instagram, checking South African digital news platforms for updates to the loadshedding schedule.

Her parents live in Pretoria and she has found it "tough negotiating the loadshedding schedules and time zone differences", when trying to call home via Zoom, she explains.

The last thing Henriette does before heading to work is open the latest edition of *Saffa Mag*, where she pages to their advertisement section looking for the closest store selling biltong.

"It's the little things you miss when you are over here," she says.

A NOVEL DEMOGRAPHIC

Henriette, who has been living and working in the United States (US) since January 2021, is one of the roughly 915 000 South Africans living and working abroad, according to data collected by the Statista Research Department in 2020.

More than 247 000 South African emigrants had settled in the United Kingdom (UK) by 2020, while the second and third largest cohorts exist in Australia and the US, with nearly 200 000 and more than 117 000 emmigrants respectively, according to Statista.

"There is definitely a small tradition of South African communities maintaining interest in South African content," says Corrie Botha, a marketing project manager originally from Vanderbijlpark. He co-hosts the podcast, *Ons Vir Jou*, from his apartment in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Botha and his business partner Eduan Kruger started the podcast in 2021 after meeting through a mutual connection. Kruger, originally from Mbombela, now lives in Woerden, Netherlands, where he works as a real estate consultant.

They recognised the need for a platform where South Africans could discuss South African news and get credible emigration advice and information, says Kruger. The podcast gained popularity after only a few episodes, he adds.

Ons vir Jou has reached over 2 000 listeners in 38 countries since its inception, according to Botha.

However, only time will tell whether local content for South Africans living abroad is a demographic worth investing in, according to Henning Neethling, chief financial officer at Sky News Australia.

"You would have to consider whether there is sufficient growth in the number of South Africans migrating and working abroad, and what the overall trend of their news consumption is," says Neethling.

ANCHORS OF CONNECTION

"I think the culture you grow up in runs much deeper than what we all would like to admit," says Neethling.

Neethling, who grew up on a farm in the southern Free State, moved to Sydney, Australia in 2008 to pursue a job opportunity. He says he still feels a "level of connection" when meeting other Afrikaans-speaking South Africans abroad.

"Remember that for people who emigrate [out of SA] – it's not easy. It looks very idyllic and it sounds wonderful and we all think we leave our troubles behind when we leave, but it is a very emotional and financially taxing journey for a lot of people," says Green.

Green, who is also the national group editor for Caxton Local Newspapers, has been running *Saffa Mag's* multi-continental editorial team from SA since 2021.

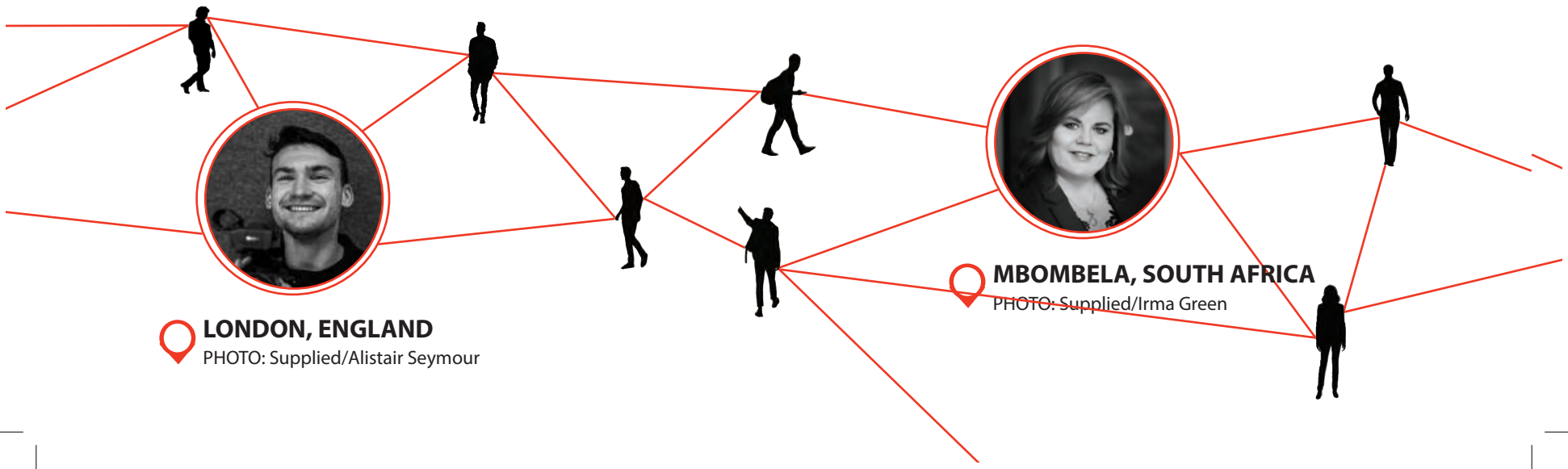
"[Emigrating] is less about wanting to leave and more about wanting to go," says Alistair Seymour, a production coordinator for Flux Broadcasting. Seymour moved to London, England in April 2022 to pursue a career in broadcasting.

Many of his peers consider returning to SA in the long run, says Seymour. If publications invest in content that is geared towards emigrants, they might remain loyal readers even if they return to SA, he explains.

LOCAL CONTENT ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

In September 2022, approximately 11% of *Netwerk24's* site traffic originated outside South Africa's borders, says Madelein Venter, national marketing manager at *Netwerk24*.

The US, Namibia, the UK, Australia and Norway are the



> **THE CULTURE YOU GROW UP IN RUNS MUCH DEEPER THAN WHAT WE ALL WOULD LIKE TO ADMIT.**

countries who generate most of *Netwerk24's* page visits outside of South Africa, says Venter. Whilst this figure includes both readers who have emigrated and those who are merely out of SA temporarily, it does point towards a wide-spread audience, she adds.

In line with this, approximately 10% of *Daily Maverick*'s 9 million unique monthly users originate outside South Africa, says Alet Law, audience development manager at *Daily Maverick*.

The publication's international audience has grown in step with its South African counterpart, according to Law. There is a great need for South Africans to connect with their roots, and South African media is one way to foster that connection, says Green.

Eduan Roos, deputy head of news at New Zealand Media and Entertainment, moved his family to New Zealand in 2016, shortly before the birth of his twins, with the hope of providing them with a better future, he says.

They now live in a semi-rural district north of Auckland and "it's chock-a-block full of South African expats and almost everyone knows each other", says Roos. "South Africans, and happenings in the country – like politics, sport, friends, family – all form some part of our conversations," he says.

Despite having been in New Zealand for almost six years, Roos remains a "news junkie" and still "has one foot firmly in SA", he says. "I try to stay on top of new and current affairs in SA and consume content daily – primarily from *News24* and *Netwerk24*."

The majority of South Africans, to some degree, follow the social media accounts of South African news organisations, even if they do not frequent their traditional news platforms, says Seymour.

A POTHOLE IN THE ROAD

Digital news sites are increasingly reliant on subscription-based models and this can be "somewhat of a deterrent" to South Africans living abroad, according to Roos. This means that much of the news content from these sites is consumed through social media, he explains.

In addition, not all topics resonate with emigrated South Africans, says Roos. However, "the latest visa or immigration changes, travel restrictions, house prices, taxation tweaks, migration numbers and destinations, and crime remain hot-button topics", he says.

"The time difference between the countries could be another obstacle," says Roos. Some news sites are "dead" overnight in SA, while readers on the other side of the globe are in their daytime content consumption windows, he explains.

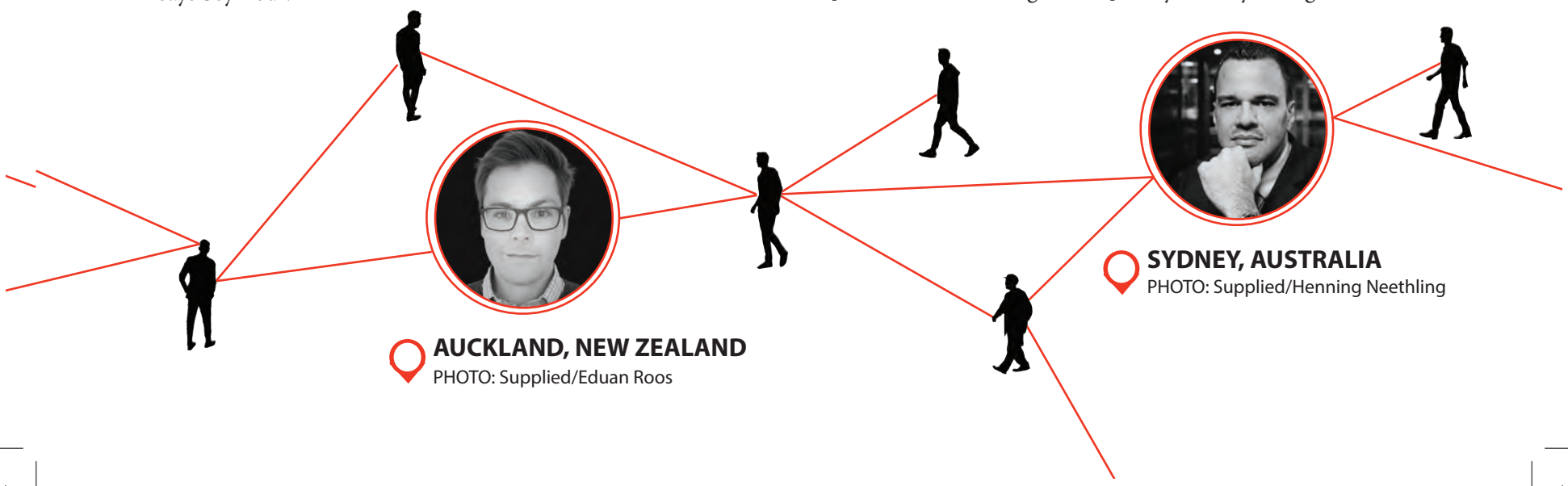
Producing content for South Africans living abroad can be logistically challenging despite sources being very eager to engage, says Green. "When our work day ends, theirs starts."

STRIKING A BALANCE

SA's news cycle is "super dense" compared to other countries, according to Seymour.

"People like to look down on SA because the news that comes out of there is mostly negative, like the country is constantly falling apart," he claims. Seymour believes that constructive journalism is the key to maintaining a vested interest among South African emigrants.

"If something amazing happens, it's almost like such a shock for [South Africans living abroad]. They literally can't get their



AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND
PHOTO: Supplied/Eduan Roos

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
PHOTO: Supplied/Henning Neethling

> **YOU CAN NEVER CUT THE UMBILICAL CORD WITH THE COUNTRY YOU COME FROM.**

heads around it," says Seymour. "Bad news is what creates sensation", and that sensation is often utilised to drive likes and draw readers to the story, according to Kruger.

However, the key to engaging with South African demographics abroad in the future is striking a balance between hard-hitting journalism and the more positive news stories, according to Liesel Pienaar, the editor of Kuberkuier, a section in *Sarie* magazine.

The section, which is also published on *Sarie's* website, focuses on telling the success stories of South Africans living and working overseas and is one of the magazine's most popular sections, according to Pienaar.

"Especially after Covid-19, people yearn for positivity in their lives," she says.

A GAP IN THE MARKET

There is a restricted amount of information available for South Africans about their home country and fellow compatriots when they are in the US, says Green.

Saffa Mag was born out of a need for connection, a lack of reliable practical advice, and to promote its business partner, the South African Chamber of Commerce in the US, according to Green.

The majority of the magazine's readers are South Africans who are living in the US or are actively looking to make the move overseas, says Green.

"A lot of people struggle with immigration issues like opening a bank account or applying for citizenship, and the implications that surround them," says Green. *Saffa Mag's* targeted, interactive advertising connects South Africans directly with specific services and products tailored to their needs as emigrants, she adds.

The South African Chamber of Commerce in the UK recently contacted *Saffa Mag* about the possibility of expanding to the UK, says Green. "There is clearly a need for this type of content," she says.

Although Neethling no longer actively consumes South African news, he believes there are certain journalism beats, like sports journalism, that pose a potential market for the South African media to explore.

"Nothing makes me feel more proud to be a South African than when our athletes perform on the world stage," he says.

Catering content to South Africans abroad gives the platform a strong hook, and although readership might take a while to increase, they will eventually start looking at the other content on offer as well, according to Kruger.

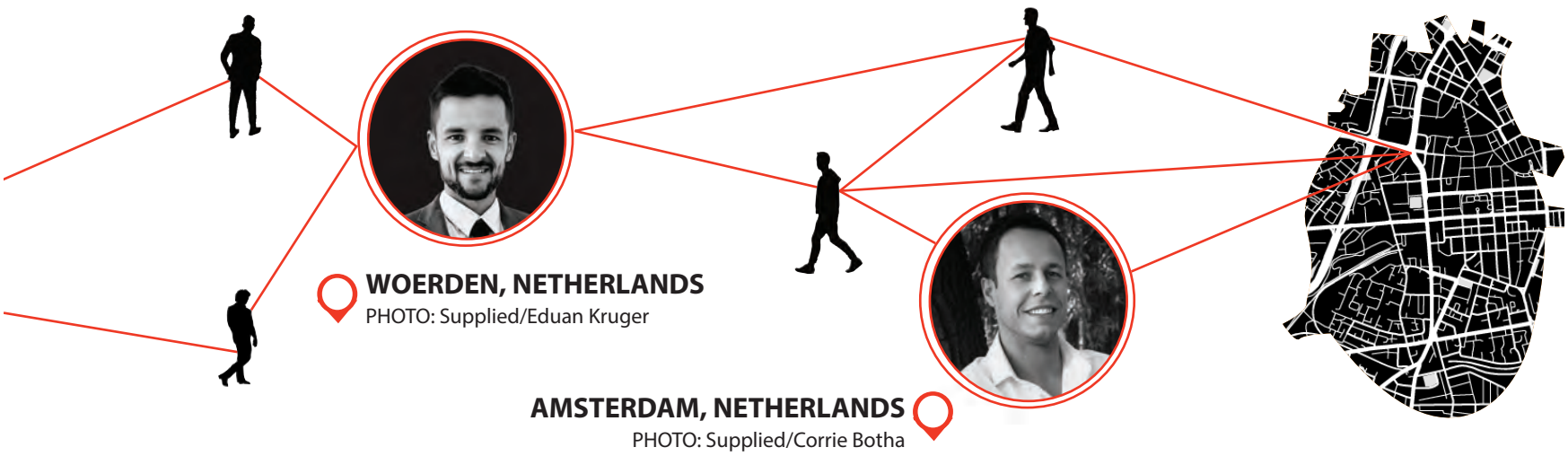
"The moment you read that content you also read the next page and the next," he says.

GROWING THE GLOBAL NETWORK

"What you offer to readers in other countries needs to make them feel [like they are] at home," says Green. Publications like *Saffa Mag* have the potential to become local publications that cross continents by offering readers accessible hyper-local content across the globe, she explains.

The moment South Africans cross borders they tend to form connections with one another, even though they have different backgrounds and might not have come across each other otherwise, says Green. "[South Africans] want to connect to their roots."

Strong local journalism builds social cohesion and encourages engagement from South African citizens who may live in other countries but still have a role to play in South African communities, claims Green. "You can never cut the umbilical cord with the country you come from. You can move away but it remains rooted in you," she says. ●



WOERDEN, NETHERLANDS
PHOTO: Supplied/Eduan Kruger

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS
PHOTO: Supplied/Corrie Botha

METHODS & MEDIUMS

STEP UP OR STEP OUT. WITH THE RAPID AND CONSTANT DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY, THE MEDIA INDUSTRY HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO KEEP UP. THE FUTURE OF THE MEDIA WILL BE DEPENDENT ON ITS ABILITY TO INCORPORATE CONTENT INTO NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND PLATFORMS.

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INFLUENCERS WHO INFORM

The growth of social media and its presence in our daily lives has long been a hot topic. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok keep us entertained and connected with others. The scope of content is endless, and news has become part of the infinite scroll.

BY **NAKISHKA SKRIKER**

The increased digitalisation of content has made news more accessible. News is quite literally at our fingertips – provided we have a device that can access the internet. Major publications have taken advantage of the online space to publish news instantly, but independent content creators have also jumped on the bandwagon.

"Everyone can share news," says Anton Harber, adjunct professor of journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand. Harber is also the executive director of the Campaign for Free Expression, a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and promoting free speech.

"Citizens have always produced or engaged with media," says Harber. However, he considers this "unfiltered and unprocessed communication", instead of journalism.

Harber defines a journalist as someone who selects, gathers and processes news (including verification, contextualisation and explanation) to meet professional and ethical standards. He also expects journalism to be presented in a way that is "useful for those who wish to be active and engaged citizens".

MAKING IT CLICK

Kaitlin Rawson is a Johannesburg-based content creator and tutor. Rawson has over 40 000 followers on her news-based TikTok account and over a million likes. She regularly posts videos covering South African politics and social justice issues.

Many people prefer to get their news in video format, says Rawson. Hearing someone speak can be a more digestible way of consuming news, rather than having to seek it out and read through it, she says.

TikTok's algorithm and app design means that people who aren't necessarily looking for news may stumble across Rawson's videos on the TikTok 'For You' page, where they are

Kaitlin Rawson. PHOTO: Instagram/Kaitlin Rawson
GRAPHIC: Nakishka Skriker

recommended videos. "They don't necessarily have to go looking for it," says Rawson. "It's kind of right there in front of them."

Christian Maidman, a Capetonian content creator with over 55 000 followers on TikTok, says the algorithm makes it "very easy to grow fast if your content is good".

"In the past few years I've started a number of businesses, one of which being a news publication called *Daily Bagel*," he says.

This publication sent out a daily newsletter that briefly summarised South African-related news, he says. To further promote the publication, Maidman created his TikTok account to summarise news stories. Although he chose to stop the publication in 2021 to pursue different business interests, he kept the TikTok account going due to its growing popularity.

Maidman's account is dedicated to delivering "local news content in a way that hasn't been done yet", he says. He claims that no major South African publications have taken advantage of TikTok's platform. At the time of publication, news publications such as *Daily Maverick, Mail & Guardian* and *News24* had no verified TikTok accounts.

"For now, we are consolidating our already growing audience and we do not yet see a big enough return on investment from social media to expand our efforts there," says Alet Law, the audience development manager for *Daily Maverick*.

Seeing the gap, Maidman has dedicated his account to delivering news in a way that is both informative and entertaining through short but comprehensive videos.

Maidman says he prioritises accuracy over urgency, which sets him apart from traditional fast-paced journalists. "I wait a day before reporting on a new news story," he says. "I prefer to be a day late with reinforced confirmation that the story is true."

Rawson creates content for "people who want to be informed, but don't necessarily have the time to go and read and do in-depth research", she says. Thus, she has taken on the task of doing the research and packaging news content in a more accessible way, she explains.

CONTENT THAT CONTRIBUTES

News content creators on social media may have "the opportunity to connect with an audience that traditional journalism doesn't connect with as much", says Tamsin Metelerkamp, a journalist at *Daily Maverick*.

"There are many routes into journalism," she says. "I don't think we should gatekeep the information sharing space."

Daily Maverick has invested in and built their reputation on credible, trustworthy, long form journalism – which does not come cheaply or quickly, says Law.

"That said, the more independent voices there are, the better for our country's democracy, and we would welcome more of these in the news media instead of viewing them as competition," she says.

Maidman does not consider himself a journalist. "Not for a second," he says. "Most of them work harder than I ever could."

However, he feels that not everyone is suited for news content creation. Firstly, he says, one must be able to understand complex news topics well enough to be able to explain them in easy and comprehensible ways. Secondly, "posting consistent content is actually more difficult than it seems," says Maidman.

"Most importantly, one must be able to leave their opinions at the door when covering news stories," he says.

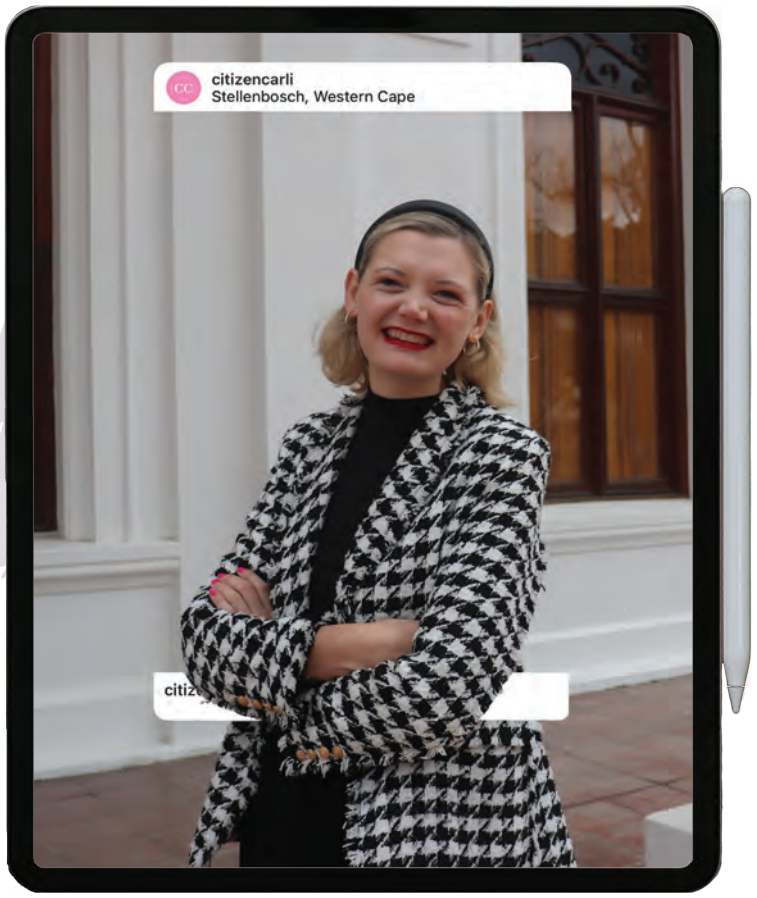
Carli van Wyk is a ward councillor and mayoral committee member for planning in the Stellenbosch Municipality. She creates news content on her Instagram account, @citizencarli, with the aim of empowering local citizens through information.

"I try to, where there is news, simplify or create a platform where people can engage with the topics," she says.

Often, people aren't sure where to start to find out what a news story is about, she says. Therefore, she tries to do weekly news updates on her Instagram stories. She also unpacks more complex news stories on her account.

Van Wyk does not think of herself as a journalist, but as a "contributor" to the media. However, unlike Maidman, she believes that sharing her opinion is part of her unique offering as a news content creator.

"I am aligned with a political party," says Van Wyk, acknowledging that this entails that she has certain biases. However, she asserts that her account is not strictly a news



Carli van Wyk. PHOTO: Nakishka Skriker
GRAPHIC: Nakishka Skriker

> **“I DON’T THINK WE SHOULD *GATEKEEP* THE INFORMATION SHARING SPACE.**

platform.“It’s a platform where I share my ideas,” she says. “I try – with most of the news I share – to say: ‘This is the news. Share your opinion.’”

There is a notion that politicians are disconnected from people, says Van Wyk. As someone in local government, Van Wyk aims to make politics more accessible through her content.

Rawson considers herself a journalist in the sense that she attempts to hold herself up to the ethical standards expected of one. She shares her own perspectives on issues, but makes sure to be clear about whether she is speaking from a “news perspective” or in a personal capacity, she states.

However, Rawson feels that even when she is not sharing her personal opinions, delivering content through a video format makes people more critical of her.

“Even when it’s not necessarily sharing my personal opinion on something, it’s still my face, [and] it’s still my voice,” she says.

“At the moment, I think a lot of my content still comes across as quite controversial,” says Rawson. “I think people always view politics, and especially social justice issues, as somewhat controversial.”

HOLDING YOUR ACCOUNT TO ACCOUNT

Rawson can recall a few occasions in which she has misspoken on her account, or published a video without checking it thoroughly enough. In one instance, she recalls uploading a video, and quickly noticing that she had made a mistake.

“I deleted the video, and then I re-uploaded a new version, essentially of that video, where I corrected what I’d said,” she explains.

In other instances, she has left inaccurate videos up to allow for context and utilised the TikTok ‘stitch’ feature to add onto a previous video with a follow-up video, explaining why she may have misspoken.

Rawson produces all of her content independently, without the support of an editorial team or corporation, she states.

Despite this, she feels that she is often held to the same standards, and sometimes even higher standards.

It’s easy to criticise someone in a TikTok comment section, says Rawson, adding that journalists writing articles online are not necessarily as vulnerable to negative commentary.

“I do get my fair share of hate comments, and it is hard not to take it personally sometimes,” she says. “I do try and remind myself that I don’t have to take the opinions of other people on board if they’re not an opinion that I value.”

Rawson is, however, open to constructive criticism from experts in the field and those who are knowledgeable on the topics she covers.

Maidman hasn’t yet been in the position where he has needed to issue a correction, but he isn’t too concerned about this occurring in the future, he says.

“I think owning up to a mistake and ‘righting a wrong’ would only further push the point to my audience that I care about the truth,” he says.

TERMS & CONDITIONS APPLY

Traditionally, journalists are held to a certain ethical standard, and abide by certain codes of conduct, such as the Press Code, says Metelerkamp. With online news content creators, it might be difficult to enforce the same standards, she says.

“I think it would be very difficult to create mechanisms of accountability within those spaces,” she adds.

However, people engaging with news content creators should “approach it in the same way that they use traditional news media”, says Metelerkamp. This means not simply taking news at face value, she explains.

News content creators have a place in the media landscape, says Metelerkamp. “It might be a while before we understand where that place is and how to regulate it, but they definitely add value.”

Rawson feels that it would be beneficial to have a regulatory board in place, though regulation wouldn’t be as big of a concern if social media platforms had more effective moderation.

This would prevent people from spreading blatantly false information, she says.

“Social media is a powerful tool for journalists but it is also a powerful tool for disinformation agents,” says Harber. “In the end, it is only a tool and it depends how one uses it.”

Social media has changed the way we produce and consume news in both positive and negative ways, he says. “We can only hope that people become more critically aware as media consumers, [and will be] able to distinguish between fact and fiction.”

Rawson believes that people could benefit from citizen education on what responsible journalism looks like and when to trust a source.

A little bit of scepticism is always helpful, she says. ●

AIRING INTO TOMORROW

Streaming platforms are changing the game in the television industry. As audiences for these platforms continue to grow, broadcast journalists and TV newsrooms have to rethink their positioning in the industry.

BY **MICALEB LAWRENCE**

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about a boost in the audience engagement of streaming services, says Keyan Tomaselli, author and communications professor at the University of Johannesburg. This rise is owed to the affordability, convenience and freedom that viewers have to choose what they want to watch and when they want to watch it, says Tomaselli.

But, amidst a spike in streaming platforms, where does South Africa's broadcast media stand? Firstly, there are structural issues in SA, such as loadshedding – where the country's main source of energy, Eskom, is incapable of consistently producing electricity, influencing both SA's broadcast media and streaming services, he says.

In addition to this, the choice of platform for viewers is an issue for broadcasted news, as consumers have free reign when it comes to their choice of streaming content or using digital satellite services, he says.

"While television (TV) is not likely to disappear soon, the longevity of the internet will continue to dominate and, as such, news will see a major shift towards digital platforms," says Latashia Naidoo, an investigative journalist and producer for *Carte Blanche*.

Naidoo, a BBC Komla Dumor finalist for the Outstanding African Journalist award, believes that news consumers will continue to evolve, and so will the way they consume news. However, in Naidoo's opinion, this will not take away from the roles of broadcast journalists.

THE PUBLIC'S NEWS BROADCASTER

SA's public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), has been nationally broadcasting news to South Africans for more than 85 years, according to their website.

The rise of streaming platforms has

REPORTING

"changed [SABC's] news production rhythm", says Moshoeshoe Monare, SABC's group executive for news and current affairs.

The SABC now understands that there is no longer only prime news, says Monare. "It has also compelled [SABC News] to exploit new advanced technology and not rely on old school technology that was meant for linear TV and radio," he adds.

The public broadcaster is committed to being impartial and independent when it comes to news broadcasting, Monare tells *SMF*. SABC News continues to tell the "stories of ordinary citizens through top quality programming that is relevant and interesting in a way that viewers can relate to", he says.

The SABC News Channel has an audience share of 7 204 278 South African viewers in a typical month for their prime time news, according to their 2021/2022 annual report.

"While the numbers fluctuate from platform to platform, we [at SABC News] are committed to attracting and retaining our loyal news viewers by constantly reviewing our offerings and understanding viewers and listeners' consumption patterns and behaviour," explains Monare.

The SABC also looks into programmes that can be shared on a variety of platforms – whether it be digital, TV or radio, explains Monare. In this way, SABC News can ensure that the future of broadcast journalism remains focused on content instead of the platform it lands on, he says.

SO, WHAT ABOUT STREAMING?

Showmax, a streaming service in SA, offers its viewers a collection of content, including access to live news programming from SABC News, as well as internationally broadcasted news programmes like *Euronews, Africanews* and *Newzroom Afrika*. This is according to Laura Cooke, head of public relations and communications for connected video at MultiChoice, which owns Showmax.

However, the news streaming option is limited to Showmax Pro plan customers, Cooke explains. The streaming platform officially launched in SA in 2015, according to their website.

"We are already seeing how live reporting has changed over the years as broadcasters geared their content towards audiences on streaming platforms where user numbers can be gauged in an instant," say Robin and Lee-Anne Adams, via email correspondence with *SMF*. The husband and wife duo work as broadcast journalists and media professionals in SA and abroad.

> "THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DIVERSIFY THE CONTENT ON STREAMING PLATFORMS TO INCLUDE A NEWS FOCUS.

The reality of current news consumption is that a lot of the content gets viewed through streaming platforms, says Naidoo, as these "offer viewers a plethora of content options". Naidoo believes there is an opportunity to diversify the content on streaming platforms to include a news focus, which would open the door for streaming services to claim the monopoly of broadcasting news content whilst retaining longevity as content will be offered online and can be rewatched, she explains.

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

"We [Showmax] are confident that our existing content line-up is working for the needs of our customers," says Cooke. The streaming service, which is available to DStv customers, saw a 68% increase in their paying subscribers in the last financial year, according to Cooke. This confirms that the current content strategy of Showmax is on the right track, she says. In SA, the majority of audiences leaning towards streaming services are made up of Netflix paid subscribers, according to a survey conducted by Finder for the streaming statistics of SA for 2021.

Finder's statistics show that 52.08% of South African respondents prefer using Netflix over the other streaming platforms available to the country, while 5.65% of users are subscribed to Amazon Prime Video. Both Netflix and Amazon Prime Video were launched in SA in 2016.

"In the fight for a biggest audience share, you may see providers trying to cater to a wider range of audience in their content, and that may affect the kind of content they newsgather," claim the Adams pair.

"DStv retains its older, more well-off audiences and retains its broader attraction due to its news and sports channels, which are not available on the streaming channels," claims Tomaselli. The SABC, however, retains the majority of the 'lower end' SA audiences, says Tomaselli. Unfortunately, like many other public service broadcasters, the SABC now lacks viable funding models, he claims.

BROADCASTING TOWARDS TOMORROW

Broadcast journalists may face challenges if streaming platforms adopt news-focused programming, says Naidoo.

"The 'live' element of news may no longer factor in how content is broadcasted on streaming platforms,

LIVE

given that there's no real-time offerings available for such," she explains.

In this regard, news that is broadcasted may be more curated with pre-recorded shows, further resulting in a loss of the 'breaking news' element of live reporting, says Naidoo.

Despite the challenges that lie ahead for this medium, broadcast journalists suggest that there are ways in which streaming platforms can be beneficial to live reporting. With the advent of streaming platforms providing viewers with broadcasted news, journalists can look forward to "a larger and more diverse audience base", claim the Adams pair.

"Because there is an ever-growing array of streaming platforms, it means you're able to report stories to a wider spectrum of users," they add. For broadcasting programmes like *Carte Blanche,* their success and longevity is a result of the quality of the content they produce, says Naidoo.

The programme maintains its mass-appeal for TV audiences, thus transcending decades of technology, as well as news expansion models, she says.

When producing live news content for an audience, "there is no denying that content, and especially broadcast reporting, costs money", say the Adams pair. "That money has to come from somewhere. A fee policy, in principle, should greatly contribute to the quality of output," they explain to *SMF*.

THEN AND NOW

In a world where the news cycle remains ever-changing and evolving, journalists are no longer obliged to subscribe to a traditional role, claims Naidoo.

Aspects like social media and ordinary citizens who share news-related content to their online followers, also come into play for broadcast journalists, she adds.

In relation to this, "some would argue that this has made the role of a journalist redundant; however, it's not an accurate perspective of the role [broadcast journalists] fulfil on a daily basis", says Naidoo.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought several other challenges for future live news reporters."Lockdown necessitated the need for [broadcast journalists] to relook our working model. Radio presenters were doing their shows from home, news anchors were doing rolling news off teleprompters from their homes too," explain the Adams pair.

Over the years, a transformation from traditional news roles to a more technologically savvy news role was seen, says Naidoo.

"What this means is that broadcast journalists now need to upskill themselves to a point where they are able to report in the field, and edit and file stories for playout," add the Adams pair.

This influences the way broadcast journalists connect, source news, and share news with audiences, says Naidoo.

In addition to this, live news reporting moving online has made room for "the 'breaking news' aspect to be instantaneous and more impactful given that the reach is much greater via social media than through traditional broadcast mediums", she explains.

REPORTING LIVE

Journalists are skilled enough to equip themselves to adapt to the changes their industry faces, says Naidoo. "While broadcast journalists are familiar with the 'live' element of how we report, I don't believe that it would nullify our ability to report the news on a different platform," she says.

The media industry is constantly changing and, as such, broadcast journalists need to adapt accordingly, explains Naidoo.

This may mean stepping out of their comfort zones, regardless of what the future may hold for the live reporting element their work entails, she says.

"Learning to entrench themselves within the new and unfamiliar [is] the only way we can maintain relevance in, and within, such a diverse, multifaceted industry," says Naidoo. ●

PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS: Micaleb Lawrence

PODCA

A trending medium in SA

On-demand podcast content is becoming increasingly popular in South Africa, with some experts saying that it is set to overtake the radio broadcasting scene.

BY **LIAM ABERCROMBIE**

Podcasts are already very popular and well known in places such as the United States (US) and Europe, but it is definitely also a trending medium in South Africa right now, says Catherine Rice, podcast producer at *News24*.

"I think people searching for specific content will go to podcasts. They know they're going to find [the content they want] because there's a podcast for just about anything," states Rice.

The growth of podcasts in SA can be attributed to the freedom of the medium, and the fact that anyone can start a podcast and express their opinions without needing permission, says Nicole Engelbrecht, an independent podcast producer and host of the True Crime South Africa podcast.

Some local examples include The Gareth Cliff Show, hosted by Gareth Cliff, and Podcast and Chill with MacG, hosted by Macgyver Mukwevho.

ON AIR

According to a 2021 report by The Infinite Dial, 48% of South Africans aged 15 and over were familiar with podcasts, compared to 22% in 2019. For reference, 78% of the US population were familiar with podcasts in 2021.

The Infinite Dial is a company that focuses on digital media consumer behaviour in the US. The company recently completed its second report for South Africa, where direct comparisons between the South African and US-market are made.

The podcast medium has started to leave a footprint in the broadcasting industry, with on-demand and niche content growing in popularity amongst listeners. This is according to Jon Savage, director at InBroadcasting.

InBroadcasting works closely with brands such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram, says Savage, adding that the company focuses on the digital space in Africa.

"The audiences are there. The commercial ability is there. The format is there," says Savage about the podcasting industry.

RADIO VS PODCASTS

Podcasts have allowed audiences to decide which creators are talented, rather than leaving the choice to a radio station manager, claims Savage. "The good and the bad of [podcasting] is that it has cut out the need for a middleman," he adds.

Live radio is easily accessible and currently occupies a place in the broadcast industry, says Savage.

The Infinite Dial survey states that in 2021, 69% of South Africans over the age of 15 listened to radio, both on-air and online.

However, the rise of podcasts has started to influence the industry in such a way that radio stations have now started to produce their own podcasting content, says Savage.

CONTENT: NOW OR LATER?

On-demand content is more audience-focused because people choose what content to listen to, and when they want to listen to

STING

it, says Chris Borain, head of group innovation at African Media Entertainment (AME).

AME is a media company that focuses on digital media services and radio assets, and owns two radio brands: Algoa FM and OFM.

"Audiences have gotten used to consuming content when they want to – video or audio," says Borain. Digital audio, such as podcasts and streaming, fill that expectation, he adds.

As a result, the country's radio industry, too, is preparing itself for a shift to on-demand content, according to Engelbrecht. And that content is in the form of podcasts, she says.

The exceptions for on-demand content are real time events such as sports events, as well as interactive content such as talk radio, as these can't be packaged for a pre-recorded podcast, says Francois Retief, the chief operating officer of Iono.fm, a podcasting and streaming integrated platform.

"There is definitely still a place for real-time content as things happen. But for the most part, I think content on-demand is the way to go," he adds.

"I think that there is a place for both [radio and podcasts], and certainly in South Africa, with a large portion of our population not having daily access to affordable internet," states Engelbrecht.

The benefit of radio is that it can still be listened to without the need to pay for internet access, she adds.

According to Statista, 67.9% of South Africans are active internet users as of January 2022. In comparison, 91.8% of the US population are active internet users.

"The cost of data is always a problem in SA, and until that drops, there will always be some concern as to how large the [podcasting] audience can be," says Borain.

A PENNY FOR YOUR EAR

"When a radio station sells advertising, they're selling their broadcast space and they're selling their audience. That's the only thing that brands want to pay for – reach and access to an audience," says Savage.

He believes podcasts have better monetisation potential than radio. Podcasts also sell advertising space to brands and sponsors in order to earn revenue, says Savage.

Podcasts make use of audio advertising, where there is a combination of digital pre-roll ads, mid-roll ads, and post-roll ads, says Retief.

"[This is] basically similar to YouTube – an ad in the beginning, ads in the middle, and an ad at the end," he says.

"What catches a lot of people by surprise is that your most valuable ad slot is actually the pre-roll slot. So, the one right in the beginning."

Many people think that the post-roll slot is less valuable than the other slots because listeners may not reach the end of the podcast, says Retief.

"If you consider that you only pay for the post-rolls that are delivered, and also that it's the end of the podcast – you're sitting with somebody that has now finished one activity, [and] they

> **"AUDIENCES HAVE GOTTEN USED TO CONSUMING CONTENT WHEN THEY WANT TO – VIDEO OR AUDIO.**

need to decide what to do next," he says.
"That gives you the advantage that there's a fairly good chance that they will follow that ad to your brand."

The advantage with pre-roll slots is that the listener is entirely invested in listening to the podcast at this stage, says Retief.

"You would typically get your pre-roll listeners on a second or a third impression, or even after they've listened to the podcast they may remember to go and respond to your ad," he explains.

The most popular ways of selling ad space on podcasts are either doing a live-read or pre-recorded ad, or getting a sponsorship for the product in the ad in the form of brand partnerships, says Savage. "Brand partnerships are essentially the main way to do it."

Additionally, YouTube has made it possible for podcast creators to get memberships or "Super Chats", which are a more direct way of getting viewers to contribute towards a channel, says Renaldo Gouws, a former radio presenter and now a YouTuber who uploads podcasts on his channel.

"You can earn passive income from YouTube putting ads on your videos or on your podcast," says Gouws.

Podcasts can also be monetised through subscription and donation models, says Retief.

"You could have content, which is not generally available to the public, but only available on subscription," he adds.

At *News24*, certain podcasts are put behind the organisation's paywall, Rice says. This usually includes specialised podcasts which take a lot of time to investigate and edit, she says.

The current challenge for podcasts is that they are unregulated, says Savage. "They're risky, because there isn't an institution. It's just independent creators."

Brands, advertising agencies and marketing executives that are used to spending millions of rands on radio are not "entirely comfortable with going to this new media that has smaller audiences, and it's a bit of a risk", claims Savage.

DARK SIDE OF THE MIC

"I think one of the nice things is that podcasting is quite a low barrier to entry medium, which is why we see a lot of independent producers," says Engelbrecht. However, this comes with its own challenges. For a podcast to be successful, the producer needs to be consistent, she explains.

One of the biggest challenges to podcasts in SA is people not having access to the internet, says Engelbrecht. "I think that's one of the things that's going to perhaps slow down our growth in the podcast medium."

With many South Africans still struggling to get a consistent internet connection, coupled with data costs, the country's podcast medium will struggle to grow to the level that countries such as the US have, states Engelbrecht.

An additional challenge is that, as the podcast market matures, there's a tendency for advertisers to go for the top podcasters, says Retief.

An example of this is Joe Rogan, a US-based podcaster who gets millions of downloads on each episode, explains Retief.

Rogan's podcasts include topics such as current events, politics, science, and hobbies, with a range of guests who feature on the show.

Many podcasters in other countries have to look at smaller advertising campaigns which are often geographically focused – something that is not a problem in the wider US market, says Retief.

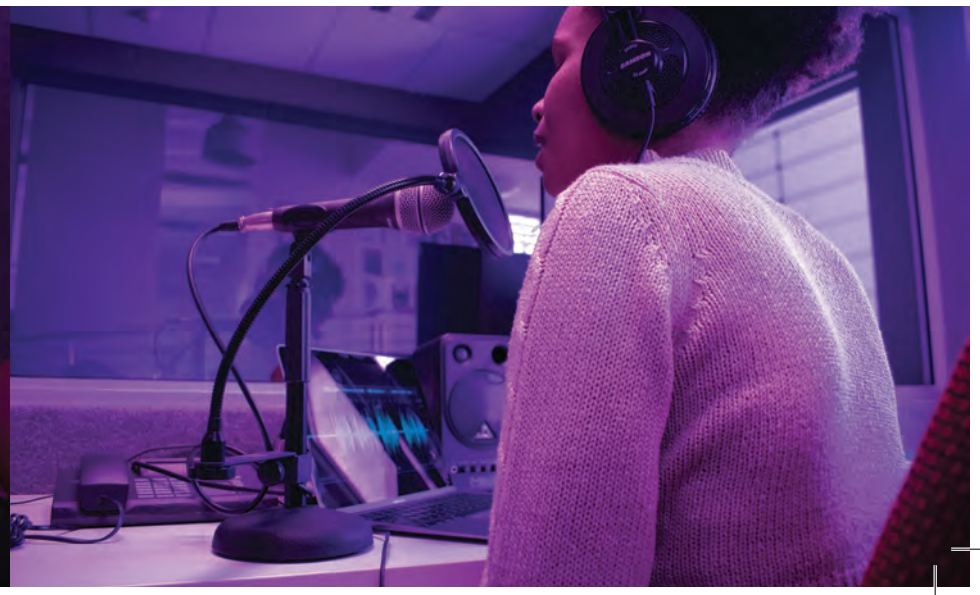
Some well-known international news podcasts include The Daily by *The New York Times*, the BBC's Global News Podcast, and Today in Focus by *The Telegraph*.

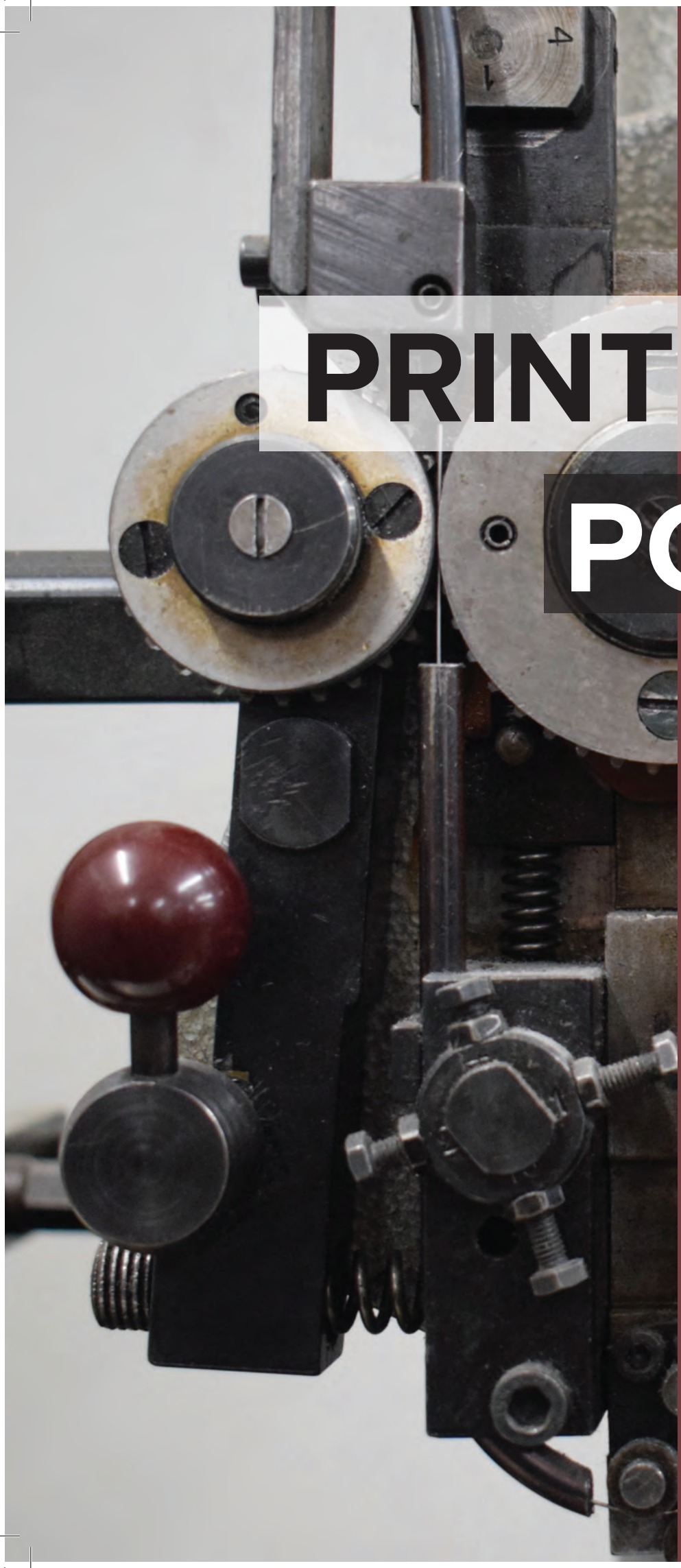
"I think by the nature of it as well, you need to decide whether you have a broad podcast, where you have a huge audience, or whether you go for a niche where you may have a more valuable audience, but a smaller audience," says Retief.

For Engelbrecht, the future of podcasting in South Africa depends on how well producers can navigate these challenges. ●

"THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT BRANDS WANT TO PAY FOR – REACH AND ACCESS TO AN AUDIENCE.

PHOTOS: Liam Abercrombie





PRINTING POWER

The death of print has been proclaimed for years. But while many physical publications have shifted to the digital realm, printing technology constantly advances and professionals refuse to give up on paper.

BY **TAMIA RETIEF**

IN 2020, media conglomerate Media24 announced that they would be closing multiple print publications, with a few transitioning to digital platforms and others becoming independent publications.

This action was a response to the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since then, publications such as *finweek* were also shut down, and the community newspaper *Weekend Witness*, along with Media24's other KwaZulu-Natal community newspapers, were sold to Capital Newspapers, says Egbert de Waal, spokesperson for Media24.

Yet, some publications, including those from other publishing houses, were re-launched under new publishers, starting a revival in print media, according to De Waal. These included *Rooi Rose* and *House & Leisure*.

"This is not an industry that's dead. In fact, it continues to re-invent itself as time and technology changes," says Sabina van den Oever, the sales and marketing manager for Printech, a company that supplies, installs and fixes printing equipment in the Southern African region.

THE HEART OF PRINT

For most media houses, their print publications are still the "lion's share" of their revenue, with printing technology at the heart of print media, says Dr Kate Skinner, executive director of the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP).

The printing industry, like most, now leans more closely into the current culture of technology: Being on-demand and fast-paced, says Ken Horn, IT support manager at RISO Africa, a printing company established in 1946 that manufactures duplicators and inkjet printers.

To print-on-demand (POD) means to print only what has been sold by the publication to the end-user or retailer, says Hussein Khan, a general sales manager at Novus Printing, one of the largest printing companies in the country.

"In POD the publication goes back to press hundreds of times based on the success of the same, since the publication is not mass-printed before release," he says.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, printer manufacturers were already aware of the need to have faster printing presses, says James Hart, director of African Sun Media, a printing company affiliated with Stellenbosch University that focuses primarily on university press.

Hart explains that, at present, printing 100 newspaper copies may cost just as much as 10 000 copies. This is because the installation cost of the large, old printers, such as a traditional printing press, is more expensive than the actual cost of printing, thus limiting the printing of smaller amounts of copies, says Hart.

To cut costs and create a more efficient system, manufacturers have made smaller and faster machines that may make it possible to print smaller batches of newspapers, he says.

Because of this, most small-scale publications would not be printed on traditional newspaper quality paper, but would need to be printed digitally, Hart explains.

"[Printer manufacturers] took these massive big machines that take up like half a rugby field, and they made them quicker, shorter, smaller and cheaper," says Hart.

As the machines run for shorter amounts of time, it becomes cheaper to cater for the newspaper market, he explains.

"I've had students here that wanted to start their own newspaper and they said [...] they just want 500 copies. If you switch that thing on and you switch it off, five minutes later, you've printed 2 000 copies. It's just so fast," says Hart.

THE TECHNOLOGY AT PRESENT

Since 2010, commercial inkjet technology has become more widely manufactured, with more print service providers using this technology in their practices, says Shaun Prinsloo.

Prinsloo is the national sales manager of commercial inkjet machinery at Altron Document Solutions, which supplies Xerox printers to businesses.

Inkjet technology uses digital printing, which results in a shorter run time, thus creating products faster, says Prinsloo.

This has become RISO's primary focus, as they have been manufacturers of inkjet machines for the last 15 years, says Horn.

Apart from speed, inkjet technology also saves costs while meeting the demands of clients who require commercial printing, he says.

"Commercial printers benefit from our products as they provide the capacity and ability to more easily cater to the growing need for print-on-demand services," says Horn.

At larger printing companies, such as Novus Print, they use a variety of printers to achieve different goals, says Khan.

"We have sheet-fed presses that are used for shorter-run book-type work, digital presses are used for a variety of purposes, gravure presses for long-run high-quality commercial work like retail leaflets and magazines, heatset presses whose product ranges are similar to gravure, as well as coldset presses which are predominantly used for printing newspapers," explains Khan.

KEEPING UP WITH THE PRINT

Publications such as *Gans-Berg News*, a community newspaper in the Western Cape, have shifted to independently publishing their weekly newspapers to reduce long-term costs.

Gans-Berg News are currently using an Epson printer which is typically used as an office printer, according to Michelle van Zyl, the community newspaper's owner and editor.

From a financial perspective, printing in-house will, in the long run, be a lot cheaper than using a bigger printing house, says Van Zyl.

According to Hart, publications such as *Die Burger* can print 60 000 copies of a 16-page newspaper per hour. There has not been any change in speed over the last 15 years because most newspaper presses

PHOTOS: Tamia Retief

THE PRINTING INDUSTRY IS A LIVING ORGANISM

currently in use are more than 20 years old, says Hart.

For companies such as Printech, who focus on lithographic printing and bindery equipment, ensuring that their technical staff is continuously trained and equipped is an investment well worth making, says Van den Oever.

While the company originally started out importing and rebuilding Heidelberg printing presses, they now specialise in servicing and training operators to work a variety of printing presses, such as Heidelberg and Koenig & Bauer, she says.

Van den Oever says the key to their success is training their technicians both locally and in Germany. They learn more skills and then return home to apply these skills to their work.

"Given the high standards of Germany, our engineers and technicians return to South Africa empowered to raise local standards of excellence while keeping abreast in the ever-changing world of technology," says Van den Oever.

SUSTAINABILITY: A CORE VALUE

When looking at the future of printing technology, one cannot exclude sustainability, says Horn. This is because it has become an important factor, from an energy-saving perspective to the components of the product, he says.

One of the ways in which RISO practices sustainability is by offering printer systems with hardware and supplies that are environmentally friendly, such as rice bran oil ink for their RISOGRAPH digital duplicators (office printers), explains Horn. They also utilise "cold print" – which means that they do not use heat dryers when printing, he adds.

"This duplicator creates a 'stencil' or master of the original, and can print up to 190 pages per minute using rice bran oil ink," says Horn.

They have also developed a new system which allows for printing to continue through power outages, says Horn. This is possible because of a "low-energy draw of the equipment", he adds.

African Sun Media uses recycled paper where clients request for this, says Hart. They also ensure that the paper used comes from a supervised, environmentally sensitive tree plantation, he adds.

According to Hart, 90% of all paper used for printing comes from forests where the trees were planted specifically for this purpose.

"PRINT IS NOT DEAD"

"All in all, while the industry in general is in decline, it is also changing. These [technological] changes and advancements can only act as a benefit to the future of print publications," says Khan.

"We believe that our audiences still love print and will continue to do so," says Skinner. The AIP organises 171 publishers who produce 226 publications, with most of these being physically printed, she states. "We can't afford to close our print editions," says Skinner.

While he was initially pessimistic about the future of print, Hart has changed his tune. "I said years ago that print is dying. I said it ten years ago. But I'm still here and print is not dead."

For Tobie van den Bergh, the editor of the *Middelburg Observer*, it is important for print to adjust to new changes.

The *Middelburg Observer* is a Caxton-owned newspaper in Mpumalanga. It is printed at CTP's head offices in Mbombela on a community goss printer.

"We're in a world that changes every second. Nobody can predict what will happen the next second, day or year. I believe print will be with us for years to come, supported by whatever will be next," says Van den Bergh.

Prinsloo shared a study from a chapter in the *Journal of Print and Media Technology Research of 2019*, "The application of augmented reality in print media", which states that augmented reality may make a greater appearance in print media through the use of QR codes, linking print publications to their digital platforms.

PRINT IN FOCUS

In the next 10 years, printing technology will be focused on shorter run times, with customers expecting work to be done even faster and at an even higher quality, says Van den Oever.

She predicts that these developments will be seen in the products released, namely for "litho, flexo and digital machinery", and that one product will be able to perform a job which previously required multiple machines.

"The companies with equipment such as [mentioned above] would have the benefit of producing a single sheet to 100 000 sheets, in perfect consistency being in register and colour, with variable and personalised data added to the print media," explains Van den Oever.

She believes that these advancements in printing technology prove that print media is not a dying industry and will not be replaced by digital technologies. "It has been driven by people for people," says Van Den Oever.

All print media consists of brands meeting consumers' needs and adjusting products to each customer's personal taste, which the people working in print strive to do, she says.

"The printing industry is a living organism in its own right." ●

LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS

The digitalisation of photojournalism has seen the field evolve from heavy camera equipment to palm-sized smartphones. However, while the equipment, competitors, fieldwork and stories captured within the field may have changed, industry professionals believe that the goal of photojournalism remains the same. Telling important stories through the art of photography.

BY **KARLA DE BOD**

The roots of modern photojournalism date back to 1925: The year the Leica 1(A) – the world's first 35mm camera, went on sale. This is according to the National Museum of American History.

Nearly a century on from the release of the revolutionary 35mm camera, the field of photojournalism grapples with a shift which may change the future of the industry entirely. The use of smartphones.

THE FALL OF FILM

The transition from film cameras to digital cameras more than 20 years ago was the biggest change in the photojournalism field, claims Alan Eason, who has been working as a press photojournalist at the *Daily Dispatch* since 1999.

With the move to digital cameras, photojournalists needed to shift their perspectives to capture stories, according to Hush Naidoo, vice chair of the Southern African Freelancers' Association.

"Years prior to digital, we had to make sure we captured images that told a story creatively. Nowadays, with digital, we tend to shoot as many images as possible," says Naidoo.

"This [has] evidently changed the way we compose the images. Our equipment has become much lighter and we tend to spend less time in the field," he adds.

These days, traditional DSLR cameras have moved to a mirrorless system, which features a single, removable lens and a digital display, says Eason. This system has benefits in terms of the size and weight of the gear, as well as a host of other technical components, he explains.

"The advancement in technology, such as eye controlled autofocus [and] incredible low light capabilities, for example, has made life easier for photographers," says Eason.

"The smartphone is like a whole newsroom in one device.

MOVING TO MOBILE

"The smartphone is like a whole newsroom in one device," says Alet Pretorius, a freelance photojournalist who provides photographs to Gallo Images.

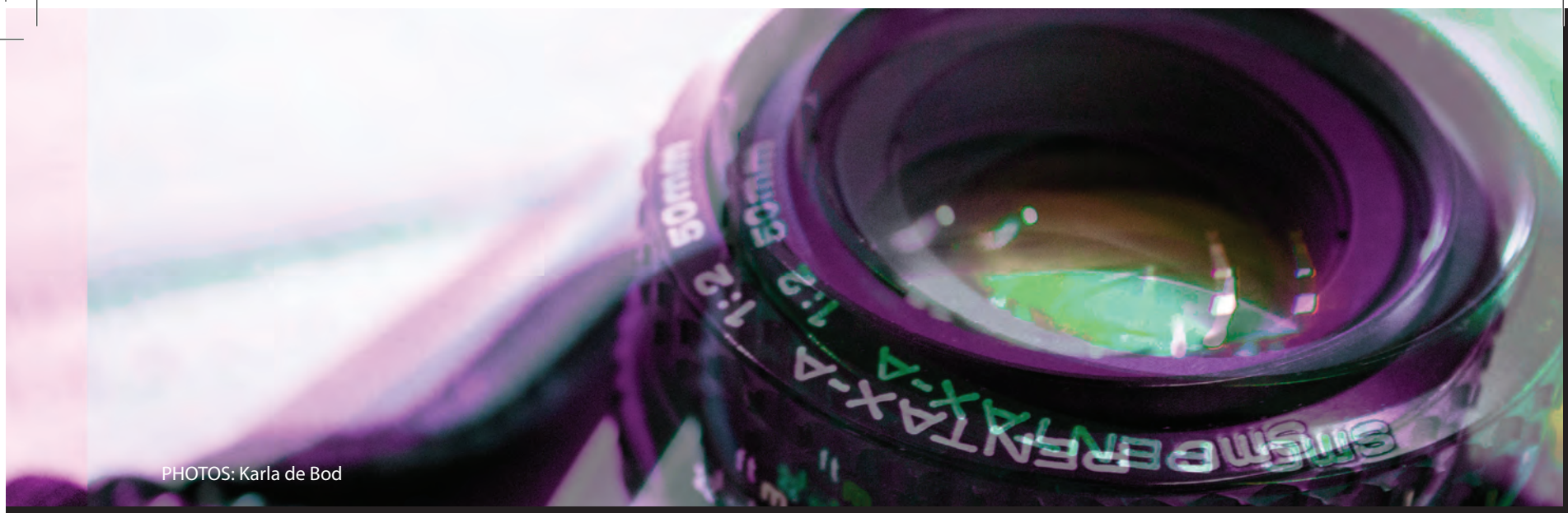
"With just one tool you can take images, record interviews, take videos, write stories, edit photos and videos, send images, videos and text, live broadcast from the scene and more," she says.

With newer forms of photojournalism, the job description of modern photojournalists entails much more than photography and fieldwork, states Edrea du Toit, a photojournalist for *Rapport*.

It requires skills and knowledge from various platforms, allowing the field of photojournalism to grow, says Graeme Williams, who has been working as a photojournalist since the 1980s.

Photojournalism is not mobile journalism, says Williams.

"The onset of better technology within our cell phones will inspire a new breed of photojournalists," says Naidoo. "But, in saying that, the person still has to have passion and the desire to capture a photo that tells a non-biased story and is not one-sided."



PHOTOS: Karla de Bod

The change in environment also means that photojournalists are competing against millions of images available, as there are many different ways to tell stories and various platforms to publish on, says Pretorius.

Smartphones are enabling more people to move into photojournalism, resulting in an increase in the supply market, she says. As such, photojournalists have to make sure their images stand out from those available, she adds.

WHEN THE PICTURES DESK EMPTIES OUT

With the rise of smartphones and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the size of newsrooms' picture desks have significantly decreased.

These days, very few publications have any photojournalists working there as full-time employees, says Naidoo.

Today, journalists are often writing the story, taking the pictures and filing for social media, says Pretorius.

"The quality of photography by journalists has improved a lot in the last few years," she says. "But the best stories are often a team effort with a dedicated journalist, photojournalist, data or internet journalist and/or designer."

Du Toit says ten years ago, she was part of a team of 10 photographers who were shooting for both *Die Burger* and *Rapport* in Cape Town. At the time of writing, these publications each employed one photographer, she says.

News publications are reliant on sourced images, but do take their own photographs when they can, says Du Toit. Publications also make use of more supplied images, and will continue to do so, as it is often eyewitnesses that are first on a scene instead of journalists, says Pretorius.

"We use news agencies like Gallo, Getty and other international agencies, but also members of the public that supply us with images for specific stories," says Du Toit. "Prioritising stories that we know will deliver great images has also become very important for the overall visual aesthetics of a publication."

NEW AND MORE COMPETITORS

Pretorius states that professional photojournalists need to continuously improve on their technical abilities, as well as the way they tell stories, to keep up with new competitors and amateur photographers.

The number of amateur photographers has increased, as almost anyone can take instant photographs if they are at a scene before a photojournalist, she says.

Because of this, anyone who has access to a cell phone can produce high quality content, which puts pressure on photojournalists, according to Du Toit.

"With the rise in social media and cell phone usage, it has forced photojournalists to become much more creative because of the high camera quality that cell phones produce these days,"



(From left to right) Alet Pretorius, Edrea du Toit and Graeme Williams working in the field. PHOTOS: Supplied

says Du Toit. “We are no longer the only people who can create high quality content.”

However, while amateur photographers are able to produce photographs with a high camera quality, this does not necessarily translate into being quality content, says Du Toit.

This has a negative impact on publications, as newspapers have become increasingly reliant on amateur photographers to supply them with photographs, causing the quality of photographs within publications to drop significantly, she claims.

As such, there will always be a need for professional photojournalists to provide publications with “hard news images”, which amateur photographers cannot always provide, says Du Toit.

“I do believe that there is a space for both photojournalists and amateur photographers to work together. Amateur photographers provide those instant images of events that might take the professional photojournalist some time to get to the scene,” she says.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Great photojournalism comes with good planning, research, lots of patience, and being in the field at the right time, and the right place too, says Eason.

Williams does not believe that the move to mobile journalism will necessarily have an impact on career opportunities for photojournalists. It is their skills, not their gear, that sets them apart, he says.

“What mobiles [have] influenced so dramatically is that everyone has the possibility now to report on something. If you’re in the right place at the right time, you can get a photograph and it can tell a story,” says Williams.

Anybody could be at the right place at the right time, and get the picture, he says. But skill would be the difference between an ordinary snap, and a photo of journalistic quality, Williams maintains.

Photojournalism means to be better, he says. “It means that you just really put in the effort of a journalist, and you’ve got to work at showing that actual working photographs are a hell of a lot better than some person with their cell phone.”

ZOOMING IN ON THE FUTURE

Many of the technical skills required in the past are not as important anymore, says Eason. And the equipment used within the field will continue to improve, perhaps beyond the use of humans, Pretorius adds.

“Like in most industries, artificial intelligence (AI) will definitely be part of the future of photojournalism,” says Pretorius. “It will be easier and cheaper to just send a drone equipped with AI that will be able not just to take images, but good images.” The technology to do this already exists, she adds.

While the rise of digitalisation has changed many aspects of the field of photojournalism, it will not change the essence of what photojournalism is, says Williams. ●

META

The metaverse is described as a digital, interactive representation of the real world, and is often characterised by the use of augmented and virtual reality technologies. Is journalism ready to take on tech's hottest trend?

BY AIDEN LOUW

Being at the forefront of new technologies and seeing how these technologies can be used to better journalism is the mission of *Al Jazeera*'s Emmy-nominated immersive storytelling and media innovation studio, *AJ Contrast.*

This is according to Zahra Rasool, the head and editorial lead of *AJ Contrast.* "The way that I look at doing journalism and telling stories, is that all of these different technologies that we have, are tools in order to tell stories in different ways," she tells *SMF.*

'A SENSE OF WONDER'

"My attraction to journalism has always been a sense of wonder," says Bun Booyens, a journalist who has been in the field for almost four decades.

As the former editor of *Die Burger* and *Weg!,* as well as having worked for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Booyens has witnessed the field of journalism confront new technologies and face challenges to old revenue models.

"The media adapts unpredictably to change," he says, adding that how the media will adapt to the metaverse is mere speculation at this point.

Rasool agrees with Booyens on this unpredictability, and says that while *AJ Contrast* is no stranger to metaverse technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), she is unsure what *Al Jazeera's* place in the metaverse should be.

META MOVES

The metaverse is a digital, interactive representation of the real world, explains Boaz Keren-Gil, the chief technology officer at Treedis, a leading metaverse company that helps businesses create their digital twin.

To achieve this digitalisation, he says metaverse companies rely on the use of AR and VR technologies.

"When we are using AR technologies, we are augmenting the reality that we physically see around us by adding things like images and sound," says Keren–Gil. "With VR technologies, we are simulating a 3D environment where users can interact."

Treedis is approached by businesses from various industries wishing to make use of such technologies, and the company has reached a total of 600 different businesses this year, according to Keren-Gil.

"We have everything," he says. "It's bizarre. We have aeroplanes, ships, hotels, strip clubs. Like really, everything."

VR is at the crux of metaverse technology, says Keren-Gil. Creating the technology needed to make VR experiences more accessible is one way in which entry into the metaverse will become more normalised across the board, he says.

Creating a VR experience entails using cameras which cost roughly R500 000 to laser scan a room, says Keren-Gil. The scanning process takes between 10 and 12 hours, he adds.

The laser of the new iPhone 14, that launched earlier this year, has the same scanning technology found in expensive cameras, he says. The same room which takes 10 to 12 hours to scan could be done in an hour using "a simple iPhone", says Keren-Gil.

DIGITAL TWINS

Data collection is the backbone of the metaverse, says Keren-Gil. Companies like Facebook and Matterport are ultimately data companies, he explains. "What they want to do to the world around us is to create a digital twin […] for every asset on Earth."

MINDED

The metaverse looms and, as such, it is crucial to consider whether there is, or indeed should be, a space for journalism, experts say. PHOTO: Aiden Louw

These meta moves are also on the agenda of the World Economic Forum (WEF), which published its 'Digital Twin Cities: Framework and Global Practices' report in April 2022. The idea of digital twin cities aligns with the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development, according to Jeff Merritt, the head of urban transformation at the WEF.

Merritt tells *SMF* that digital twin technology can help to optimise the ecological environment and improve cities' resilience.

"It could lower energy costs as well as optimise the ecological layout of cities. The technology could also significantly improve residents' quality of life and enhance the inclusiveness of cities," he explains.

"Through the integration of virtual and real, as well as by integrating multiple possible scenarios – digital twin hospitals, classrooms and nursing homes could provide full-range, full-time, customised services and follow-up services for individuals, thus optimising their experience," says Merritt.

VERSING WITH VR

Booyens believes metaverse technologies could lend themselves to specific beats in journalism, like lifestyle and investigative journalism.

Incorporating AR into content curated by travel magazines could make for a more enhanced and engaged interaction with the information produced, he explains. "Most tourism information is really third-hand and low-level… it's really bad," claims Booyens.

Investigative journalism could also find its place in the metaverse, says Booyens. "You can come in a different [avatar] as an alternative to a witness-protection type thing."

Rasool agrees that some stories may be better suited to these technologies than others.

AJ Contrast produced a story using AR and VR called *Still Here,* which follows a woman coming home after being incarcerated for 15 years. This immersive project allows viewers to explore the world of the subject in close contact.

While incarceration is a well-covered topic, Rasool explains that using this technology helped them to spotlight the story in a new way.

"The audience that we were trying to target were people who […] don't know that much about the issue. People who are upper middle class, wealthier, urban populations – who hear about it, but are not necessarily well informed," explains Rasool.

She adds that this demographic would be the ones attending the event spaces where the story premiered and who would have access to the technology needed to interact with *Still Here*, like VR goggles, for example.

As much as his sense of wonder for the future of journalism and the metaverse excites him, Booyens does have his reservations.

Ultimately, he says there's nothing better than the grittiness of reporting news in real time, without the buffer of these technologies. "And I think that news should stick to the actual, gritty things," he says.

> **"IF WE WANT TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS ON NEW PLATFORMS, WE HAVE TO GET THERE FIRST AS JOURNALISTS**

The immersion that Booyens claims removes the grittiness and realness of an event is something Simon Wood, an Emmy-nominated filmmaker, sees as VR's greatest storytelling strength.

The number one advantage of VR is that "it's very hard to look away in that space", says Wood. "It pushes subjects close to you and creates a form of empathy."

Wood and his wife, Meghna Singh, created a VR documentary called *Container,* which confronts slavery in a shipping container. The film premiered on a digital Venetian Island in 2021, which was designed to look like an island in Venice, he says. "The container itself is a confrontation and invites people to look at something that perhaps they're aware of, [but] that they're not willing to see".

EMPATHY OR VOYEURISM?

"I think we need to be more careful [and] more aware when we are using immersive technologies," says Rasool. *AJ Contrast* uses cutting-edge technology, like AR and VR, to amplify the stories of underrepresented communities, she explains.

"With a lot of immersive technology, there is this voyeurism that is associated with it," says Rasool, using the example of taking audiences on a VR tour inside a refugee camp.

Rasool says that when she first began working in VR spaces, she was one of the few people of colour. "Most of the people who were doing the storytelling were white creators, and the stories that they were telling were mostly of non-white people," she says.

"I think we've got to be aware about [...] who are the people who are able to create, and we've got to intentionally diversify and democratise the use of those technologies," explains Rasool.

She says that diversifying the creator pool is made difficult by the barriers of entry posed by the technical knowledge and training needed to operate AR and VR technologies.

For this reason, *AJ Contrast* collaborates with creators close to the stories they are telling and provides them with training, says Rasool.

FORGING THE FUTURE

While *AJ Contrast* has been considering entering the metaverse, Rasool says they need to ensure that their role towards public service is not overshadowed by their role as innovators.

"[*Al Jazeera*'s audience] is pretty international, and a lot of it

As the technology to produce VR content becomes more accessible, more industries can make use of it, says Boaz Keren-Gil, the chief technical officer at Treedis. PHOTO: Aiden Louw

is in the Global South," says Rasool. "Those are the people that don't necessarily have access to the metaverse, like the people would have in the Western countries."

Thus, the audience for the content *Al Jazeera* would create in the metaverse would be small, she adds.

On a more local front, various South African news publications contacted by *SMF* stated that they were not yet making use of AR and VR technologies.

There may nevertheless be consequences for journalism if the industry does not enter the metaverse, says Simon Allison, editor of *The Continent*, a local publication designed to be read and distributed on WhatsApp in an attempt to combat fake news.

Allison believes fake news spreads easily on WhatsApp because it is relatively free of news organisations, and because it is an information-sharing platform that relies on close networks and, therefore, supposedly trusted sources of information.

He cites WhatsApp as the most egregious example of what happens when journalists do not enter new platforms.

"That's what gave space for fake news to flourish, because actually, journalists hadn't staked their claim properly on these new platforms," says Allison. "Journalists have no choice but to start planning for how we adapt to new technology and information sharing systems that come along, [including] but not limited to the metaverse," he adds.

Allison says this adaptation is crucial if journalists are to avoid the same misgivings experienced at the advent of the digital era: When old technologies and ways of doing things, like print, were clung onto by media houses, and where journalists "failed to adapt to reality".

Allison is unsure of what operating in the metaverse will look like but says it is something *The Continent* is seriously considering.

Going forward, a legal "wild west" is how Booyens describes what the metaverse will be like for a while. Allison, meanwhile, asserts that "if we want to prevent the spread of fake news on new platforms, we have to get there first as journalists". ●

INTERESTS & INSIGHTS

EVERY JOURNALISTIC BEAT HAS FACED A METAMORPHOSIS – SOME FOR THE BETTER, OTHERS FOR THE WORSE. THE MEDIA CAN'T PREDICT THE FUTURE BUT IT CAN PREPARE FOR IT – AND IT SHOULD.

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THE MEDIA'S STEAMY TABOO

The topic of SEX has long been a no-go-zone for mainstream media, but it has become a vehicle for promoting wellness and progressive conversations.

BY **TIM MALINZI**

The topic of sex ebbs and flows in and out of the South African media's spotlight. One day, it's a hot topic – the next, not so much, says Christiaan Boonzaier, a freelance writer with a masters in journalism.

Boonzaier, who did his masters thesis on the history of pornographic magazines in South Africa between 1939 and 1989, does not expect this trend to change anytime soon.

When Boonzaier completed his thesis in 2014, many academics still considered his topic "socially unacceptable", he says.

"I immediately realised there's a clear hole I could fill with research," says Boonzaier.

"Historically, [the portrayal of sex in the media] leaned more heavily towards objectification, in part because only white men were driving the conversations," he says.

Although the portrayal of sex can perpetuate objectification, Boonzaier argues that it can also allow for empowerment.

"Today, of course, not only are women contributing to this conversation, but input is multicultural. Which is why the pendulum is pretty much swaying all over the place – from empowerment to objectification and back," he explains.

"I don't think the South African media has found its footing yet."

A DELICATE TOUCH

Gotlhokwang Angoma-Mzini, the editor of *Women's Health*, believes the topic of sex will become more accepted in the media as time goes on.

"The more time passes, the more we all start to get comfortable with sex. Not as some taboo thing but as part of a healthy adulthood," she says.

Covering sex and sexuality as mainstream topics should, however, be done delicately – keeping the intricate nuances of the subjects at the forefront, according to Avri Spilka, a counselling psychologist specialising in sexual wellbeing.

"I have more of a hope, than an expectation, that free-thinking journalists will collaborate and support each other in bringing the multiplicity and complexity of human sexuality into mainstream media," says Spilka.

> **"THERE ARE WAY TOO MANY OTHER THINGS TO BE SHOCKED ABOUT – SEX SHOULDN'T BE ONE OF THEM**

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

At face value, defining "sex" is not as easy as it may seem, Spilka says. Often, language can make it tricky to navigate the several connotations and meanings attached to the word.

Spilka understands that the definition of sex is not always clear-cut: Thus, understanding what someone means when talking about "sex" is important for her practice.

There's a limited understanding by people of everything that goes into sex, according to Angoma-Mzini.

"Often people think it's about body parts and heteronormativity. It's obviously more nuanced than that – from the mental health and emotional elements of sex, to the varieties and power dynamics, all the way to enhancements and toys," she says. Because of the multifaceted dynamics of sex, people need to engage with the topic with a sense of open-mindedness, says Angoma-Mzini.

TURNING BACK THE CLOCK

A century ago, sex was not covered in the South African media. It wasn't until the boom of the internet and the rapid globalisation of the 1990s that sex became more widely spoken about, according to Boonzaier.

"South African women in certain circles roughly 100 years ago were rapped on the knuckles for wearing lipstick in public," he says. "So, you can just imagine how conservatism reigned supreme then."

At the time, the South African media followed strict draconian censorship laws which had been adopted from the United Kingdom, says Boonzaier. This meant that there was an extremely tight grip on which topics were allowed to be explored in the media – and sex was not one of them.

"Pornographic postcards, and later magazines, were present in South Africa from around the late 1930s," he claims. "But they were all imported from abroad, hidden between sets of crockery and other whatnot to outwit the censors."

Fast forward to the 1980s, and these strict laws were mostly relaxed, says Boonzaier. During the 90s, "sex as a topic swept across South Africa", he adds.

"By 2000, the sexual landscape was more relaxed," says Erla-Mari Diedericks, a columnist for *Netwerk24* who regularly writes about sex and sex-related topics.

"I started writing for *Playboy* in 2011," says Diedericks. "I could fairly write about anything. From toyboys, to orgasms, to nude dick pics."

THE LANDSCAPE TODAY

Despite the growing acceptance over the years, the South African media is still relatively conservative when it comes to discussing sex, says Boonzaier.

"If we, rather simplistically, consider that the media mirrors society – then it makes sense why South African media is still quite conservative. South Africans, more generally, are still quite conservative when it comes to sex," he explains.

This conservatism is only one side of the story, according to Rian van Heerden, the producer of *Sex in Afrikaans*, a docuseries which premiered on Showmax in February.

According to Van Heerden, the South African public is more open-minded than they get credit for.

"We will always have the conservative element, but people clearly have a need for more information regarding sex," he says.

Diedericks agrees with this, noting that she can get over 10 000 reads on an article about sex.

A major challenge Van Heerden faced when producing *Sex in Afrikaans* was finding people willing to speak openly about sex, and their own sex lives, on television.

"I keep on saying that we got a very brave group of people together," says Van Heerden. "They are pioneers."

Van Heerden says the public's reaction to the series was "better than expected", and that a diverse group of people watched the show despite it being called *Sex in Afrikaans*.

However, Boonzaier claims that many Afrikaans-speaking people were appalled by the show, indicating parts of the country are still very conservative when it comes to the topic of sex.

"There are way too many other things to be shocked about – sex shouldn't be one of them," says Boonzaier. "Unless it has to do with sexual offences, which is still a major problem in South Africa and deserves the spotlight."

The public's rejection of sex in the media does not only occur in series like *Sex in Afrikaans*, but also extends to written media,

according to Diedericks. She says the publications she works for still receive backlash from readers who do not want content about homosexuality to be produced.

However, these readers are in the minority, and she hardly receives criticism anymore, she claims. Nonetheless, these accounts indicate that not all South Africans are entirely comfortable having sexual content, and especially diverse sexual content, published.

THE MEDIA'S ROLE

Women's Health aims to incorporate a wellness aspect when portraying sex in their publication, says Angoma-Mzini.

"People are always looking for sound advice on sexual wellness, so not just sex," she says. "We aim to ensure the content is smart, science-based, and of-the-moment. We tackle topics people are talking about, as well as the issues that sex/relationship experts are hearing about in their offices."

One such expert, Spilka, believes the way sex and sexuality are portrayed in the media can be extremely influential on the public, especially for individuals who cannot access information about sex in other ways.

"What's concerning is that these representations are very limited to mostly white, middle class, able bodied, young, classically attractive, heterosexual and monogomous people," says Spilka.

"These portrayals are rooted in gender stereotypes which show 'good' men as sexual pursuers and 'good' women as sexual gatekeepers," she adds. "There are whole libraries of books dissecting why these representations are so damaging."

> **"I DON'T THINK THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA HAS FOUND ITS FOOTING YET.**

Spilka hopes to see the mainstream media showcase the diverse ways sex and sexuality can be represented, and she calls upon journalists to fulfil this mandate.

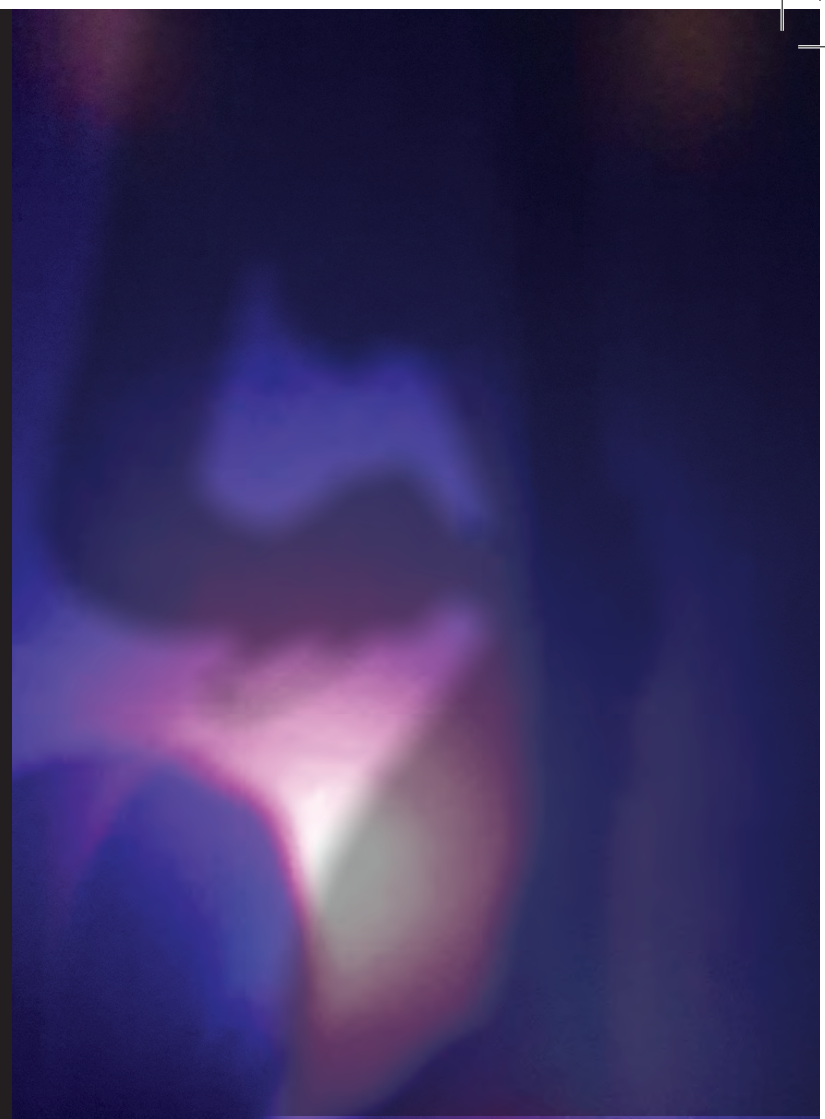
"My hope is that good journalists will do good journalism, and ensure that future portrayals of sex and sexuality are in the public's interest, and not just in the interests of a select few," she says.

Using both the South African Constitution and the Press Code as guides, South African media have the ability to change how sex is represented, claims Boonzaier.

"Both the Constitution and the Press Code allow [the media] to be a bit more ballsy when it comes to how we report on sex as a topic in the media," says Boonzaier.

"Times have changed, and we really need to be less closeted about a topic like sex that really permeates everyday life on many levels." ●

PHOTOS: Tim Malinzi



WHAT IS SEX?

"What I think of when I hear the word sex may be completely different to what a client of mine thinks, so it's always worth asking the question of how each person defines sex to establish a common vocabulary," says Avri Spilka, a counselling psychologist specialising in sexual wellbeing.

For Spilka, sex refers to the ways human beings understand the "primary sex characteristics of physical bodies".

This includes traits such as external or winternal genitalia, chromosomes, hormones and the sex differentiation of the brain, she says.

"To others, the word 'sex' could mean gender identity and expression, or sexual orientation, or particular sexual behaviours and practices with a whole range of different body parts, fantasies and toys," she adds.

The word could also refer to how these different elements interact with each other within a person, between people or in a society at any point in time, Spilka explains. For some, sex is something taboo and unspeakable. For others, it is exciting and pleasurable.

THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING

SO SHOULD ITS COVERAGE

The way the media portrays the causes of climate events is often disconnected from the broader political and economic elements influencing climate change, and excludes those most affected. Going forward, experts say it is important for the media to dive into the systemic nature of the climate crisis.

BY **JEAN-MARIE UYS**

Nature does not sit by idly and allow the world to change without responding. Rather, it is continuously adapting, says Prof Guy Midgley, head of the Global Change Biology Group and director of the school for climate studies and center for invasion biology at Stellenbosch University (SU).

Instead of focusing on climate events in a sensational manner, the media should adapt its approach to climate reporting and rather shed light on the systemic nature of the problem, according to Dr Dale McKinley, political activist, researcher and educator at The International Labour Research and Information Group.

"Climate change is a great example of how broken journalism is right now, and provides some really good examples of what [the media] can do about it," Nic Newman, senior research associate at the Reuters Institute for the study of journalism, told *SMF*'s Téa Bell.

> "CLIMATE REPORTERS NEED TO CRITIQUE THE ECONOMIC 'GAME' THAT IS DRIVING US TOWARDS AN EXTINCTION-LEVEL EVENT.

WANTED: A SENSE OF HOPE

A fair criticism of journalism today is that it focuses on the negative, because negativity sells, claims Newman.

"Climate change is one of those stories where we see a lot of avoidance [in the media]," says Newman. "It's one disaster after another on the front page."

There is also a "growing fatigue around the same-old, same-old angles and dry Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports", according to Tony Carnie, a freelance environmental journalist.

Readers who do not believe in climate change turn away and dig into their beliefs even more, while others who can't bear to think about where the world is going, switch off, says Newman.

Climate coverage will have to move away from doomsday scenarios and focus more on giving people a sense of agency and hope, without compromising a sense of realism, he adds.

REMAINING CREDIBLE AMIDST THE CRISIS

Some of the biggest challenges climate journalists will face in coming years is maintaining credibility while simultaneously building wider political and social support, says Carnie. A focus on awareness is also needed for the mitigation and adaptation concerning climate issues, he says.

Credibility can be guarded by not crying wolf too often, dramatising every extreme weather event as 'unprecedented', and by not looking for further doomsday angles, Carnie adds.

"There are many different climate stories unfolding all the time, and each has its own angle. When extreme weather events happen, the hard news stories usually focus on the actual event, which is appropriate," says Leonie Joubert, a freelance science writer and author.

However, Joubert adds that it is "very *very* true that much of the reporting or media analysis does not look at the system that's causing the problem".

REPORTING IN SILOS, MISSING THE MARK

One reason for the lack of coverage on the systemic problems of climate change is that reporters only write according to their specific beat(s) and neglect to consider climate issues within a larger context, according to Joubert.

Health reporters might cover extreme floods' impact of water borne diseases, while municipal reporters might talk about infrastructure failure or a lack of service delivery in informal settlements after flooding, she explains.

Joubert argues that reporters covering specific beats won't have the opportunity to consider the political economic angle to climate change stories. This being that "many vulnerable people in the Global South are vulnerable because they have been born into countries that have been looted by imperial and colonial interests for generations", she adds.

Furthermore, these countries remain trapped in poverty as North-South inequalities are driven by neoliberal capitalism, according to Joubert.

WHEN CLIMATE BECOMES CORPORATE

Climate reporters need to critique the economic 'game' that is driving us towards an extinction-level event, says Joubert.

"The business media is particularly guilty of failing in its

PHOTO: Jean-Marie Uys
BACKGROUND: Unsplash

> “WE NEED TO SHIFT FROM SEEING CLIMATE CHANGE AS A SCIENCE ISSUE.

The M4 Route in Westbrook, Durban closed due to heavy rain just six weeks after extreme floods struck KwaZulu-Natal in April 2022. PHOTO: Twitter/@TrafficSA

journalistic duty to shape public discourse, inform the public, and hold governments accountable,” claims Joubert. “Business reporters are largely cheerleaders of capitalist business interests, only critiquing whether corporations play well by the rules of the capitalist game or not. They don’t critique the rules of the game,” she suggests.

Instead, the dominant media reflect the interests of societies with political and economic power fostered by corporations that are “basically running the political and economic show”, according to McKinley.

“Most dominant media is ad-driven. Their funding models are dependent upon those political and economic elites,” he claims.

As a result, the media tends to avoid the fundamental causes of climate issues where corporations or politicians might be involved, with the exception of events that prove to be so egregious or corrupt that it’s impossible to ignore, says McKinley.

“Fundamentally, it’s about the forces of capital who have an interest in maintaining existing profits in carbon-based fuels,” says Newman. Many of these forces might also have an interest or stake in media companies, he says.

The capitalist system, which is based on constant growth and accumulation of profit, is unable to address the issues of the climate emergency, according to McKinley. The issues he refers to are not restricted to climate change’s environmental impact, but also includes its human impact, he says.

The Continent, a free weekly newspaper in affiliation with the *Mail & Guardian*, mainly focuses on African stories and international matters through an African perspective, says Sipho Kings, the editorial director and co-founder of *The Continent*.

To keep the newspaper free and widely accessible, it relies on support from funders, says Kings. However, “different models work in different situations”, and he warns against donor models posing possible ethical complications.

“Donor models need to be critiqued and carefully watched, as there is a similar danger of editorial interference to what can happen in commercially-backed newsrooms,” he says.

Climate reporting is a core part of *The Continent* because “the African continent is responsible for virtually no pollution but is already paying a huge price – economically, ecologically and in terms of lives lost”, Kings says.

NOT JUST A SCIENCE ISSUE

When journalists move away from covering climate change as a science, and start clothing it with a human angle, it becomes evident that climate change is interrelated with poverty, food shortage, and security in Africa.

This is according to Dr Dominic Okoliko, researcher and post-doctoral fellow at the School of Public Leadership at SU focusing on sustainability communication and public sensemaking.

“We need to shift from seeing climate change as a science issue,” says Okoliko. “What about the angle of how it is affecting the community, and what can I do about it? News coverage needs to give a voice to these issues.”

The public is often unaware of those who are fundamentally impacted by and most vulnerable to climate change – the marginalised and poorer communities that live in areas susceptible to extreme weather events, according to McKinley.

“The voices of officialdom and of the elites dominate the public sphere and news reporting. People on the ground, who are directly impacted by [extreme weather] events to which reportage

refers, are seldom heard," McKinley says in *Include Our Story,* a book he co-authored about multiplying voices in the news media.

Generally, the loudest voices in climate reporting are governments and scientists, says Okoliko. "There is a need to change that."

"Voice coverage needs to balance to a great extent. For that to realise, it would shift the norm that guides journalism which tends to give attention to an authoritative voice," he says.

When more attention is given to the human impact that climate change exerts on poor and marginalised communities, news avoidance will decrease and people will begin "to appreciate the depth of the problem", according to Okoliko.

FROM GLOBAL SCIENCE TO A LOCAL ISSUE

McKinley argues that there is a need for "listening journalism" when reporting on climate change, which is much more attuned to ordinary people's voices, experiences and struggles.

The complexity of the science behind climate change is interesting at an academic level, but often remains too inaccessible for ordinary people and communities in the tropics or subtropics, according to Carnie.

"Most people, especially in poorer communities, want to know how a changing climate will alter their lives (on their doorsteps and during their own lifetimes). Why should they care unduly about melting ice caps or rainfall projections for 2090?" he says.

"The complexity of climate science is not a durable or absorbing narrative for people caught up with the challenges of their daily lives."

As a result, it becomes important to engage more closely with communities and younger audiences, and to translate climate narratives into stories with broader public appeal, often at more local levels, states Carnie.

However, Okoliko points out that it is often difficult for reporters to engage with local community members if a prior connection has not been established.

"When I interviewed reporters for my [doctoral] work, some of the things they highlighted was how local community members are not interested in speaking because they don't know the person that is coming," he says.

In order to soften the barrier between reporters and community members, reporters will need to liaise with non-governmental organisations involved in local communities, according to Okoliko.

SLOW TICKET TO CLIMATE CRASH

One of the biggest challenges Carnie has faced as an environmental reporter is telling stories of climate change where the impacts are not as immediate and dramatic as an earthquake or train crash.

"People often want to see dead bodies to be convinced that there is a deadly threat ahead. But this is a slow-moving train crash and many people still see climate change as something that might affect future generations," he says.

Humanity has already made many irreversible environmental changes, according to Midgley. He explains how the planet's inhabitants – the plants, animals and ourselves – are children of the ice age.

"We're moving ourselves out of the ice age at an ever increasing pace [...] There's some big risks out there for getting too far out of this envelope," says Midgley. "The planet will survive. Biodiversity will survive. It's our modern society that is under threat." ●

Dr. Domimic Okoliko, researcher and post-doctoral fellow at the School of Public Leadership at Stellenbosch University.
PHOTO AND GRAPHIC: Jean-Marie Uys

Leefstyljoernalistiek
in die era van
sosiale media

'n Magdom inhoud word daagliks, en byna moeiteloos, vir gebruik op sosiale media-platforms geskep. Waar pas leefstyljoernalistiek in hierdie prentjie in?

DEUR **DOMINIQUE FUCHS**

FOTO'S: Dominique Fuchs

Die gewildheid van sosiale media skep rampspoedige gevolge vir leefstyljoernalistiek. Só sê Georgia East, die vryskut-inhoudskepper, -fotograaf en kookboekskrywer wat die bekroonde leefstyl-blog, East After Noon, begin het.

East, wat daagliks leefstylinhoud aan haar bykans 10 000 volgelinge op Instagram deel, meen dat leefstyljoernalistiek geleidelik besig is om uit te sterf aangesien dit nie dieselfde trekkrag en interaksie-vermoë as sosiale media het nie.

"Joernalistiek moet vinnig nuwe inligting kan verskaf aangesien gehore nie meer die geduld of aandag het om na inligting te soek nie," sê sy. "Sosiale media-inhoudskeppers bied ook die idee dat hulle vriende met hul volgelinge is. Mense is meer geneig om na 'n vriend as 'n vreemdeling te luister."

Die koms van die sosiale media-sfeer veroorsaak verder dat die konsep van joernalistiek in iets meer vloeibaar moet verander. East hou voor dat die toenemende gewildheid van video's nóg 'n rede vir die moontlike uitsterf van leefstyljoernalistiek is.

"Hoekom sal jy oor iets oplees as jy liewers 'n stap-vir-stap-video kan kyk?" vra East. Sy dink egter dat daar plek vir leefstyljoernalistiek én sosiale media-inhoud moet wees. Tayla Gasparre meen dat daar wel spasie vir albei is. Sy is een van die twee susters agter die gewilde Instagram-kosblad, The Cape Town Glutton, wat vanaf 2015 'n volgelingbasis van 11 600 gekweek het.

Sy voeg egter by dat drukmedia dalk nie meer vir lank sal bestaan nie, aangesien sosiale media meer toeganklik is.

'N SINKENDE SKIP

Alle media sal uiteindelik digitaal word, glo Gasparre.

Hoewel talle gedrukte leefstyltydskrifte groot aanhang op sosiale media geniet, ervaar hulle steeds 'n afname in sirkulasie. *Tuis*, tesame met sy Engelse eweknie *Home*, het byvoorbeeld meer as 28 000 volgelinge op Instagram, en *Sarie* spog met meer as 86 000 volgelinge. Tussen die tweede kwartale van 2021 en 2022 het die sirkulasie van albei hierdie publikasies egter onderskeidelik met 13% en 11% gedaal, volgens data van die Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) van Suid-Afrika.

Volgens East dien sosiale media as hedendaagse medisyne vir mense se kort aandagspan en moet joernalistiek aanpasbaar wees om by hierdie kultuur in te pas.

"Ons glo dat inhoudskeppers heel waarskynlik die beroep van leefstyljoernalistiek sal vervang en dat leefstyljoernaliste hul inhoud aanlyn sal neem," sê Gasparre.

Inhoudskeppers is daartoe in staat om maklik verteerbare inligting op 'n genotvolle manier te verskaf, sonder enige pretensie of fieterjasies, sê East. Tydskrifte bevat hoogs gestileerde inhoud wat baie lesers sal bewonder, maar nie mee sal vereenselwig nie, verduidelik sy. "Sosiale media-inhoud is oor die algemeen meer herkenbaar en plaas nie soveel druk op perfeksie soos tydskrifte nie," sê sy.

DINK BUITE DIE BOKS

"Die uitdaging vir leefstyltydskrifte is om relevant te bly en deurgaans jou lesers se behoeftes eerste te stel," verduidelik Arnold Ras, digitale bestuurder van *Stellenbosch Visio*, 'n leefstyltydskrif gerig op Stellenbosch. Ras bestuur die tydskrif se digitale teenwoordigheid asook hulle sosiale media-platforms.

Lesers put wel steeds genot daaruit om 'n fisiese produk in hul hande te hou en daardeur te blaai, meen Ras. Hy is daarvan oortuig dat daar steeds 'n volhoubare toekoms vir tydskrifte is. "Dis tog hoekom ons doen wat ons doen: Om in te lig, te onderrig, en te vermaak. Goeie joernalistiek, op papier, is ver van 'n stille dood sterf," sê Ras. "Miskien is ek subjektief omdat ek so 'n onblusbare liefde vir gedrukte media en tydskrifontwerp het, maar wanneer dit by topgehalte-joernalistiek kom, maak lesers hul beursies oop."

Hierdie publikasie se sirkulasie is vir die afgelope vyf jaar gemiddeld 7 481 per uitgawe, volgens Jaco Scholtz, die tydskrif se sakebestuurder. Die tydskrif se aanlyn sirkulasie is gemiddeld 14 511 per maand. Hulle het ook meer as 5 000 volgelinge op hulle Instagram-blad.

Stellenbosch Visio se leserskap bestee egter min tyd op sosiale media-platforms, volgens Scholtz. Hulle sosiale media-blaaie word eerder gebruik om 'n tweede lewe aan die inhoud van die tydskrif te gee en om tydsensitiewe en nuuswaardige inligting met hulle lesers te deel.

Pierre Steyn, redakteur van *Weg!* en *Go!*, voeg by dat hulle lesers dit ook verkies om tydskrifte in hulle hande te hou met 70% van hulle lesersbasis wat steeds die fisiese tydskrifte koop.

"Ons digitale platforms dien as aanvullende bronne van kommunikasie om nuwe gehore regoor Suid-Afrika en elders te bereik," sê hy. "Sosiale media is 'n oseaan van inhoud – 'n nimmereindige worsmasjien wat 'n mens eensklaps kan insluk. Om as 'n publikasie jou pad te vind tussen hierdie kakofonie van beelde, video's en woorde, is alles behalwe 'n maklike taak."

"Die papier-sirkulasie van 99,9% van gevestigde tydskrifte daal al die afgelope dekade stelselmatig, en dit is eintlik merkwaardig dat die gewone *Weg!* en *Go!* s'n so min gedaal het," sê Steyn.

Weg! en *Go!* se totale sirkulasie vir die tweede kwartaal van 2022 was 46 455 en het 'n 7,5% afname sedert die eerste kwartaal van dié jaar ervaar, volgens ABC.

Die sirkulasiesyfer het egter skerp gedaal vergeleke met die tweede kwartaal van 2017 waartydens die sirkulasiesyfer 55 555 was.

Steyn verduidelik dat die span by *Weg!* en *Go!* 'n premie begin plaas het op papier namate hulle digitale gehore gegroei het. "Dit is duur om tydskrifte te druk en versprei. Waar *Weg!* en *Go!* in 2017 R40 gekos het, kos dit in 2022 R100 per tydskrif," verduidelik Steyn.

Gehalte tydskrifte in 'n spesifieke nis, en wat baie kos, gaan al meer 'n tendens word, meen hy. "'n Voorbeeld hiervan is ons jaarlikse spesiale uitgawes. In sy geheel gesien, verkoop ons nou meer *Weg!*- en *Go!*-tydskrifte as ooit tevore."

Kleiner sirkulasies van ou gevestigde tydskrifte is dalk 'n gegewe, maar dit is steeds 'n uitstekende, aanpasbare besigheid met 'n blink en winsgewende toekoms, meen Steyn.

SOSIALE MEDIA AS 'N BATE

"Tydskrifte moet, soos enige ander bedryf, aanpas en groei soos die wêreld en tegnologie om ons vorentoe beweeg," sê Ras. Hy meen dat 'n publikasie se digitale teenwoordigheid nie tweede viool moet speel nie.

Beide *Stellenbosch Visio* se lojale tydskriflesers en digitale gehore speel 'n uiters belangrike rol in dié tydskrif se groei, ontwikkeling en sukses as 'n Suid-Afrikaanse leefstyltydskrif, verduidelik hy.

"'n Mens moet voortdurend buite die boks dink en kanse waag. Só kom 'n mens al nader aan 'n blywende aanlyn gehoor wat bereid is om hul tyd af te staan om op [aanlyn] inhoud te reageer," sê hy.

Hy verduidelik dat sosiale media danksy die meetbaarheid en onmiddellikheid daarvan 'n ongelooflike aanwins vir hierdie publikasie is. "Jy weet presies met wie jy praat en waarvan hierdie gehoor hou," sê Ras.

Volgens Steyn is sosiale media "'n ryk bron van inhoud". Facebook en Instagram bied vir leefstylpublikasies toegang tot nuwe gehore en nuwe geleenthede, sê hy. Dit beteken ook 'n nuwe manier om met gebruikers in gesprek te tree.

Wat sosiale media betref, is daar egter nie een stel reëls wat vir alle publikasies sal werk nie, sê Ras. "Sosiale media is 'n bate wat ons in staat stel om 24 uur van die dag met ons gemeenskap en nismark te kommunikeer. Dit is 'n waardevolle, *real-time barometer* van gewoontes, sentiment en gedrag," sê hy.

Leefstylhandelsmerke moet seker maak dat hulle relevant bly sodat hulle vir hul verbruikers ook op sosiale media inhoud kan bied. Hulle moet egter steeds getrou bly aan hul waardes as 'n publikasie en platform, volgens Ernusta Maralack, artikelredakteur van *Kuier*.

"Jy moet die behoeftes van jou mark op alle platforms verstaan, want ons kan nie aanneem dat die persoon wat die tydskrif koop presies dieselfde persoon is wat baie tyd op sosiale media spandeer nie," voeg sy by.

Verbruikers gaan die produk kies waarmee hulle kan identifiseer en wat op verskeie vlakke tot hulle spreek, verduidelik Maralack.

Sosiale media-platforms soos Instagram, TikTok en ander maniere van digitale en sosiale interaksie, is wonderlik, sê Maralack. "Maar as daar een ding is wat ons by *Kuier* geleer het, is dit dat alles nie vir almal is nie. Ons ontmoet ons mark waar hulle is en waar hulle ons wil vind."

BETROUBARE INHOUD

Tye het inderdaad verander en sosiale media speel 'n groot rol in hoe verbruikers verkies om inhoud te verbruik, verduidelik Maralack. As verbruikers antwoorde soek vir hulle vrae of iets wil lees, sal hulle dit óf op Google soek óf gaan kyk wat bekendes of beïnvloeders te sê het, sê sy.

Volgens Maralack is mense uitgelewer aan ander se opinies op sosiale media. Hierteenoor verskaf leefstyljoernalistiek al die inligting, feite en insigte wat lesers toerus om hul eie gevolgtrekkings aan die einde van 'n artikel te maak.

"Jy moet die inligting kan vertrou. Beïnvloeders word betaal om lofsange te sing, besighede skryf hul eie resensies en daar is 'n magdom ongeredigeerde en ongeverifieerde inligting om deur te ploeg," sê Steyn.

Weg! se reputasie is gebou op die feit dat die tydskrif se joernaliste op soortgelyke maniere as sy lesers reis, en dat hulle geloofwaardige en eerlike menings gee, verduidelik Steyn. Die tydskrif betaal ook self vir uitstappies waaroor die joernaliste skryf.

"Solank ons mense met ons stories kan boei, sal daar 'n toekoms vir ons en vir goeie joernaliste wees," sê Steyn. Joernalistiek sal aanhou voortbestaan as uitstekende joernaliste na die uithoeke van die land en vasteland reis, hulle daar ingrawe as waarnemers en 'n stem gee aan 'n plek en sy mense, meen hy.

'N BLIK OP DIE TOEKOMS

Mense het 'n kort aandagspan en 'n byna onversadigbare aptyt vir inligting wat vinnig verteer kan word, sê East. Daarom moet inhoud wat geskep word, voldoen aan hierdie behoeftes, meen sy. "Mense het nie meer die aandagspan wat graag wag vir eenmaandelikse inhoud nie," sê sy.

East verduidelik dat sosiale media-neigings besig is om te verander aangesien dit nou na minder bekende inhoudskeppers beweeg wat outentieke inhoud op sosiale media plaas en slegs produkte of plekke blootstel wat in lyn met hul gehoor is.

Bekende beïnvloeders kan nie meer elke plasing 'n betaalde advertensie maak nie, sê East. Mense soek liewers outentieke inhoud en die gevoel dat hulle êrens behoort, meen sy.

"Daar is wel steeds 'n ruimte vir leefstyljoernalistiek – dit sal egter harder moet werk om voor te bly." ●

’N SEEKAT MET BAIE ARMS

Voortdurende veranderinge in die medialandskap oor die laaste klompie jare het teweeg gebring dat verskeie plaaslike drukpublikasies hulself moes vernuwe om volhoubaarheid te verseker.

DEUR **KARLA VAN DER MERWE**

ILLUSTRASIE: Karla van der Merwe

"Wat jy nie kan sien nie, kan jy nie koop nie." Só sê Terena le Roux, redakteur en uitgewer van *Idees*, *Joernaal* en hulle Engelse eweknieë, *Ideas* en *Journal*. Hulle het gedurende die Covid-19-pandemie gevind dat hul tydskrifte dit soms nooit tot op die rakke gemaak het nie.

"Ons verspreiders is nie in winkels toegelaat om tydskrifte uit te pak nie en tot vandag toe sukkel ons met winkels wat bloot die tydskrifte in hul stoorkamers laat lê, want die rakspasie het dramaties verklein," vertel sy.

Dit is slegs deel van 'n groter storie wanneer dit kom by die uitdagings wat die Suid-Afrikaanse drukmedia in die gesig staar.

AGTER DIE KAP VAN DIE BYL

Die Covid-19-pandemie het die "vooraf-bestaande strukturele langtermyn-inkrimping van drukmedia verhaas, met 'n vernietigende uitwerking op [Media24 se] eie, reeds kwesbare drukmediabedrywighede". So lui Media24 se persverklaring van 7 Julie 2020 waarin hulle aangekondig het dat hulle oorweeg om verskeie van hulle publikasies se produksie te staak, en dié wat oorleef se produksie uit te kontrakteer.

Baie publikasies word nou, ná die Covid-verwante inperkings, minder gereeld of slegs digitaal gepubliseer en redaksies moes hulle benaderings tot die bedryf verander, volgens dié persverklaring.

"Onverwagte goed soos die feit dat mense tuis gebly en meer gekook het, het beteken [dat] hulle meer kos gaan koop, en papiermeulens het begin fokus op verpakking eerder as tydskrifte. Dit het gelei tot hoër papierpryse," verduidelik Le Roux.

Die gevolg was dat baie tydskrifte hulle destydse sakemodelle moes hersien en die uitkontrakteur-model moes aanneem, verduidelik Pierre Steyn, redakteur van *Weg!* en *Go!*.

"Die redakteurs van tydskrifte soos *Weg!*, *Tuis*, *Fair Lady* en *Sarie* [...] het gegaan en kontrakte gesluit met Media24 om nog steeds inhoud te verskaf – nie net vir die tydskrifte nie, maar vir al die handelsmerkuitbreidings," verduidelik Steyn met verwysing na die bogenoemde sakemodel. "Ons is basies nou 'n vryskutspan wat op kontrak inhoud lewer aan Media24."

Dit is nie die eerste keer dat tydskrifte moes bontstaan om die valbyl se lem te probeer vryspring nie. Reeds in 2016 is die *Idees*-tydskrif saam met vier ander tydskrifte as Media24-tydskrifte gesluit, vertel Le Roux. Sy het die produksie van *Idees* toe onafhanklik begin behartig. "Die antwoord is eenvoudig – die tydskrifte was bloot nie winsgewend nie," sê sy.

VAN TYDSKRIF TOT HANDELSMERK

Landbouweekblad se redaksie het tien jaar gelede reeds besef dat hulle gedrukte media nie altyd hulle primêre produk sal kan wees nie, sê Chris Burgess, redakteur van dié tydskrif.

Volgens Burgess het die afname in sirkulasie dit vir hulle duidelik gemaak dat alternatiewe inkomstestrome ontwikkel moes word.

Die tydskrif se sirkulasie het sedert die tweede kwartaal (April tot Junie) van 2019 afgeneem van 21 081 tot 11 744 in die ooreenstemmende tyd vanjaar, volgens data van die Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) van Suid-Afrika.

> "DIE TOEKOMS VAN TYDSKRIFTE SE SAKEMODELLE IS OM TOENEMEND MEER NA DIE VRYSKUTMODEL TE BEWEEG.

Voorheen was *Landbouweekblad* een van twee groot landboutydskrifte in Suid-Afrika, volgens Burgess.

"*Landbouweekblad* en *Farmer's Weekly* was waar 'n groot deel van die bemarkingsbegroting van landboumaatskappye spandeer is," vertel hy. "Maar met sosiale media en selfone waar [enige iemand] klein video's kan maak, en met joernalistiek wat op 'n manier so vinnig 'n groot demokrasie geraak het – enige iemand kan nou 'n joernalis wees."

Deesdae kan daar nie meer na *Landbouweekblad* as net 'n tydskrif verwys word nie, maar eerder as 'n handelsmerk, sê Burgess. Dit is omdat hulle nou verskeie produkte onder dié naam publiseer.

"Dit raak baie meer gefragmenteerd. Jy doen nie meer net 'n tydskrif nie. Skielik het jy baie meer wat jy moet doen," verduidelik hy. "Ons [het] eenvoudig gegaan en gaan kyk op watter platforms ons met boere kan gesels."

Landbouweekblad is nou alles van 'n tydskrif vir boere en diegene wat in die landboubedryf betrokke is, tot 'n televisieprogram, 'n webwerf, geleenthede, konferensies en selfs 'n WhatsApp-veldtog, volgens Burgess.

Weg! het 'n soortgelyke sakemodel aangeneem, sê Steyn. Dit bestaan nou uit 'n tydskrif wat omtrent 46 455 kopieë per uitgawe sikuleer (aldus ABC se data), maar dan is daar ook die televisiereeks Weg! Agterpaaie, podsendings, 'n webwerf en verskeie sosiale media-platforms, verduidelik hy.

"Tydskrifte is lank nie meer net produkte nie – dit is multimedia-handelsmerke. Dit is belangrik om in 'n mens se agterkop te hou," meen Steyn. "Dit is soos 'n seekat met baie arms."

VRYSKUT SNY KOSTES

"Ons is in die toekoms van tydskrifte," sê Lise Coetsee, groeibestuurder by Media24 se leefstylafdeling. "Ons pryse gaan op. Mense kla altyd dat tydskrifte so duur geraak [het]."

Lesers moet egter in ag neem dat dit harde werk is om 'n tydskrif van hoë gehalte saam te stel en dat 'n span mense daarvoor betaal moet word, verduidelik sy.

Die toekoms van tydskrifte se sakemodelle is om toenemend meer na die vryskutmodel te beweeg, volgens Coetsee. "Ons gaan 'n 20/80-model wees, sal ek sê: 80% uitkontrakteer en 20%

bly in die besigheid."

Hoewel die winsmarge verklein as werk uitgekontrakteer word, voel Coetsee dat die algehele kostes verbonde aan die produksie van 'n publikasie uiteindelik minder is oor die langtermyn.

"As jy dit van so half 'n groter prentjie kyk, dan is dit beter. Maar as jy net na die sakemodel van een tydskrif kyk, dan is jou winsmarge nogal klein," verduidelik sy.

Die tydskrifte wat steeds binne die maatskappy vervaardig word, verskaf baie groter winsmarges op 'n slag, verduidelik Coetsee verder. Sy voeg egter by dat dit dalk 'n gevolg kan wees van die weeklikse publikasies wat meer gereeld op die rakke verskyn.

Steyn meen dat die vryskutmodel vir joernaliste toelaat om ander werk te doen buiten net dit wat hulle byvoorbeeld vir *Weg!* en die publikasie se ander tydskrifte doen. Hy noem egter dat hy nie seker is of dit op die langtermyn volhoubaar gaan wees nie.

"Die huidige model wat ons nou bedryf, maak tot 'n groot mate staat op daai institusionele kennis wat 'n span al oor jare opgebou het om dinge aan die gang te hou. So op die kort- tot mediumtermyn, [sal] dit kan werk," sê hy. "Dis mense wat al jare lank vir *Weg!* werk. Dis 'n goed geoliede masjien."

Hy voeg egter by dat die probleem ontstaan wanneer "dele van daardie masjien begin wegskilfer" en die joernaliste ander projekte of poste aanneem.

VIND DIE NIS

Gedrukte tydskrifte sal uiteindelik uit die korporatiewe omgewing beweeg, voorspel Steyn.

"Media24 se fokus is baie duidelik en hulle draai nie doekies om nie: Hulle sien hulself toenemend as 'n digitale maatskappy," meen hy. "Die papierprodukte maak nog steeds vir hulle goeie wins. Dit is hoekom dit daar is, [...] maar op die langtermyn mik hulle na 'n digitale toekoms."

Hy voeg egter by dat daar steeds 'n toekoms vir gedrukte tydskrifte sal wees. Hy voorspel dat dit veral in onafhanklike besit sal wees, en dat dié model dan ook in die langtermyn die meer volhoubare een sal wees. "Dit gaan baie nisprodukte wees en dit gaan duur wees," sê hy.

Coetsee noem dat tydskrifte hulle inhoud uniek gaan moet maak sodat dit anders is as die inhoud wat verniet op die internet beskikbaar is. "[Mense] gaan koop die tydskrif vir goeie, betroubare, in-diepte inhoud wat as 'n ontvlugting kan dien."

Robyn Wilkinson, die redakteur en uitgewer van *Holistica,* verduidelik dat sy haar tydskrif as 'n tipe versamelstuk aan die lesers daarvan bied. Sodoende het lesers iets wat vir hulle die moeite werd is om te hou. Terselfdertyd maak dit dan minder papier-rommel, aangesien mense dit nie sommer gaan weggooi nie, sê sy.

Holistica is 'n tydskrif wat gerig is op 'n nismark vir diegene wat van 'n holistiese leefstyl hou en deelneem in aktiwiteite soos joga en meditasie, sê Wilkinson. Dié onafhanklike tydskrif publiseer twee keer 'n jaar 7 000 uitgawes wat in winkels soos Woolworths, Clicks, Dischem, Pick n Pay en Spar versprei word, volgens Wilkinson. Ouer uitgawes is ook in gesondheidsrestaurante, joga-ateljees en by welstandsgeleenthede beskikbaar, sê sy.

Soortgelyk is *Bruis* gerig op 'n spesifieke teikenmark van mans en vroue bo die ouderdom van 50, volgens Trudie Myburgh, dié tydskrif se redakteur en uitgewer.

'n Studie wat deur die Oxford-Instituut vir Bevolkingsveroudering gedoen is, dui aan dat "die groot golf van ouer mense Suid-Afrika van 2030 tot 2050 [sal] tref", sê Myburgh.

"Die 50 plus-mark is vertroud met gedrukte publikasies en meer geneig om nie net digitaal te wil lees nie. So, dit maak sin om hierdie mark met 'n gedrukte tydskrif te bereik wat ook digitaal beskikbaar is vir diegene wat dit aanlyn wil lees," meen Myburgh.

> **"TYDSKRIFTE IS LANK NIE MEER NET PRODUKTE NIE [...] DIT IS SOOS 'N SEEKAT MET BAIE ARMS.**

GEKOMPLISEERDE INKOMSTESTROME

Beide Myburgh en Wilkinson noem dat hulle nie in die toekoms op advertensies as hulle hoofinkomstebron gaan staatmaak nie.

"Ons hoofbron van inkomste word uit verkope van die tydskrif verkry [in die vorm van] kleinhandel- en subskripsieverkope vir die gedrukte sowel as digitale weergawes van die tydskrif," verduidelik Myburgh. "Advertensieverkope vorm 'n sekondêre bron van inkomste."

Wilkinson vertel dat baie van haar adverteerders wat destyds in haar tydskrif geadverteer het, nou eerder aanlyn adverteer. Sy vertel sy maak ook nou meer staat op die omslagprys as hoofinkomstebron.

Burgess voeg by dat baie van diegene wat eers as advertensiekliënte gedien het, ook nou hulle eie inhoud produseer. "Dit is nie net jou tradisionele mededingers teen wie, en saam met wie, jy moet werk nie; dis nou ook jou voormalige kliënte wat hulle eie media-goed doen," sê hy.

DIE PAD VORENTOE

Le Roux meen dat tydskrifte op hierdie stadium moet seker maak dat hulle inhoud so goed moontlik is en "met [hulle] lesers praat". "Sonder [jou lesers] het jy nie 'n tydskrif of 'n [sakemodel] nie," sê sy.

Myburgh voeg by dat mense nooit sal ophou lees nie, ongeag die formaat van die leesstof. "Wêreldwyd is die gedrukte media steeds sterk. Indien papierpryse en verspreidingskostes bekostigbaar bly, glo ek daar is 'n toekoms vir gedrukte tydskrifte. Veral as die tydskrif ook digitaal beskikbaar is." ●

BENDING THE BUSINESS PLAN

Experts say the journalism industry is currently plagued by severe instability. In these uncertain times, media houses are trying to find the best ways of staying profitable.

BY **JOEL ONTONG**

"IT is not Covid that destroyed us," says Hopewell Radebe, the projects and office manager of the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF). The industry was "already on a downward trajectory," says Radebe, referring to the instability of the journalism industry.

A decrease in readership is a contributing factor to this instability and this was noted before the Covid-19 pandemic, he says.

"There had been a warning going around that we needed to innovate the media industry and find ways to make the business survive beyond advertising," he explains. "We are at a junction where we have to innovate or perish," says Radebe, referring to news companies adapting their revenue models for the digital space.

In this unstable industry, "a lot of people have lost their jobs and the industry is not taking more people than it used to", says Tim Cohen, the business editor at *Daily Maverick*. The industry is much smaller than what it used to be, he says.

The full-time journalism workforce decreased by half between 2008 and 2018, according to the 2018 State of the Newsroom report published by the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). The report says that the workforce went from 10 000 to 5 000 over that period, but warns that the number of job losses could be higher.

Currently, the journalism industry is a tough environment to be in, says Glenda Nevill, editor of *The Media Online*. Nevill has seen many journalists on non-permanent contracts. She has also seen journalists' salaries stagnate. The freelancing environment is becoming more fierce as well, she says.

Instability in the industry can be traced

GRAPHICS: Joel Ontong

to the 2008 financial crises, she claims.

"It's a scary environment. I'm not too sure if I had a child who wanted to go into [the journalism industry], I'd say - 'Go for it!'," she says.

Some media workers have stepped away from the news world to sustain themselves, according to Anton Harber, adjunct professor of journalism at Wits. "This uncertainty and instability have driven many journalists to find safe havens in public relations, corporate communications or related work," he says.

"Many are struggling to make a living or to build sustainable enterprises," he adds.

THE THREAT OF BIG TECH

One of the journalism industry's greatest threats is 'big tech' companies such as Google and Facebook, says Cohen.

Companies like Google and Facebook have absorbed a huge "share of mind", says Cohen, meaning these platforms take up more of people's free time. The share of mind is split further between video games and television, he says, leaving a smaller share for news.

However, the pandemic showed that trusted news is still in high demand, and audiences will go to the media to get it, says Radebe. But, audiences expect their news to be free, he says.

This is because Google and social media platforms were "picking up interesting stories and putting them up for free", says Radebe. News companies struggle to compete against these entities and lose out on advertising revenue, he explains.

Radebe says the journalism world had a delayed reaction to this threat. "The industry woke up late and [said] – 'Actually you guys have been killing us!'"

Styli Charalambous, the chief executive officer (CEO) at *Daily Maverick*, believes that the likes of Google and Facebook "built a better mousetrap" when it comes to advertising revenue.

"There was no divine right to advertising that was the sole domain of news publishers," he continues. These companies simply have better systems for garnering advertising revenue, compared to news companies, says Charalambous.

> "THUS FAR NO MODEL HAS PROVED TO BE THE SILVER BULLET.

However, he takes issue with companies like Google and Facebook not being held to the same level of account as media houses. These companies should be held accountable if they publish false stories, he says. But currently they are not, he claims.

Despite the tough environment of the online space, "different parts of the online world provide different opportunities", says Cohen. There is potential in different online resources that news companies can use to their advantage, he adds.

HYBRIDITY IS KEY

News companies rarely have one stream of revenue, according to Anton van Zyl, owner of *Zoutnet*, publisher of the *Zoutpansberger* and *Limpopo Mirror*.

Hybrid models, where companies have multiple income streams, are popular routes for many media houses, he says.

News publications may utilise advertisements, subscriptions, shopping portals and donor funding, among other things, according to Van Zyl. "It's difficult to say which of these might prove to be sustainable," he says.

For small local publishers, like *Zoutnet*, finding the best model is a challenge, he says. "Thus far no model has proved to be the silver bullet. Donor funding is difficult to secure and even less accessible for small local publishers," says Van Zyl. The *Zoutpansberger* has a print order of 2 500, while the *Limpopo Mirror* has a print order of 7 500, he says.

"The online ad model is horrific and it's hard to convince readers to subscribe and pay for news," says Van Zyl. Since they operate in marginalised communities, a paywall is not an option, he explains.

Therefore, hybrid models are most likely the future, he emphasises. Companies such as *Daily Maverick* and *News24* both have multiple streams of income, he says.

FINDING THE SILVER BULLET

Daily Maverick's main sources of income include philanthropy, commercial revenue and reader revenue, says Charalambous. Commercial revenue is generated through selling advertising packages and sponsorships through their publications and events, according to *Daily Maverick*'s website. Reader revenue mainly consists of membership payments from their audience, states their website.

"Philanthropy was [our] overarching dominant income stream, which is not great because you're susceptible to the whims of funders," says Charalambous. *Daily Maverick* then launched their membership programme, Maverick Insider, four years ago, he says. To grow the business side of the company, they are focusing on commercial and reader revenue, says Charalambous.

Certain revenue models are gaining significant popularity, such as the subscriber-based model, says Henriëtte Loubser, editor-in-chief at *Netwerk24*. Both *Netwerk24* and *News24* have articles which are free to read, but also have a subscription option for premium content.

News24 launched its subscription platform in August 2020, according to the *News24* website. *Netwerk24* has had a subscription option since its launch in 2014, according to the World Association of News Publishers. The two publications also make use of commercial revenue, according to their websites.

Other popular news websites also use subscriptions, but implement it in different ways and have different offerings. For instance, *The Citizen* has some content for

> **“THERE WILL BE A FEW WINNERS AND AN ENOURMOUS AMOUNT OF LOSERS.**

free and provides exclusive content and benefits (like accommodation vouchers) to subscribers. *Moneyweb* also provides premium content to subscribers, along with fewer advertisements, access to online archives and other benefits. This is according to each publication's respective website.

"Subscription models seem to be the future of the journalism business, with advertising supplementing this income," says Loubser.

Though newsrooms have been shrinking for years, they have begun growing again due to the income from subscriptions, claims Loubser. "Worldwide there is a recognition from the public that it costs money to produce quality journalism and that they can contribute towards this through subscriptions to news websites," she adds.

"In a lot of major developed markets, like the US and Europe and the UK, people are warning of subscription fatigue," claims Charalambous.

This is because the audience's household budget for subscriptions is not just competing with other news companies, but also entertainment companies such as Netflix, he says.

However, the general move toward subscriptions is a good one for journalism, claims Charalambous. The move forced a lot of organisations to evaluate the quality of their journalism and consider whether they were serving the needs of their audiences or their advertisers, he says.

News companies such as *News24* must have a high standard of journalism to justify a paywall for their premium content, otherwise audiences will not see their subscriber option as worth paying for, Charalambous explains. In this way, subscriber options lead to better journalism, he claims.

The fact that *News24* uses a subscription-based system is very significant, says Cohen. This is because *News24* is the "dominant news player" in South Africa's online space, he claims.

Many of the leading brands in the news market are doing well using a subscriber based model, but that same success may not translate to smaller projects, says Cohen. "There will be a few winners and an absolutely enormous amount of losers."

THE MICROPAYMENT MODEL

An alternative revenue stream for news companies is micropayments, according to Dominic Young, the CEO and founder of Axate, a company based in the United Kingdom which provides micropayment options for online publishers.

Users who have an Axate online wallet can pay for articles from publications that have signed up to Axate's micropayment service, he says. Axate does not publish news itself, he adds.

Instead of paying for a subscription, a person can pay a small fee to view a single article, such as 25 cents or £1, using an Axate online wallet, says Young.

"I started Axate because I was reflecting on the fact that the relationship which traditional readers have with traditional newspapers is casual," he says. Readers rarely made strict commitments to a single newspaper and instead used multiple sources for news, he says. Axate facilitates this same type of relationship, but online, according to Young.

This is why Young refers to this model as casual payments, instead of micropayments.

Though he believes that this is the future of news and media revenue, Young says it has been difficult to get publishers on board with the idea. Some publishers are worried that they will lose their subscribers if they offer a lower commitment opportunity, he says.

Young does believe that subscriptions and micropayments can successfully work together.

However, Charalambous believes the micropayment model has already "fallen flat". If a company utilises micropayments and a form of subscription, micropayments could "cannibalise" a company's subscription offering, he says.

"Rather than paying my R75 a month, let me pay my R2 for this article," Charalambous explains.

A LEARNING CURVE

It is a game of trial and error for news companies when trying to find the best revenue model, says Nevill. "We are learning as we go."

It has become clear that the news media industry will have to draw on a number of revenue sources, says Harber. "Publishers will have to invest more in producing the quality of news that people will pay for."

The industry needs a model that is financially stable, allows for independent journalism, and strives for profit, he says.

"The work of journalists will be more important than ever in the pursuit of truth, transparency and accountability, and hopefully society will come to recognise its value and pay for it," says Harber. ●

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Food For Mzansi didn't exist five years ago. Today, it is the biggest digital agricultural publication in South Africa, surpassing mainstream competitors. Having expanded into health and the continent-wide agricultural space, the publication continues to trailblaze the way forward with narratives previously untold.

BY **CODY HANSEN**

Just off Paarl's Main Road, on a quiet inclined street, there is a pale blue building surrounded by a metal black fence. Outside, a water fountain sits in the middle of a neatly maintained garden, boasting spekboom in bright shades of green. A stoep with a tin roof houses neighbouring doors – both nestled underneath patterned windows. One is a double door, old and wooden, which leads to a room with white walls framed with photographs from across the African continent.

Closest to the photograph of Zambia, a small kitchenette peaks through the entrance way, while more rooms are visible in the distance. In this unsuspecting space lies the heartbeat of a publication taking South Africa's agricultural landscape by storm.

ORGANICALLY PRODUCED JOURNALISM

"The Food For Mzansi Group is a house of niche vertical brands which includes *Food For Mzansi, Health For Mzansi* – which recently won best Gen Z news publication in the African Digital Media Awards – and *FoodForAfrika.com*, an Africa-wide agriculture news publication," says Ivor Price, co-founder and editor-in-chief of the Food For Mzansi Group. These are more than just digital news publications, says Price.

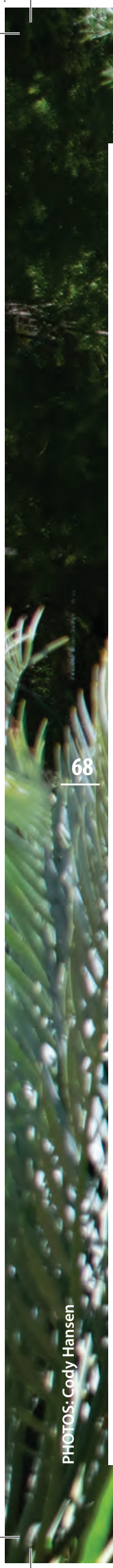
"They're little movements for change – omnichannel brands that reach audiences with great journalistic content wherever they may be."

"We speak for previously unseen, unheard, and underrepresented audiences. If they appear in our publications, there is a very good chance that they're the first people in their families to have ever been featured by the media in South Africa," says Price.

These people's stories aren't linear, and often their lives aren't pretty, says Price. "But they work incredibly hard. They're entrepreneurial. And despite everything that goes wrong, they still believe in this crazy, beautiful country called South Africa."

A MOMENT OF REALISATION

"*Food For Mzansi* was inspired by an unexpected opportunity to



present an agriculture television show, *Landbouweekliks* on VIA, way back in 2018," says Price.

He describes this as a "Damascus Road experience", in which he travelled more than 100 000km and interviewed nearly 50 farmers. Price says other than two exceptions, they were all white men involved in large-scale farming.

"Although I was inspired by their work and contribution to food security, I also could not ignore that I was now complicit in sharing a one-sided view of the agriculture sector," says Price.

As he looked further into the issue, Price realised the mainstream media was underrepresenting an important audience.

"These were the more than 2 million other farmers: Mostly small-scale and subsistence farmers, who were also greatly contributing to food security," he says.

REAPING THE HARVEST

The idea didn't start off with a publication in mind, says Kobus Louwrens, co-founder of the Food For Mzansi Group.

"It was initially just going to be kind of like a social cohesion experiment backed by one sponsor, and then our audience kind of found us," says Louwrens. "Then we saw that there's actually a viable audience for a whole new agriculture publication in this market." Despite starting as an experiment born out of passion, *Food For Mzansi* is now officially South Africa's biggest digital agricultural publication, surpassing competitors with over a century of history, says Price.

Although iAB-SA's "common currency" platform, Narratiive, was recently retired, Price references figures drawn on 1 July 2022 where *Food For Mzansi* had 404 645 unique browsers for the preceding 30-day period, while *Landbouweekblad* had 293 292 and *Farmer's Weekly* came in at 199 758.

In total, the Food For Mzansi group also has around 50 000 newsletter subscribers, says Louwrens.

CULTIVATING CURIOSITY

Food For Mzansi covers a wide spectrum of news in the agricultural field. "From the latest on agricultural politics [and] economic and international developments, to agricultural innovation, agricultural trade, indigenous foods, healthy food choices, land reform, rural security, sustainability, agri-tourism and so much more," says Duncan Masiwa, head of news at *Food For Mzansi*.

"We unashamedly salute the unsung heroes of agriculture and construct new narratives about the agricultural sector. Mzansi's farming sector has long suffered from negative narratives and myths that exist about the sector," he says.

One of Masiwa's favourite stories covered by *Food For Mzansi* was a series of stories written on the 2019 Youth in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Awards.

"More than a year after the government announced the winners of a competition aimed at acknowledging the work of exceptional young farmers, some awardees had still not received their prize money of between R50 000 and R200 000," he says.

> **"Despite everything that goes wrong, they still believe in this crazy, beautiful country called South Africa**

The winners turned to *Food For Mzansi* for help, and after multiple stories were published, they finally received their prize money, says Masiwa.

"It's quite a special feeling one experiences when you've helped a farmer or a group of people who were on the receiving end of some kind of injustice," he says. "In the end, that's what journalism is all about, right? Being a voice for the unheard and unrecognised."

CHANGING THE GAME

Food For Mzansi is positioned as the new face of South African agriculture, according to Louwrens.

"I think in the broader South African media landscape, we like to think we've got a role to play in terms of diversifying," he adds.

"We're a black-owned, small, independent company. Our mission is to represent and diversify stories that are being told and the people that are being represented," says Louwrens. "We also like to think that we play a bit of a disruptive role in our niche."

Food For Mzansi takes a lot of pride in the amount of coverage small agricultural successes and small-scale farmers are receiving in other mainstream publications at the moment, he says.

"We like to think maybe we played a little bit of a role in making farmers the heroes that they seem to have become now over the last couple of years," says Louwrens.

Noluthando Ngcakani, head of news at *Health For Mzansi*, says she didn't think twice about applying after seeing that *Food For Mzansi* was looking for a features writer.

"I guess what inspired me is seeing people who looked like me doing such amazing things in agriculture, and how refreshing the brand is and its mission to give other perspectives of a sector that had once rejected people who look like me," she says.

"I just thought it was beautiful to see young, black farmers [and] women in agriculture just being celebrated and embraced," says Ngcakani.

DOWN TO BUSINESS

Whereas typical digital news publications may be reliant on a single stream of revenue, such as advertising, *Food For Mzansi* have multiple, says Price. "We are an omni-channel brand cleverly monetising different products."

A major income stream for the group is events, says Louwrens.

One of the events hosted by *Food For Mzansi* is the Mzansi

PHOTOS: Cody Hansen

Young Farmers Indaba, a gathering of 200 of South Africa's finest young farmers and agripreneurs sponsored by agricultural and other enterprises, says Price.

Another income stream is advertising, which is "small but growing", says Louwrens. The group is working hard to build advertising relationships, he adds.

"We are up against publications that have 100+ year-old track records and relationships in what's actually a very conservative sector. But we're seeing really good things happening there in terms of some of the major agri-advertisers starting to trial us," says Louwrens.

The group also makes "quite a bit of money" from the combination of their podcasts and newsletters, says Louwrens.

They currently have two podcasts, Farmer's Inside Track and Sisters Without Shame; as well as seven weekly newsletters, according to Meagan van der Vent, office manager and audio and video producer at the Food For Mzansi Group.

While the group's publications are advertiser-driven, a grant received two years ago has been a game-changer for *Food For Mzansi*, says Louwrens.

"We were one of only two South African publications to win a Google News Initiative grant," says Louwrens. This helped fund a nationwide citizen journalism programme called Sinelizwi, he says. So far, more than 60 people have been trained in the basic principles of news, journalism and mobile video journalism through the programme, says Price.

FROM THE OUTSIDE, LOOKING IN

Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist at the Agricultural Business Chamber of South Africa, believes *Food For Mzansi* has filled a void in South Africa's agricultural media space.

"For a long time, [South Africa] had the traditional magazines that are focused on agriculture", but there wasn't a lot of investment in developing an online presence with fast-paced reporting, Sihlobo tells *SMF*.

"I think *Food For Mzansi* has managed to do that," he says. Sihlobo believes *Food For Mzansi* has an edge because they target a younger audience in their writing style, approach to news, and their coverage of important policy points, he says.

There has been a positive reception from the agricultural industry towards the publication, says Sihlobo.

"They have this fresh voice and fresh perspective, and even the way they display their news and their reporting – it carries that," he says. "As things stand today, I see potential and growth in what *Food For Mzansi* is doing."

PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

"My vision has always been to create a significant new player in the South African and continent-wide media space; a company that is innovative in terms of business models and has a disruptive culture in terms of re-inventing things that we've sort of become used to," says Louwrens.

A few years ago, *Food For Mzansi* was the new kid on the agricultural block with lots to prove, says Masiwa. "I think we're past that now."

Having started out with two co-founders and one employee, the group now employs nearly 20 people, says Price. "That's bigger than many newsrooms in this country today. We've also reached a point where the business has become sustainable without having a big funder on board," he says.

"Furthermore, I would like to believe that the 12 global media awards we've won in just more than three years are testimony to the journalistic excellence and media innovation we strive for," says Price.

Despite their success, Price says the group is still in the startup phase, and "will continue to be for the next two years, at least".

"Just like a new-born baby who's grown into a toddler, it will take many more years to reach our full potential." ●

From left to right: Meagan van der Vent, office manager at the Food For Mzansi Group, Luci Dordley, journalist at *FoodForAfrika*, Duncan Masiwa, head of news at *Food For Mzansi*, Noluthando Ngcakani, head of news at *Health For Mzansi,* and Vateka Halile, journalist at *Food For Mzansi*. PHOTO: Cody Hansen

ETHICS & ERRORS

THE TRUISM OF LEARNING FROM MISTAKES IS POSSIBLY MORE ACCURATE THAN EVER BEFORE. TO DEVELOP AS ETHICAL JOURNALISTS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE MISTAKES FROM THE PAST.

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THE NEW STAN•DARD

adv. Language and the media's give and take

GRAPHICS: Connor Cogill

Language use reflects society, and media reflects language use. In an era of social media and fast-paced change, the dynamic nature of language is sure to follow...

BY **CONNOR COGILL**

From lexical shifts to changes in register, the dynamic nature of language means that it is constantly subject to change. These changes do not just affect the way we speak and tweet, but are reflected in the ways we produce media.

This is according to Prof Rufus Gouws, a lexicographer and professor of Afrikaans linguistics at Stellenbosch University (SU). Language changes are not linguistically motivated, but are the result of how society uses language, as well as the communicative needs of speech communities, says Gouws.

"The media plays a role [in changing language use] by reflecting the language use of the various speech communities," he says. "The media can introduce new language forms, but they rather reflect what really happens in actual language use."

AN INTER-LINGUAL AFFAIR

"In our era, language change is happening at quite a pace," claims Gouws. This is because the use of language in the media has to reflect the use of language in society, he explains.

These ideas are echoed by Leo Cordom, an Afrikaans multimedia journalist at *Netwerk24*.

"Language is constantly changing, and I believe journalism is a testament to that," he says.

> **"LANGUAGE IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING, AND I BELIEVE JOURNALISM IS A TESTAMENT TO THAT.**

However, language change is not the same for all languages, according to Marius Visser, chief sub-editor at *Huisgenoot*. Visser works primarily in Afrikaans, and claims that the written word has yet to catch up with the spoken word of the 1980s.

He points to broadcast news as an example of this language lag. "Some people [in broadcast journalism] are not even willing to say the word *kar* (car). They would rather say *motor*."

"There's a register that they keep when they speak on the news, when they write in the newspapers, and so on," says Visser. "That, I think, is dangerous, because young people grow up and don't recognise their own language when they watch the news."

Visser refers to the different dialects in Afrikaans media, and how only Standaardafrikaans is represented. This is a "source of estrangement", he adds.

REGARDING REGISTER

Although the gaps in dialectal representation still exist, the speed with which the written word catches up with the way we speak has increased, says Visser. "More voices [and] more diversity gets to be put on the page."

"[The] informality that we get away with in the written word is becoming far more of a reflection of how people really speak," claims Visser. "I think it's a very good thing; that we're moving towards writing the way that people speak, in a language that people can recognise as their own."

However, these changes in formality are dependent on the type of story being produced, according to Cordom.

"When we look at business or political stories, it is more of a formal nature, because the sources used for such types of stories are experts and academics," he says.

When it comes to people's stories that are based on their own experiences, Cordom sees the shift in language a lot more.

"Regarding Standaardafrikaans and Kaaps, I always aim to treat the dialect in which the person speaks with sufficient compassion and respect," he says.

THE SOCIAL FACTOR

Chief among the reasons for change in media language is social media, and economic and cultural power, says Visser.

"The age of the demographic that commands the most advertising dollars has gone down," says Visser. This translates to more economic and cultural power resting with younger people, which, in turn, alters the discourse we see in the media, he says.

Jana van der Merwe, Afrikaans investigative editor at *Netwerk24*, says she thinks social media actually places more of an onus on journalists to keep their writing to a professional standard.

"Our standard of writing is what differentiates us as professional journalists [from] the public," she says.

"I think the use of social media is an excellent platform for freedom of speech, but on our platforms, our choices of words need to remain formal, as we need to maintain objectivity at all times."

CHANGE IN PRACTICE

While Van der Merwe was working at *Huisgenoot* a few years ago, the decision was made to stop addressing sources by their last names and, instead, address them by their first names, she explains. This was an effort to connect with readers on a more personal level, she says.

There is also "a greater social awareness" impacting the way journalists write, says Van der Merwe. "As journalists, it is our responsibility to be socially aware."

"We are very cautious of not writing or using word choices that can be misconstrued for opinion, condonement or as being subjective," she adds.

On a linguistic level, some terms fall into disuse because of

CONTENT WARNING: THE FOLLOWING SECTION CONTAINS MENTIONS OF SUICIDE.

ideological changes, whereas others do because the actual things they refer to have become obsolete, explains Gouws.

One such example of ideological changes implicating language changes is the Afrikaans term "*selfmoord*", which directly translates to "self murder", being dropped in favour of the term "*selfdood*", which translates to "self-death", says Visser.

This change is helpful because it changes the way people think about suicide, according to Dr Lauren Mongie, a sociolinguists lecturer at SU.

"It's a small distinction – '*moord*' and '*dood*' – but I do think that it's a positive change, and I do think that it's in the direction of where we need to go," says Mongie, adding that this shift was "a very sensible one" because it maintains the meaning, but has a less harsh connotation.

THE SPEEDING TREADMILL

A possible side-effect of the new standard of language is that we are faced with the "treadmill of euphemisms", claims Visser.

"Through social media, and through 'wokeness' and cancel culture, there is a quick turnover of prohibited words," he claims.

Visser uses the example of terms used throughout history to refer to people with low IQs. The term "idiot" was meant to be a neutral term, but then adopted a pejorative connotation and was replaced by "moron", he explains. Once "moron" also started being used in an insulting way, it was replaced by "imbecile", which also became pejorative, he adds.

This "treadmill" of replacing a negative term with a neutral one without changing how we approach or perceive these terms is what is problematic, according to Visser.

"It's not about the word," he says. "A lot of people think we can solve all these problems by using the right words, and that's not the case. Your whole approach needs to change."

However, incremental lexical changes are important in order to move forward as a society, says Mongie.

"Small shifts are very important and very positive, because we know that the way that something is described hugely influences how people perceive it," she says.

Mongie refers to a psycholinguistic research study in which people were exposed to two different texts – one neutral and one negative – concerning the same concept.

Reactions to the concept were recorded afterwards, and the research found that the negative text caused the participants to have negative feelings about the concept, she explains.

The cycle of terms replacing one another is moving faster and faster, says Visser.

"[The treadmill] has been speeding up in the last seven years or so – since 2015. There's been sort of a call to change," Visser claims. "I think, eventually, rationality will win out, but it might take a while."

HEADLINING THE FUTURE

Cordom's hope for the future of language use in the media is that it will be inclusive and that social awareness will be a big end goal for storytelling.

> **"AND IF YOU START TO REALLY DELVE INTO IT INSTEAD OF JUST REPLACING THE WORDS; THAT'LL GIVE YOU THE EDGE.**

After joining the newsroom in 2020, Cordom's approach as a young journalist is to always strive for "authentic storytelling", he says.

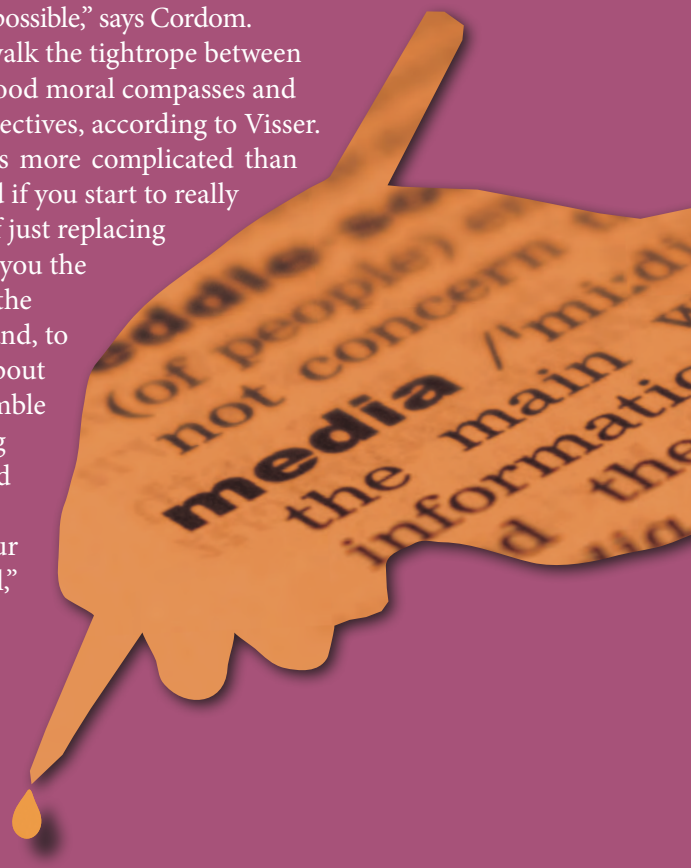
"I believe that one of the most important qualities a journalist can have is to have compassion for their sources – and especially the dialect in which they speak," Visser added.

"I think that what other young journalists can do to remain progressive in their use of language is to approach their journalism with an open mind. Educate yourself and reach out to other colleagues if you are unsure, in order to make sure you act as inclusive as possible," says Cordom.

Journalists need to walk the tightrope between progression, having good moral compasses and deepening their perspectives, according to Visser.

Every issue is always more complicated than it seems, he says. "And if you start to really delve into it instead of just replacing the words; that'll give you the edge. That'll give you the advantage to understand, to be more productive about issues, to be more humble – because you're going to make mistakes. And I think that's going to have an impact on your moral compass as well," says Visser.

"You just have to remember the world is more complicated than you think." ●



SHAPING

GRAPHIC: Jamie Venter

The media industry produces a plethora of content on a daily basis, on various platforms, affecting people in different ways. But is the industry reflective enough, or aware of the extent to which their articles can influence the perspectives of readers and listeners?

BY ASIVE MABULA

"Journalists must be fully aware of the role they play in shaping readers' or listeners' views," says Suné Payne, a journalist at *Daily Maverick*.

Misinformation can have real life impacts, such as negatively influencing people's opinions, decision-making and overall poor judgement, says Payne. Therefore, it is important that context and all sides of a story are told in a fair and balanced manner so that the listener or reader can have better formed opinions, she explains.

FROM MISINFORMATION TO MISCOMMUNICATION

"Familiarity with media literacy skills, and especially how they apply to things like social media, is going to be really important," says Keegan Leech, a researcher at Africa Check in Johannesburg.

The interconnectedness of social media has allowed people easier access to misinformation, says Leech. Put differently, it has allowed misinformation to spread more easily, he says. "But, it is a double-edged sword in that it also allows people easier access to good information which is hopefully what we aim to provide."

Africa Check is an African independent fact checking organisation that verifies claims made anywhere in the public domain, Leech explains. This includes anything said on social media, and even in Parliament, he says.

The company analyses claims to ensure that they are accurate and concur with available verified information, according to Leech. Africa Check uses the same networks on which misinformation spreads to promote accurate information, he adds.

The immense popularity of social media and the rise of misinformation has challenged the credibility of journalists, and has raised questions about the longevity of the profession, according to a 2021 study conducted by Prof Ingrid Volkmer, head of the media and communications programme at the University of Melbourne in Australia.

The study, which looked into digital interaction during the Covid-19 pandemic, shows that nearly 4 billion people, or about 53% of the world's population, are active social media users and use more than one platform. Facebook was found to be spreading approximately 3.8 billion views of health and vaccination misinformation during this time, the study states.

The platforms carrying journalism might have changed. "[But] journalism is not about to die," says Lizeka Mda, a journalism practice lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand.

"What should set us apart from all the noise on social media is that what is produced by journalists, and published, must be information that has been verified. Also, as a journalist, you should think long and hard before pressing the 'share' button on social media," says Mda.

Practising the "rule of thumb" is important before sharing anything, says Leech.

"Teaching people the simple rules of... stop, think and see if this is emotionally charged… often is a really good way to give them media literacy skills that they can then apply all the time," adds Leech. It is important to note what plays on one's emotions as it can influence what is shared, he says.

The media, therefore, has a responsibility to make people aware of how they engage or share information online. The pandemic won't be the last crisis fact checkers experience, says Leech.

"I think that, if anything, [the Covid-19 pandemic has] just given us a very good example of why fact checking and accurate reporting of information is so important," he says.

"JOURNALISM IS NOT ABOUT TO DIE.

USING NUMBERS TO COMBAT MISINFORMATION

Using statistical data to convey information is one way to ensure citizens are informed about the state of the socio-economic and physical environment they live in, says Jeremie Munyabarame, senior marketing officer for Statistics SA (Stats SA).

Socio-economic statistics provide critical and vital information for the livelihood of individuals, families and society in general, says Munyabarame. "Official statistics conveyed through [the] media enable people to make evidence-based decisions and to inform their opinions," he says.

"These statistics are covered in the mainstream media and

it would be great for community media to cover them more to bring the facts about our society closer to home in a more relevant way," says Munyabarame. This would allow journalists to narrow perspectives and context through the use of language and geography, he adds.

Moreover, people are able to hold the state accountable in terms of service delivery and policy implementation based on the statistical evidence produced, he adds.

"These statistics paint the picture of the reality of the country's people, economy, living conditions and natural environment within a designated time frame," says Munyabarane.

A MIRROR OF SOCIETY

However, Jessica Uiras, programme coordinator at Namibia Media Trust (NMT), points out that, ultimately, public interest comes down to what matters to everyone in society.

"It is about the common good, and the well-being of everyone in the community journalists serve," she says.

NMT, a non-profit organisation based in Namibia, also owns the newspaper *The Namibian*, as well as WordPress Namibia, a printing company. The organisation promotes press freedom, freedom of expression, and access to information at national, regional and international levels, says Uiras.

Uiras adds that some people in Namibia gravitate towards "negative stories". They also tend to prefer more political stories, as these potentially affect their livelihoods, she says.

Mda agrees that the principles of journalism are ever important. "Our first obligation is to the truth. And public interest should come before our own self-interest," says Mda.

"I think like any form of media, journalism does have the potential to feed into people's biases," says Tamsin Metelerkamp, a civil society and social justice journalist for *Daily Maverick*.

"That's why it's so important to have a broad range of media houses, [and] a broad range of journalists with a broad range of focuses so that people are hopefully exposed... not just to things that they already believe," says Metelerkamp.

There has increasingly been a move towards short-form content to cater to readers' attention spans and to get news out faster. However, Metelerkamp feels this trend does a disservice to a lot of stories.

A READ INTO THE FUTURE

By verifying facts and gathering statistics, patterns within and influencing society can be predicted, says Payne.

Journalists' ability to influence perspectives is mirrored by their ability to "predict patterns" without necessarily predicting the future, she says. "In many cases, journalists warned of the potential bad behaviour of certain individuals during the early 2010s – only for these faces to emerge during the height of the Gupta-linked state-capture era."

> **"PUBLIC INTEREST IS ABOUT WHAT MATTERS TO EVERYONE IN SOCIETY. IT IS ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD.**

However, these warning signs were ignored and some of those individuals would later hold powerful positions within government and state-owned entities, says Payne.

Metelerkamp believes that even though the platforms that carry journalism change, the narratives of stories themselves do not necessarily change.

The media will continue to report on the same major issues, and readers and listeners will continue to hear about corruption, health and poverty, she says.

"I think South Africa has a lot of stories that don't get told, and anybody who is able to listen and to bring a few more of those into the public eye... It makes a difference," says Metelerkamp.

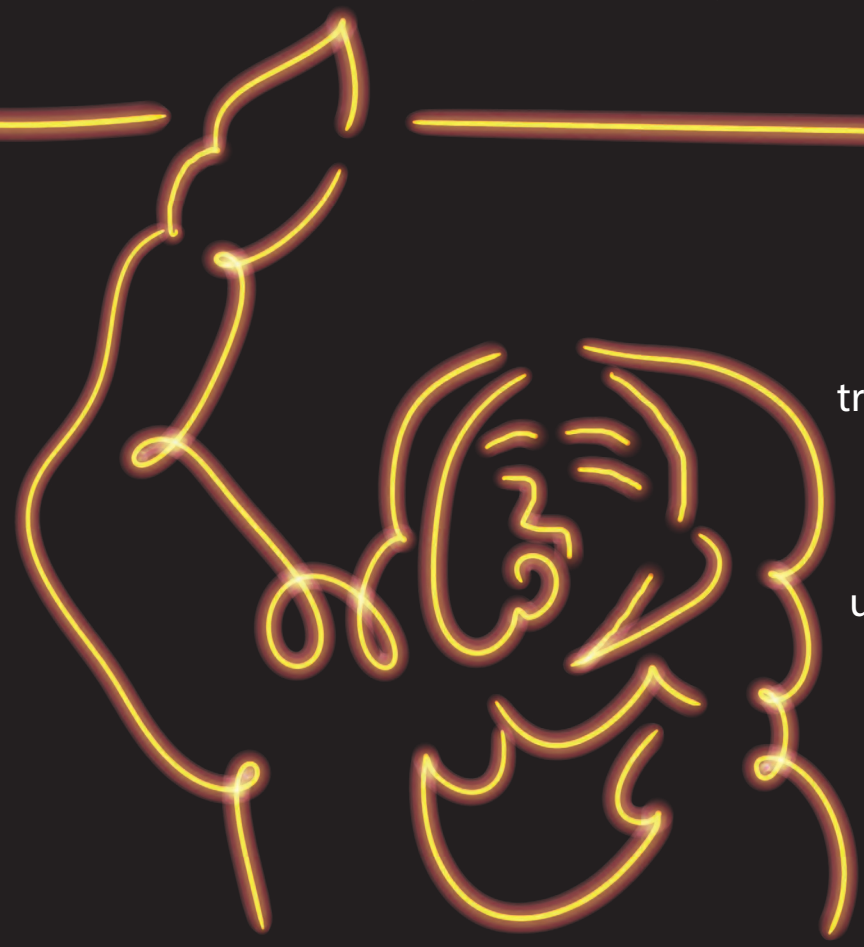
Different types of stories influence perspectives in different ways. Metelerkamp and Payne both find that longer stories provide more depth, and focus more on understanding, than short-form stories.

However, Metelerkamp believes there are positives to be found in short-form journalism – particularly as it pertains to public news consumption.

"I think people consuming news [...] about the world around them is good," she says. "So, if you know shorter articles are the way to do that and people are engaging, that is still a good thing." Although the platforms on which journalism is presented may continue to change, facts will remain facts and the need for verification will continue, says Leech. However, the notion that people will believe what they want to believe is one that he disagrees with.

"There is promising evidence that access to reliable information and exposure to fact checking can almost inoculate people against misinformation," says Leech. ●

WHEN JOURNALISM TAKES A STAND



The traditional view of journalism as only a neutral transfer of facts is coming under scrutiny. Advocacy journalism welcomes the inclusion of the journalist's voice, and can be understood as journalistic work that is open and honest about the desired impact and changes in the world.

BY **TAKUDZWA PONGWENI**

ILLUSTRATION: Jessica Hillier

Objectivity is often seen as the cornerstone of journalism. It necessitates journalists to utilise a reliable method of testing information – a transparent approach to evidence – specifically to ensure that their individual and cultural biases do not undercut the precision of their work, according to the American Press Institute website.

However, journalists have begun redefining what it means to report responsibly, resisting the century-old idea that being objective is the only way to do it.

"Of course, the idea of objectivity is in itself a highly debated one and perhaps even a flawed one," says Elna Schütz, a South African freelance journalist.

TAKING A STAND

All media organisations, including those that are relatively apolitical, adopt specific standards and principles that could be seen as political, says Micah Reddy, an investigative journalist for *amaBhungane*.

The amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism is a non-profit investigative newsroom whose largest source of income, according to their website, comes from donations from their readers and charitable foundations.

While they do not claim to practice advocacy journalism, they have a stance rooted in exposing wrongdoing and empowering people to hold those in power accountable, their website states.

Their journalists, such as Reddy, abide by this stance. For him, advocacy journalism is "journalism that pursues a particular political or social cause, usually

overtly". Considering this definition, he asks, "Where does one draw the line?"

UNDERSTANDING ADVOCACY JOURNALISM

Advocacy journalism is a form of journalism "that champions a particular cause", says Masego Mafata, a freelance journalist. "This can be a cause aligned to social justice, health, climate – any field really," she explains.

Schütz considers advocacy journalism at the core of fields such as health journalism. If an article about heart disease or cancer educates people and moves them towards better health in some small way then that can be seen as advocacy, she says. Silvio Waisbord, a professor of media and public affairs at the George Washington University, says he has noticed an uptake in advocacy journalism globally.

"I think there has always been interest, but as the limitations of the neutrality paradigm became woefully apparent, there has been more interest in alternatives, especially advocacy journalism," he explains.

Bernard Chiguvare, a freelance journalist for *GroundUp*, considers covering stories about issues for those who are vulnerable and have no one to stand for them as advocacy journalism. *GroundUp* is a not-for-profit news publication that reports on human rights stories across South Africa, according to their website.

Many of the stories Chiguvare covers concern migrant communities in South Africa. "Journalists who prefer covering such stories and being the voice of the voiceless could be practising advocacy journalism," he says.

An essential part of advocacy journalism is either an appeal for, or condemnation of, something, says Mafata.

"Advocacy journalism is rooted in integrity, transparency, and a desire to right that which has been wronged," she says, adding that even articles about state capture can be regarded as a form of advocacy journalism.

"This is but one example of the power of advocacy journalism in South Africa, and there are many more causes for which advocacy journalism may be essential in a similar vein," says Mafata.

IS OBJECTIVITY POSSIBLE?

One of the reasons why journalists have turned to advocacy journalism is the ongoing debate on whether objective reporting is a realistic ideal. Mafata considers it in flux, explaining that it is not as inflexible as journalists are taught.

"As a human writing for or against a cause, I think it is difficult to completely switch off and feel no compassion as you write," she says. Unconscious biases can also sneak into one's writing, despite journalists being unwilling to admit it, says Mafata.

"I guess one could say that this editing and revision process is a way to work objectivity into our work," she adds.

Schütz considers the idea of complete objectivity as archaic. "I do not believe that the only kind of journalism that is valid is one that is heartless or without motivation; I do not think that is really realistic," she says.

A mindless obsession with objectivity can also result in warped results, such as when the BBC reported on "one of the many conflicts in Gaza", says Reddy.

"One of its reports contained a rather decontextualised infographic showing rockets fired by Palestinian militants versus Israeli airstrikes as if they were one-for-one equivalent. Which is absurd," he claims.

The Israeli military, one of the most sophisticated militaries in the world, bombing a poverty-stricken population that could only utilise rudimentary homemade rockets could not be considered a one-to-one equivalent, according to Reddy.

"The thinking behind the BBC report was no doubt all about being seen to be objective, but it came at the cost of more important journalistic ideals like accuracy and fairness, and produced a silly result," he adds.

A CLEAR NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY

Recognising that objectivity is a false ideal, does not make one an advocacy journalist, says Reddy.

"CUTTING CORNERS DISCREDITS NOT JUST ADVOCACY JOURNALISM, BUT ALL FORMS OF JOURNALISM PRACTICE.

ILLUSTRATION: Takudzwa Pongweni

"It is just about realising a simple truth – no individual or organisation exists in a vacuum where they can assume an entirely neutral position on complex matters. We need to be honest and transparent about that," he explains.

In journalism, being transparent and making one's standings clear are essential, says Schütz.

Journalism that is funded, supported or created by a group or individual with specific political, moral, ethical or even academic leanings, needs to be made clear so that readers are aware of it, she adds.

"In an open and democratic society, a publication that advocates for a certain cause ought to be upfront about it," explains Reddy. "Advocacy journalism must be done with credibility, fairness, truth, accuracy, etc. foremost in mind."

A SLIPPERY SLOPE

Occasionally not adhering to the traditional conceptions of objectivity adds to the contentions people have regarding advocacy journalism, explains Mafata. "I think advocacy journalism is sometimes misconstrued as propaganda," she says.

Rather, it is a form of journalism practice that necessitates austerity, extensive research, and self-awareness concerning one's position on issues and the diverging stances on those issues, says Mafata.

For Kathryn Cleary, a freelance health and human rights journalist for *Spotlight NSP*, there is no such thing as 'advocacy journalism'. But, she says, journalism can be utilised as an advocacy tool by public and civil society member organisations.

"Stories that focus on certain causes or involve interviews with advocacy organisations can be tools for certain causes, but I don't believe journalism in itself can be described as advocacy," she says.

Although Cleary does not consider herself an advocacy journalist, she believes every individual has the right to health and the realisation of their human rights. "I pursue stories and investigations that seek to highlight when these rights are not being realised, were it be through inadequate access to resources, corruption, violence or other means," she says.

Some journalists, such as Cleary, believe advocacy journalism does not uphold the journalistic tenets of being impartial and unbiased. "Journalism should not be explicitly biased, and advocacy causes have an implicit bias," she says.

Waisbord also warns against a type of journalism that leans towards unsubstantiated opinion. "Some forms of advocacy journalism can merely turn into opinion if reporting is not sufficiently grounded on documented, proven facts," he explains.

Advocacy journalism is also a time-consuming form of journalism practice, says Mafata.

"One of the potential pitfalls therein is that people may cut corners to shorten the time taken in their practice of advocacy journalism," says Mafata. "Cutting corners reduces the credibility and the accuracy of the work."

THE NEED FOR ADVOCACY JOURNALISM

Waisbord considers advocacy journalism as a valuable form of journalism practice.

"It foregrounds issues and calls for action," he says. Numerous journalists, such as Mafata and Schütz, hold the same view.

For Mafata, advocacy journalism "can be used as a tool to shed light on important causes, as well as a tool through which to bring relegated narratives to the public's attention".

Schütz believes advocacy journalism is a helpful form of journalism when it is done in an honest, transparent and ethical way.

She wrote an article on spraying sanitisers on humans in special tunnels or booths to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. This article was an example of advocacy journalism, she says. Although she approached the topic neutrally, the more work she did on it, the more it became clear that this was not a safe practice.

A few weeks later, President Cyril Ramaphosa condemned the use of these disinfection booths. "I guess in a way, I did push a particular action through that article even though I believe I did it in as thorough of a scientific way as I could," she explains.

In South Africa, reporting that takes a stance could, for example, help shed light on conditions in informal settlements that struggle with poor service delivery, Chiguvare points out.

"For these communities to get the services, journalists should be the voices of these people, otherwise, the community will live and die without getting any services," he explains.

THE FUTURE OF ADVOCACY JOURNALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

"There are many pressing issues and causes in South Africa that benefit, and will continue to benefit, from advocacy journalism," says Mafata. The profitability of advocacy journalism will likely influence its viability in the future, says Waisbord.

"Some good advocacy journalism has challenges finding sustainable funding in many countries around the world," he says.

While Schütz thinks there is a future for advocacy journalism in South Africa, not all publications are suited for it. "I do not think that mainstream media houses are always the place for that; I think it often falls into the smaller niche spaces," she explains.

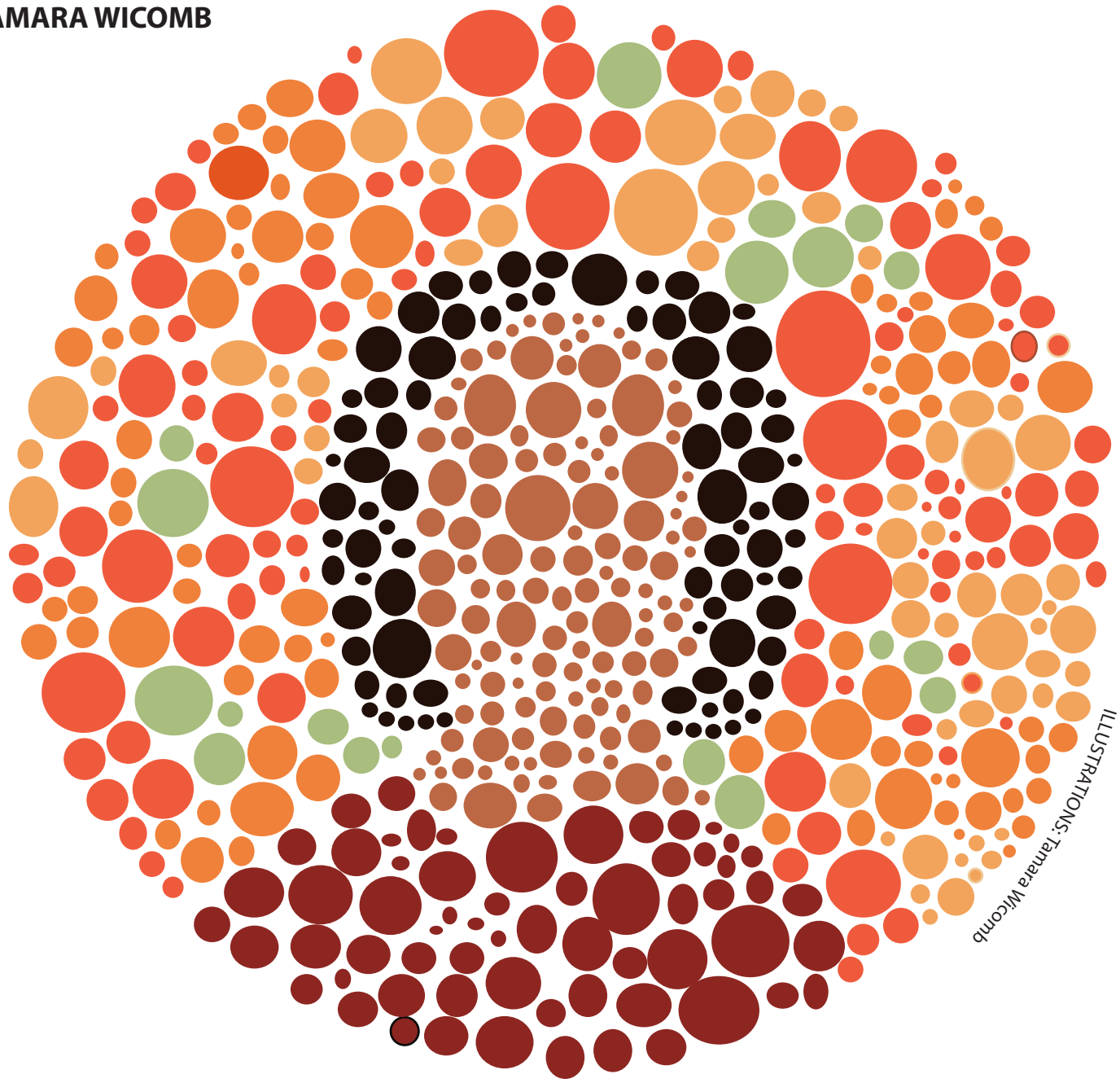
Reddy says numerous worthy causes in South Africa deserve coverage and advocacy in the South African media, but do not receive it. "Why shouldn't we have, say, a labour publication that is openly pro-worker, and that gives a voice to ordinary working-class people, through journalism that is accurate and fair?" ●

CRITICAL RA

‘No such thing as colour-blind’

Racism still remains entrenched in large parts of South African society. Experts believe critical race theory can be a way of improving the media’s coverage of race relations and of acknowledging that racism is deeply embedded in the country’s institutional structures.

BY **TAMARA WICOMB**



ILLUSTRATIONS: Tamara Wicomb

CE THEORY

Critical race theory could provide an opportunity for journalists in South Africa to benefit from addressing institutionalised racism and finding solutions to ongoing inequalities.

This is according to Shelley Bradfield, an associate professor of communication studies at Central College in the United States of America and author of *"It's [Not] Like a Racist Thing": Producing Controversial Racial Representations in Postapartheid South Africa.*

Critical race theory, or CRT, allows journalists to evaluate or analyse a current situation effectively, she says.

"The positive impact of becoming social advocates for equality might mean that journalists change the discourse of South Africa to welcome and include all people regardless of their identities," she says.

BUT WHAT IS CRT?

CRT is a concept that academics use to decipher ways in which institutions "continue to oppress 'non-white' people, despite implementing policies that, on paper, appear to be race neutral or 'colour-blind'", says Caiden Lang, an intern at the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR).

"The purpose of a critical [race] theory is to seek emancipation from oppression, both material and mental," he continues.

Journalists who are not informed on the assumptions of CRT could report differently on a racial incident than those who are knowledgeable on the topic, claims Lang.

"The former might consider the incident emblematic of a broader system of racial oppression that needs to be dismantled, whereas the latter might consider it an isolated incident that needs to be dealt with as such," he says.

The mention of CRT "is beginning to feature more and more as people struggle to find solutions to the quagmire of racial inequality we seem to be stuck in", says Lang.

Current CRT critiques the beliefs and practices that "enable racism to persist, whilst also challenging these practices to seek liberation from systematic racism", says Dr Prinola Govenden, senior research fellow at the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS) and co-author of the article — *Critiquing Print Media Transformation and Black Empowerment in South Africa: A Critical Race Theory Approach.*

In the article, Govenden highlights that CRT is not aberrational, and it starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic and can feature in our everyday practices.

"The institutionalised nature of racism is manifested in ways that our modern society restricts racialised individuals' access to opportunities, material conditions, [and] power," she says.

These inequalities are deeply embedded in legal institutions but are also absorbed into everyday culture and practices that are often invisible or easily overlooked, Govenden says in the article.

LOOKING TO THE PAST TO INFORM THE FUTURE

When looking at the first 20 years of democracy in SA, newspapers in the post-apartheid era were perpetuators of the stereotypes of blackness that "came from the colonial era", claims Govenden.

"Nowhere in our media policy and regulation are we imploring our media to be cognisant of race and racism," says Govenden.

The early history of South African media indicates that the role of the media and journalism, which was filled with 300 decades of white domination, was a racist one, claims Govenden.

Therefore, for journalism and journalists in a post-apartheid South Africa, CRT would be very useful, she says.

"If we have to apply that [CRT] to a journalist, it goes to the heart of what the journalist believes in," says Govenden.

The role of a journalist in a democratic South Africa is not just about covering the bottom line – it is about reducing stereotypes, she continues.

The media can play three roles within society; producers of racial ideology, reproducers of racial ideology, or transformers of ideology that reduce stereotypes and report with equality and inclusion, says Govenden.

> **"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS BEING COLOUR-BLIND WHEN IT COMES TO RACE.**

"I think critical race theory, along with decolonial theory, would allow us to look at race more deeply," she states.

Decolonial theory argues that there is a continuous pattern that presents itself within our society stemming from "systems of colonial power in post-colonial societies", says Govenden.

While decolonial theory could provide a deeper insight into race, CRT could provide insight into the institutionalised nature of racism and how it has manifested in modern society and directly restricted access to opportunities and power, she says.

"Issues of race, racism and inequality feature prominently in South African journalism," says Lang.

"Even though CRT is not mentioned explicitly, the assumptions implicit in the theory, whether affirmed or denied, often influence the thrust of an article – whether [journalists] know it or not," says Lang.

In the role of the media, CRT currently critiques the notions of rights and opportunities, she adds.

"The role of our media, even the Press Code, balances the public interest in itself, which is a very British concept of freedom of expression, which is a liberal notion," says Govenden.

> **"THE PURPOSE OF A CRITICAL [RACE] THEORY IS TO SEEK EMANCIPATION FROM OPPRESSION, BOTH MATERIAL AND MENTAL.**

In 1994, former president Nelson Mandela said the way black elite is represented indicates a form of continuing racism, says Govenden.

Therefore, CRT would allow "us to identify that race and racism is still forming the everyday practices of the media and that it is not aberrational", she adds.

"As a black woman I understand it [CRT] as a very necessary component of our reflections on identity and societal positioning as black people, and it's important in addressing structural oppression that black people continue to face," says Zukiswa Pikoli, a journalist at *Daily Maverick*.

When informing journalists, it is important to understand the sociology of news production, says Govenden.

"If you're only going to get a white gaze and perspective on how you are doing the news, that's not going to give you equality," she says.

'THE CAPPUCCINO EFFECT'

The University of the Witswatersrand's (Wits) 2021 State of the Newsroom report showed that in 2021, the percentage of black editors in the newspaper industry was 51%.

Women remain a minority with regards to leadership in the industry.

Govenden celebrates the overall increase of black journalists in the journalism industry, and despite the report, is particularly happy with the increase in black women working as journalists.

However, there is still a need to move beyond "this macro, quantitative level of our journalism", she says.

As a black woman within the journalism field, Pikoli states that "our reflection on identity and societal positioning as black people is important in addressing structural oppression that black people continue to face".

When looking at how black government is represented – most of the stories are negative, according to Govenden.

Additionally, the way in which the black elite is represented exudes a form of continued racism, she says.

"How is it that 26 years into democracy, [there's] this power relationship where black people and women are still the other and the cogs of the wheels of journalism. White people are still at the top," says Govenden.

The above causes the "cappuccino effect", says Govenden – brown at the bottom and white on top, she explains.

Ultimately, she emphasises that there is a long way to go, and a paradigm shift in journalism is needed in not only SA's transformation policy, but also in training programmes, news values and newsrooms, Govenden adds.

Not taking CRT into consideration allows for a continuation of a cycle that perpetuates inequalities and discrimination, says Bradfield.

"[We should be] holding individuals accountable for the way the world works [and] institutions should be required to make changes to society," says Bradfield.

STORIES THAT OFFER GUIDANCE

It is important that journalists are "aware of and attuned to important academic debates insofar as they may influence the nature of public discussion", says Brooks Spector, associate editor of the *Daily Maverick* online publication.

"I think that if we want to do our jobs properly, context and honesty is important, and CRT is key to that," says Pikoli. "There's no such thing as being colour-blind when it comes to race."

Nicky Falkof, associate professor of media studies at Wits, believes it would be "hugely valuable" for journalists to be knowledgeable about CRT.

"I hope that journalists and the media they work for, or with, change tactics and look for positive ways to create a more equal and supportive society, critiquing inequality and discrimination when they see it, and writing stories that call for and offer guidance on how to create a more welcoming country", says Bradfield. ●

I WRITE *BECAUSE* I CARE

To write is to have power. And with that power comes the great responsibility of caring about what is written, how it is written, and, most importantly, the people that are being written about.

BY **ANDREA DE LILLY**

PHOTO: Andrea de Lilly

The ethics of care is an ethical approach founded on the view that virtue is "rooted in interrelationships, interconnectedness and interdependency", according to Prof Herman Wasserman, professor of media studies at the University of Cape Town.

The approach is a theory by Carol Gilligan, a feminist, ethnicist and psychologist, says Wasserman.

When applied to journalism, this approach can be understood as a set of practices, such as listening to marginalised voices, which seek to defend human dignity and promote equality, says Wasserman. However, this care should not be misunderstood as an uncritical or "feel-good" approach to journalism, he adds.

An ethics of care approach is concerned with asking critical questions about how, for example, government policies can contribute to social justice and equality, or how economic conditions or decisions may disproportionately harm the poor, says Wasserman.

For Chantel Erfort, the editor-in-chief of *Cape Community Newspapers*, an ethics of care entails caring about how one does the job of a journalist, as well as caring about the people written about. "[An ethics of care] is multi-pronged. It's about caring about how you are tackling your story, the people you are dealing with, as well as yourself," says Erfort.

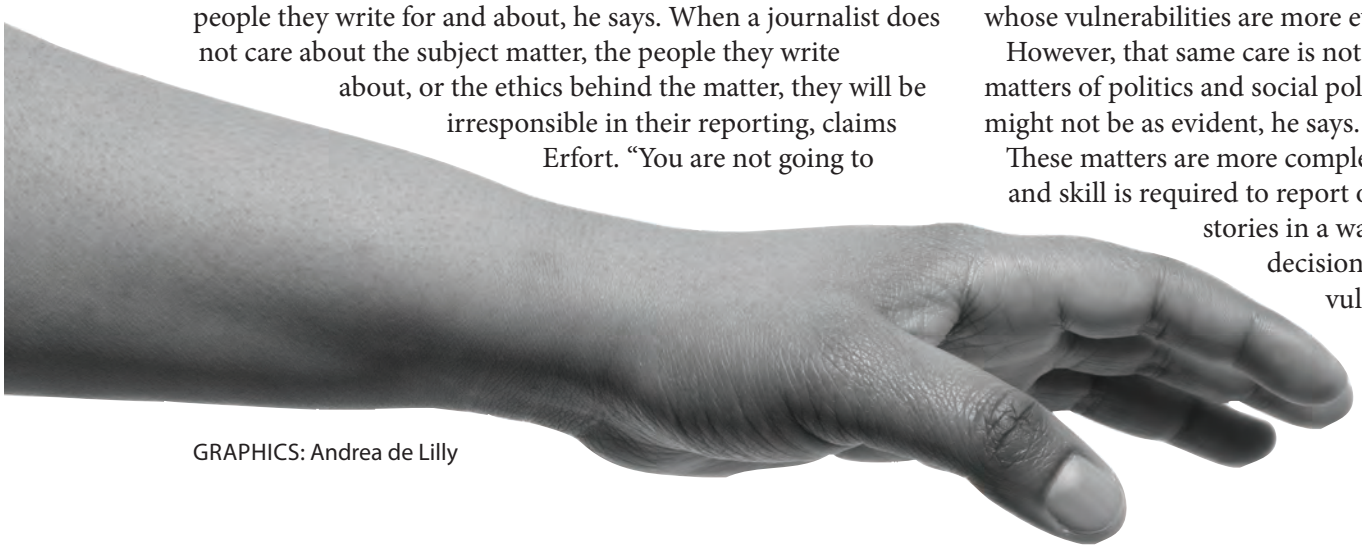
She says employing care in journalistic practices enables one to sit back and think: "Okay, how am I going to broach this subject with this person?"

RESPECTING YOUR READERS

For Keanan Harmse, a journalist at *Northern News* community newspaper, incorporating care into journalism means "you have to tell the facts".

"You don't sensationalise [a story]," he says. "You also express the person's voice that you're interviewing [and] you get as much detail as possible."

It is important to remember that journalism is about human beings and their feelings, says Thabo Leshilo, the commissioning editor of *The Conversation Africa* and former editor of *The Sowetan.* Readers have hopes and aspirations and it is necessary for journalists to consider this in the way they write, says Leshilo. Moreover, it is important that journalists respect the people they write for and about, he says. When a journalist does not care about the subject matter, the people they write about, or the ethics behind the matter, they will be irresponsible in their reporting, claims Erfort. "You are not going to care about how you do things and you are not going to care about who gets hurt, [and] how inaccurate your story is. You [will] rush over everything," says Erfort, adding that this will result in the journalist potentially not taking the necessary responsibilities.



GRAPHICS: Andrea de Lilly

You can't write a story that touches people if you are not empathetic.

An important part of keeping the public informed is, for example ensuring that one is mindful of the way in which one's reporting might affect the public's mental health, adds An Xiao Mina, a writer, artist and former Harvard University research affiliate at the Berkman Klein Centre for Internet and Society.

Having the opportunity to share one's story is still extremely special to many people, and for this reason it is important to care, explains Erfort. "You can't write a story that touches people if you are not empathetic," she adds.

MAKING CARE MORE VISIBLE

It is crucial that journalists are aware of the potential effects and consequences of secondary trauma that readers might experience from media content of a traumatic nature, according to Mina.

"Journalists can't control the world – the news itself may in fact be upsetting – but if we're not extending care, we risk losing audiences through secondary trauma and compassion fatigue," says Mina.

Reporting on sensitive issues such as mental illness or the personal lives of public figures calls for the incorporation of care, says Wasserman. Journalists might exercise care when handling more sensitive topics such as mental illness, as it involves people whose vulnerabilities are more evident, he adds.

However, that same care is not visible in the more 'impersonal' matters of politics and social policy where the implications might not be as evident, he says.

These matters are more complex, and therefore more effort and skill is required to report on political and economic stories in a way that highlights the effects of decisions and policies on the poor and vulnerable, explains Wasserman.

In order to report with care, he says it "requires the journalist

to not only report on what happens in parliament and in boardrooms, but to go out into the streets and listen to how such decisions impact the everyday experiences of people". For Harmse – incorporating care into one of his articles meant looking at a story from a completely different angle.

A local school had an innovative design and Harmse "heard the students' had a say on how the school was designed". Instead of giving the school exposure, he focused on the students' voices.

'JUST GET THIS OUT OF THE WAY'

"When I was in journalism school – and that was more than 20 years ago – empathy was nowhere in the curriculum," says Erfort. "We didn't learn how to interview people with empathy and I have always believed that it is important for journalists."

Erfort also believes having life experience can be more beneficial than any kind of journalistic experience. This makes one better equipped to deal with people, talk to and empathise with them, she adds.

"I think that often [journalists] don't think about the people behind the story – for a number of reasons – and that does not mean that you are a bad person," says Erfort.

We are in the era of the "generalist", she says. Every journalist is expected to be able to write about everything, and this results in journalists who have to write very superficially because they are not entrenched in a particular topic, claims Erfort.

"Sometimes we do feel like we just need to meet that deadline, and sometimes when we were still working in the newsroom you could hear it when someone is on deadline. It reflects in the way that they speak to people," she says.

Harmse confirms a deficiency of care, and claims that he has worked with people who have treated the journalism profession as just a "nine to five".

The "less important stories" or "puff pieces", as Harmse suggests, are the stories where that lack of care is evident.

If a journalist is not passionate about a story or the topic they are writing about, it will influence their attitude towards the story, says Harmse.

They will find themselves saying "Okay, let me just get this one out the way", he says.

Having this outlook can reflect in the articles that journalists write, as their voice tends to become "formulaic", he adds.

Leshilo admits to making a mistake on one occasion during his time as the editor of *The Sowetan*. An article was written on a man who suffered negative effects to his breasts due to antiretrovirals (ARVs), he says.

This was during the early 2000s when HIV/AIDS was running rampant in South Africa and there was a lot of wariness and fear around the use of ARVs, says Leshilo.

"[In] hindsight, that was a poor decision because [we were] sending the message to not take your ARVs."

Had more care been incorporated into this story, they could have done a better job and gotten an expert to affirm that this did not translate into ARVs being ineffective, says Leshilo.

Looking back, Leshilo says he would have chosen not to do the story instead of doing it a disservice.

GETTING IT FIRST RATHER THAN RIGHT

There is also the reality of wanting to get the scoop, says Erfort. "These days, particularly with online media, people have this awful motto that they will rather get it first than get it right, or get it online and fix it afterwards," she claims.

Erfort says she would rather be last with a story and get it absolutely right.

When trying to chase the scoop, it is easy to forget about the people, says Erfort. "[The journalist is] going to break that story and it doesn't matter what incorrect information gets published online. It doesn't matter who it affects. [The end goal] is to get it up," claims Erfort.

THE FUTURE IS CARE

The future should see journalists listening more to those on the margins, whose voices might not be as easily heard, says Wasserman. Journalists should highlight issues of social justice, question their own assumptions, and open themselves up to hearing uncomfortable truths, he says.

For Erfort, the future is about creating more educated journalists – in all spheres of life, and not merely academic education.

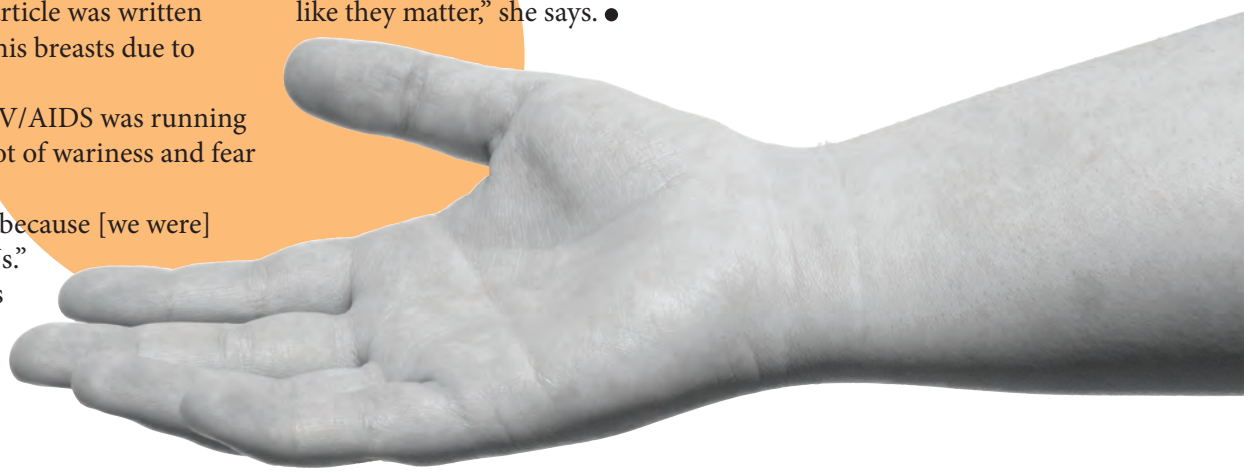
Journalism is under threat, according to Erfort. "Our credibility is in the gutter because people are just losing faith and trust in journalism."

She says journalists have a responsibility to salvage the industry, and their craft. This can be done by being ethical, trustworthy, and developing empathy, says Erfort.

"People often mistake being empathetic with being soft. And so what if you are soft? I would rather be seen as an empathetic journalist who can interview people with care, than someone who gets the story first," says Erfort. The so-called 'Twitterati' can be the ones to break the story, she says.

"Let them give you one line on what happened outside Parliament or Adderley Street."

Well trained and empathetic journalists go out and get the story, says Erfort. "You get the depth, and you speak to people like they matter," she says. ●



Beyond reasonable doubt

The law, and particularly the way in which people use it – as a shield, a tool, a sword – has a decided impact on how journalists do their job. As an uncertain future for journalism looms, the industry can turn to the law for guidance.

BY **BIANKE NEETHLING**

For centuries, Lady Justice has been the perfect embodiment of the legal system, armed with scale and sword, balance and strength, and a blindfold which maintains her impartiality. Trying to predict the future of journalism using the law seems, at first, an almost perverse act – an attempt to peek beneath the blindfold and swing the scales. However, what is the law if not a roadmap? One which plots a righteous path using laws and legislation to guide the way.

In the field of media law, many bumps and complications may arise along this road, and nothing can ever be absolutely certain. However, by considering the past and present of this ever-evolving field of law, we may just catch a glimpse beneath the blindfold.

AB INITIO

"Media law is simply a collective term for all the legislation and common law principles affecting the media," explains Herman Scholtz, South Africa's Press Ombud. "For the most part, the media is affected by the common law, i.e. law that is not contained in pieces of legislation, but that has developed over the centuries."

Aspects of the common law have undergone dramatic transformations since the advent of SA's constitutional democracy, states Dario Milo, a partner at law firm Webber Wentzel, who focuses on media, communications and information law.

These transformations concern a shift in legal priorities towards the promotion of constitutional rights, he says.

Under the previous dispensation, many of the constitutional rights and freedoms now afforded to the media did not exist, explains Scholtz.

"South Africa obviously made enormous strides in media freedom from the days of apartheid," he explains. "Freedom of speech and the media is constitutionally entrenched, the most offensive censoring laws were repealed, and there is, in my opinion, a great appreciation for good quality journalism and the contribution it makes to a functional democracy."

The right to freedom of expression has been entrenched in section 16 of the Constitution, says Dr Keneilwe Radebe, a University of Pretoria lecturer whose areas of specialisation are constitutional law and media law. This right, along with other aspects of the law, impact journalists' day-to-day work.

LACUNA

"The Protection of Private Information Act [POPIA] deals with the protection of the right to privacy," explains Radebe. "This entails that media should be cautious when revealing private information which could have the effect of violating the right to privacy," she says.

Journalists, as an integral part of their job description, publish personal information, and POPIA therefore has a direct effect on their day-to-day work, says Scholtz.

"POPIA affects journalists in two ways: On the one hand, it could have implications for the way journalists operate and attract liability through the work they do. On the other, it changes the information environment within which journalists operate," he says. "I am already seeing – in different contexts – how people (unjustly) refuse to provide information by using POPIA as a shield."

Scholtz briefly summarises the two categories of exclusions in POPIA that are relevant to journalists.

"Firstly, POPIA does not apply to data being processed for *bona fide* [with honest intentions] journalistic purposes insofar as it is necessary to reconcile the public interest with the rights of data subjects [people being reported on]. Secondly, members of the media who, by their profession, subscribe to an industry code that adequately safeguards the rights of data subjects, will be held to that code and not POPIA."

The argument for this second exception is that the journalist is already subject to a code that balances privacy and public interest, explains Milo. "If POPIA is applicable to you, then you would have to comply with all the conditions which are very rigorous and onerous in relation to publishing personal information," he says.

While the exceptions in POPIA enable some journalists to practise their craft to the fullest extent, there are some grey areas for others, according to Simon Pamphilon, a Rhodes University lecturer who teaches media law and ethics, and communication design.

Pamphilon uses freelance journalists who do not belong to a media organisa-

tion as an example of a group that falls into this grey area, as POPIA's exceptions may not apply to them.

"Many of the concepts in POPIA are somewhat vague," says Scholtz. "This is to be expected, as POPIA is based on principles, rather than a checkbox approach to compliance. As the legislation is still relatively new and the Information Regulator is still gradually ramping up its operations, there is a lot of uncertainty."

The true impact of POPIA on journalists will only be seen in the future, when matters related to it are laid out in court and the Information Regulator provides more concrete examples, says Scholtz.

IN PERSONAM

While POPIA is an area of concern for many, the law that has an immense impact on journalists' day-to-day work is defamation, according to Milo.

Defamation is an area of law that regulates, and often restricts, what the media can publish "based on the reputation and dignity of the [party] that the media is writing about", he explains.

In SA particularly, criminal defamation, whereby defamation is considered a criminal act, poses a significant threat to journalists, states Milo. "[Criminal defamation] could mean jail time or a fine for publishing defamatory material. So that's a huge problem from the perspective of media freedom."

"The use of defamation, particularly SLAPP [Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation] suits, which the rich and powerful often use to 'chill' journalists, is a serious and constant problem," states Anton Harber, adjunct professor of journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand and the executive director of the Campaign for Free Expression.

SLAPP lawsuits are "meritless or exaggerated" lawsuits that are filed with the intent to intimidate journalists and other individuals or organisations that act in the public interest. This is according to an article by Odette Geldenhuys on Webber Wentzel's website.

SLAPP lawsuits are, and will continue to be, a "big issue", says Milo.

However, he believes that SLAPPs will be more regulated in the future.

At the time of this article's publication, the Constitutional Court is forming judgement on a case wherein Webber Wentzel argued that SLAPP could be used as a defence in the law, which would result in more regulation of meritless lawsuits which hinder public participation, says Milo. Legislative provisions may also be developed to regulate SLAPP lawsuits, he says.

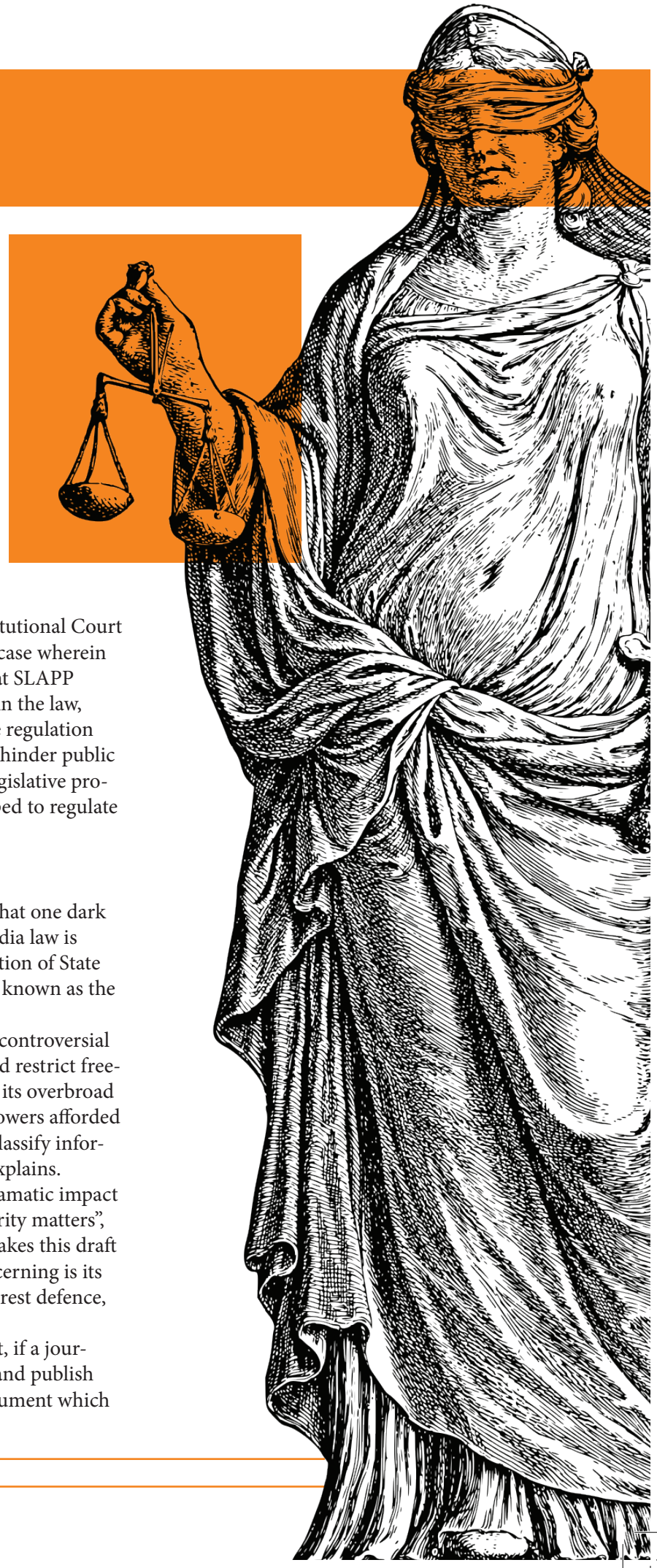
IN CAMERA

Industry professionals say that one dark cloud on the horizon of media law is the highly contested Protection of State Information (PSI) Bill, also known as the "Secrecy Bill".

"The PSI Bill is extremely controversial for the way in which it could restrict freedom of expression through its overbroad definitions and sweeping powers afforded to government officials to classify information as secret," Scholtz explains.

This Bill would "have a dramatic impact on all reportage about security matters", according to Milo. What makes this draft legislation particularly concerning is its current lack of a public interest defence, says Pamphilon.

This deficiency means that, if a journalist were to come across and publish an important classified document which



UNETHICAL REPORTING CAN HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS AND THE LAW CANNOT ALWAYS ADEQUATELY ACCOUNT FOR THIS

pertains to the public interest, they would be committing a criminal offence, explains Milo.

In addition, the Bill criminalises the possession of classified material, Pamphilon adds.

This means that a person can be prosecuted for simply being in possession of such material – whether they do anything with it or not, he states.

While the Bill has not been passed yet, one day it will be "dusted off", says Milo.

The Bill "must be signed into law at some point", and certain sections of it would be an improvement on the apartheid legislation it would replace, says Pamphilon. For example, some security legislation from the apartheid era is still in effect and has not been adapted since 1994, and the PSI Bill would replace it, he explains.

However, the Bill will hopefully not be enacted in its current format and with its current problematic sections, says Pamphilon.

ERRATUM

While the law regulates many aspects of the media, it may not always be able to cover every inch, and this becomes especially true in the growing, fast-paced world of journalism in the digital era.

"The internet and social media amplify voices and opinions, and this has a profound impact on public trust in the media and how people's views are shaped," says Scholtz. "There is a tsunami of information confronting consumers. It creates unique challenges for journalists who trade in the currency of trust, credibility, and thorough research."

Journalists must compete with a plethora of "experts" to gain their audiences' trust, says Scholtz. This is a tough task, he says, as audiences are "continuously tempted by free content, echo chambers on social media, and fake news being circulated".

Pamphilon believes that one way to address shortcomings is by looking at the law and ethics simultaneously. "I'm worried [and] it's not so much the legal side of it. It's the ethical side of it," he says.

Scholtz describes comments about the "declining quality of journalism in South Africa" that he has heard and read.

"The majority of complaints are about the same issues that plagued journalism 10, 20, 30 years ago: Complaints of unbalanced reporting, lack of pre-publication comment, and offending the dignity and reputation of people," he states.

While these lapses in ethics are damaging to the industry as a whole, Scholtz does not think the journalism sector as a whole is "worse" than a few years ago, he says.

Unethical reporting can have serious repercussions and the law cannot always adequately account for this, says Pamphilon. "[It is] not illegal to publish bullshit."

AD INFINITUM

"Media freedom is getting far more recognition in our law than under the previous dispensation. This is a major positive development but something that must be rigorously defended," states Scholtz.

Looking forward, certain parts of society, especially those whose interests are threatened by the work that journalists do, are increasingly meeting the media with hostility and calling for more regulation, he says. "This must be defended." ●

ILLUSTRATIONS: Pixabay

BORING

UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

CONTENT WARNING: THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS MENTIONS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The media plays a vital role in enforcing justice in the courtroom. But, when high profile cases are reported like an episode of Judge Judy, question marks over the media's coverage of legal proceedings arise. How can journalists apply an ethics of care to court reporting to remedy this?

BY **JAMIE VENTER**

"A very close friend of mine was murdered by her partner recently, stabbed and burned [...] with their four year old. So they are dead and the guy is on the run," says Teboho Mashota, legal programme manager for Lawyers Against Abuse (LvA).

"But no one is talking about them," says Mashota. "Their cases are not being covered."

For Mashota, this story is personal. But, she says, it is not unlike the many others she has heard during her role at LvA.

"There are women who are frustrated and who feel... if only the media could just cover this, and then perhaps, or maybe, just maybe, I might get justice."

TRIAL BY MEDIA

Fanie van Rooyen was still in bed with his wife and had plans to celebrate Valentine's Day of 2013 with breakfast before work when he received a call from his editor.

"If the tip-off was even remotely true, this would be one of the biggest stories I would ever cover," says Van Rooyen.

Before getting in the car, Van Rooyen decided to call the police – and managed to get through to the communications officer on duty, he says.

"I put it to her that we have received information that Oscar Pistorius had shot his girlfriend [Reeva Steenkamp], and she responded almost immediately with – 'Yes, he thought she was a burglar'," says Van Rooyen.

Later that same day, Van Rooyen, who was a journalist for the Afrikaans daily newspaper, *Beeld*, at the time, published the tweet that broke the story, he says.

"It was chaotic [...] especially at the beginning," says Charl du Plessis, an associate at Willem de Klerk Attorneys who was working as a legal reporter at *City Press* when the story broke.

There were around 100 photographers, videographers and journalists outside the court, says Van Rooyen. Public interest in the case was enormous, he adds.

This interest in the case did not wane with time, as coverage of the trial brought about an international media circus, explains Du Plessis.

"Viewers were glued," says Jo Munnik, the co-managing editor and head of production for the Oscar Pistorius Channel, a dedicated pop-up channel that ran 24-hour coverage of the court case on DStv.

"It was like watching a Shakespearian tragedy play out in real time," she adds.

The trial and coverage walked a very fine line between news and reality TV, says Munnik. "It became crack TV," she adds.

"I'm not sure that a court case will, in South Africa, ever again capture the imagination of a nation like this one did," explains Munnik.

"The non-stop media coverage did not ignite the public interest, but it certainly sustained it."

Munnik says there was also a strong sense of denial that the Oscar Pistorius trial was a trial by the media. Her view is that – "Of course, it was".

IN DEFENCE OF JOURNALISM

"Justice as a default should be open," says William Bird, director of Media Monitoring Africa. The Constitutional Court has made a concerted effort to vocalise that they want justice to be both seen and done, he adds.

South Africa's history makes this especially important, given how the Apartheid government used the justice system as a tool to deliberately force injustice, explains Bird.

This is why the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) "constantly lobby the Justice Department and the office of the Chief Justice to ensure that journalists have unrestricted access to magistrates and the high court", says Hopewell Radebe, the project and administration manager for SANEF.

It is the media's goal to be accurate and balanced when reporting on all the courts, commissions of inquiry and related judicial processes, explains Radebe.

"I think, in general [...] access to courts in South Africa, is really great," says Du Plessis. "The fact that the media can report and show what happens in courtrooms. I mean, it serves the basic principle of open justice."

However, Du Plessis says while the principle of open justice is good, it is something that needs to be constantly reassessed because of the unforeseen or adverse consequences that it may give rise to.

Media coverage of cases of gender-based violence (GBV) is important, explains Mashota. Good press coverage can put pressure on officials to take cases seriously and speed up the process of getting justice, she says.

"Domestic violence matters," says Mashota, and sometimes the media aren't sensitive to these issues, she adds. "To them, it's about getting the story," she claims. "And basically attracting readers or not."

MEDIA SATURATION

"The biggest pitfall of the channel and adjacent coverage is that it leaned hard into entertainment territory perhaps more so than public interest," says Munnik.

"IT WAS LIKE WATCHING A SHAKESPEARIAN TRAGEDY PLAY OUT IN REAL TIME.

She recalls one instance where Sky News released a video of Pistorius blowing up a watermelon at a shooting range. "It was not part of the trial but it was sensationalist and audiences went nuts," she explains.

"Everyone was covering the trial across the world and it became a highly competitive space," says Munnik. This competitiveness may have resulted in the duty of care, which should guide journalists' reporting, falling to the wayside – as audience ratings and being competitive in a saturated market started taking precedence, she adds.

Traditional news media now also has to contend with other online platforms where "it is a core functionality of social media for things to be sensationalised or dramatic, in order to get them to get greater shareability or to go viral", explains Bird.

Because the sustainability of media business models is so threatened and reliant on social media, "many of them may then fall into that trap, and then become sensationalist themselves in the way that they choose to report on [high profile] cases", claims Bird.

Something has to be dramatic to be shared widely, he adds.

SCALES OF JUSTICE

The level of media attention that high profile court cases get are inevitable, says Van Rooyen. The Pistorius story "ticked every single box for what people generally find newsworthy and gossip-worthy," he explains. Fame, violence, scandal, mystery, tragedy, rise and fall, he says.

"I don't really have a problem with sensationalism," says Du Plessis. "The shit that happens in SA is sensational."

"But there is a line between sensationalism and an unbalanced or incorrect account," says Du Plessis.

"When it stumbles across that line [...] it is a major problem."

There is a balance to be found, explains Bird. "When Oscar was crying on the stand, you're not going to say don't show the guy crying on the stand," he says. "I mean, the guy is on trial for murder."

But, if it is a private citizen or a survivor of GBV on the stand and she breaks down, it is different.

"I don't think that we should be seeing that moment of her trauma," he explains.

"Even something as simple as when someone breaks down in tears – you need to have a journalist who's there, who's thinking through the ethical issues quickly, and is continuously making sure that the decisions they're taking are based on something that they can justify and be accountable for," says Bird.

NOT HOW MUCH BUT HOW

Trauma is a wound that never heals, and as a survivor it can be difficult to move on if you are asked to relive the experience again and again, says Mashota. Some people want their privacy and the media needs to be sensitive to not re-victimize people, she says.

An example of this is the fact that "some journalists did not afford Reeva's grieving parents their due privacy and respect", explains Van Rooyen.

"As much as we want the stories to be covered [...] we also want the media to be sensitive," says Mashota.

Survivors of GBV face a number of challenges when seeking justice in South African courts, explains Mashota.

“AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE SURVIVORS ARE HUMAN BEINGS. THEY NEED TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

Court dates are constantly postponed, and women who have to miss work to attend are “forced to choose between food and getting justice”, she says.

Coverage of cases is important, but how they are reported on matters, she says, adding that even the language used by journalists impacts survivors.

“The media is not saying enough that it is a man doing these things,” Mashota explains. “Five women were raped – by a man.”

“At the end of the day, the survivors are human beings. They need to be treated with dignity and respect,” says Mashota.

According to Du Plessis, the coverage of the Pistorius trial amounted to “total media saturation”.

However, for Warren Batchelor, the director of the *My Name is Reeva* documentary series, the fault does not lie in how much media attention the case was given, as ultimately the case’s media attention gave Steenkamp a voice.

Instead, Batchelor says the bigger problem was how journalists, the public and officials referred to her in their coverage.

“What phased me was the fact that she was called ‘the model’, ‘the girlfriend’ and then in the trial she was called ‘the deceased’,” he says.

In some ways, Batchelor feels that the media lost sight of the fact that “hundreds of thousands of women are killed at the hands of the people that are supposed to love them”.

HEREAFTER

“There are laws that guide us here for a reason, as well as journalistic ethics and human dignity – which I hope will always take precedent,” says Munnik.

“As the media, we have a duty of care to our subjects irrespective of the public interest,” Munnik adds.

“I would simply say journalists should respect the emotions of the people who are involved in the story. They remain people who are hurt,” says Van Rooyen. “Remembering that is how you write good stories, anyway.”

Going forward, it is these ethics that need to stand above all else when reporting on criminal cases and court proceedings in SA, explains Munnik.

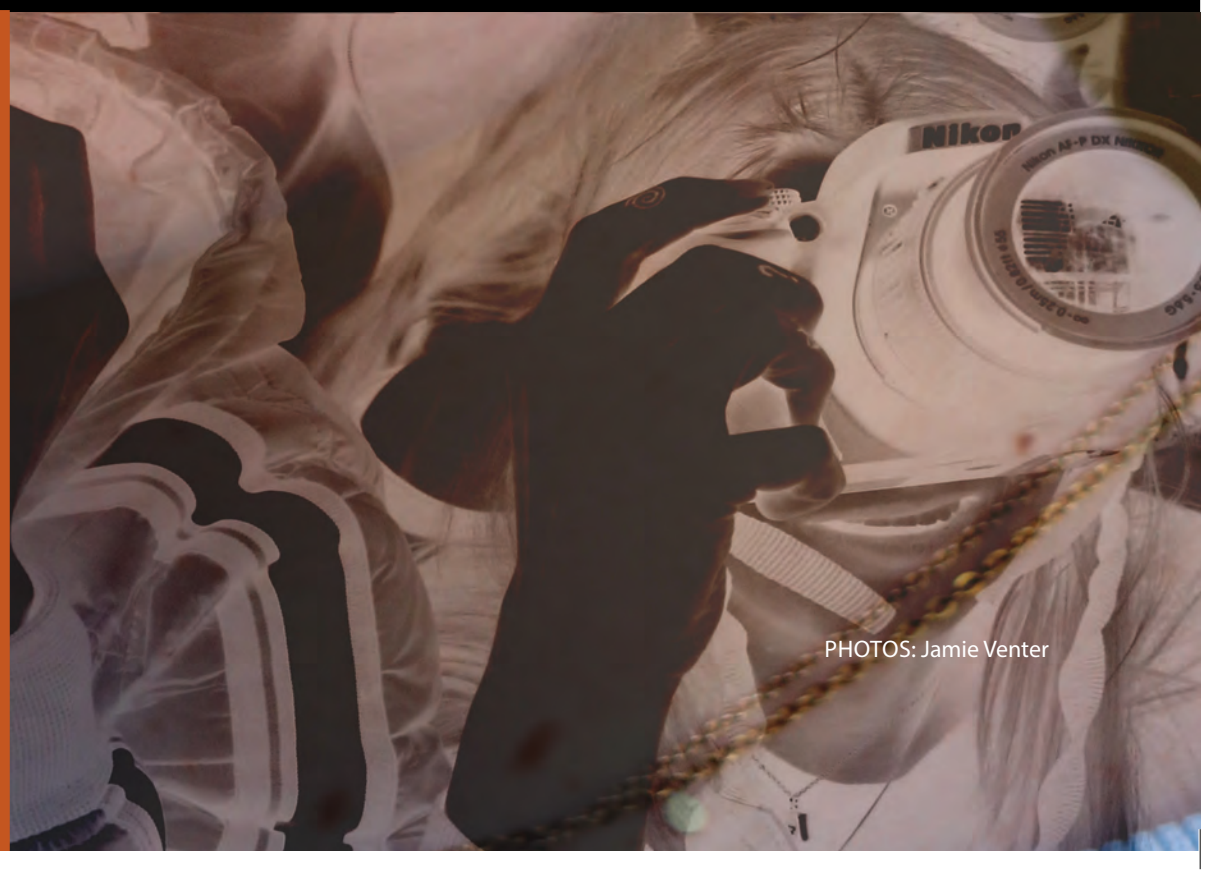
“I would like to think, if I can do it again, I would be more concerned with a duty of care towards the people in that courtroom over what the audience wanted to hear and see,” says Munnik.

“And been more of a barometer for journalists’ integrity over entertainment.” •

THE BRUTAL TRUTH

Between April and June 2022, over 11 000 cases of assault with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm were opened with the South African Police Service (SAPS), according to their crime statistics released in August. Of these cases, 1 670 cases involved children.

“South Africa was brutal and dangerous for women and children,” said Police Minister Bheki Cele at the release of these statistics. He also announced that in that same period, 855 women and 243 children were murdered across the country.



PHOTOS: Jamie Venter

FROM BREAKING TO CURATING

Media experts predict that most publications will place progressively less emphasis on fast-paced, breaking news over the next few decades. Instead, they anticipate that publications will move towards becoming curators of slow-paced news.

BY **TÉA BELL**

PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS: Téa Bell

South Africa's longest-standing digital-first news publication, *News24*, recently changed its slogan from "Breaking News. First" to "Trusted News. First".

According to Adriaan Basson, the publication's editor-in-chief, the change in slogan was a strategic move indicative of shifting values in *News24*'s newsrooms – and perhaps in the media industry as a whole.

"With the advent of disinformation and specifically fake news, we as a media industry had to take a hard look at ourselves and say 'What really is our value and what do we bring to society?'" says Basson.

THE RACE TO BE FIRST

"*News24* was founded in 1998 on the premise of being the first to break news," says Basson. He explains that operating as a digital-first publication, to a large extent uncharted territory in South Africa at that time, allowed *News24* to make good on its commitment.

"The added advantage that digital had over print 20 plus years ago was that it could be first and it could be faster," says Basson.

But, with a large number of news outlets now operating primarily as online publications, *News24* had to find a new way to differentiate its reporting from its competitors, he says.

The publication's slogan change was

"an intentional move from *News24*" but also a "move with the times", says Basson. He believes that there is an industry-wide transition from breaking news towards slower-paced "curated" journalism.

"Being digital is no longer an advantage. You have to be good, you have to be believable, you have to have integrity. And that's why for [*News24*] it was a very important change," he says.

"Advertisers aren't really interested in advertising around breaking news

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

Nic Newman, a digital strategist and senior research associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, agrees that the global news media industry has moved away from breaking news in recent years, and will likely continue to do so.

The reasons for this industry-wide transition are multifaceted, but they all centre around the overarching issue of finance, according to Newman.

"[Publications] are realising that it's not enough to only cover breaking news. Advertisers aren't really interested in advertising around breaking news, because it's not really very sexy. It doesn't really do much for their brands," claims Newman.

Recent expansions in *News24*'s content offering and the evolution of their business model to include a subscription service, attest to Newman's claims.

Most of *News24*'s breaking news stories are available for free, says Basson. However, the publication introduced a paywall on some of its investigative content, opinion and analysis pieces, videos, and podcasts in late 2020, according to *News24*'s website.

The hope behind the subscription service was that readers would be prepared to pay for "good, independent journalism", wrote Pieter du Toit, head of investigations at *News24*, in an article for the publication.

News24's subscription model secured 31 000 paying subscribers by April 2021 – less than a year after its launch, according to the World Association of Publishers.

"There was a very clear [indication] that you can't just give people breaking news, because that's commodity news which they can get anywhere for free. You have to get deeper; you have to analyse, you have to investigate," says Basson.

Daily Maverick, established in 2009, focuses predominantly on investigative journalism, analyses, and opinion pieces, according to Jillian Green, the publication's managing editor.

Even without a dedicated breaking news section, Green says the publication has a sustainable business model.

"The organisation has a diverse revenue stream which includes; advertising revenue, a membership programme (not a subscription or paywall), philanthropy and eventing, among others," says Green.

IF NOT BREAKING NEWS...

One of the reasons for the news media industry's transition towards analyses and opinion pieces is because these are much cheaper than breaking a story, claims Newman.

"Publications have limited resources and breaking news takes a lot of those resources," he says.

With newsrooms shrinking and the overall decrease in advertising revenue seen in recent years, most publications do not have the money to fly a reporter to a different country to cover a story, let alone pay for their food, accommodation and other living expenses, says Newman.

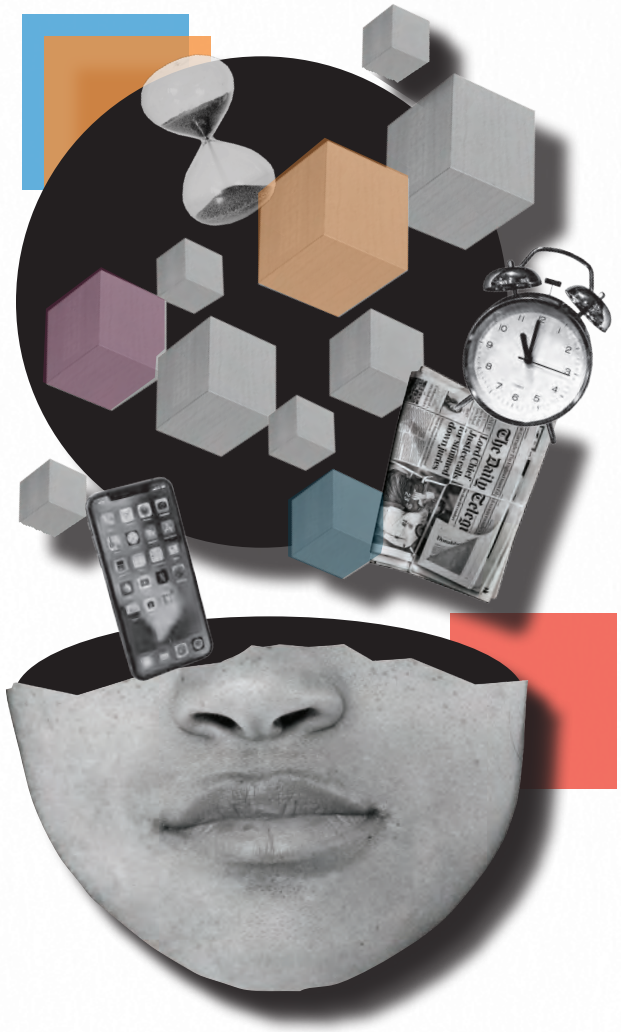
Vicus Burger, news editor for the northern region of *Netwerk24*, believes there is still a space for breaking news but agrees that it is expensive to cover. As an example of this, he references the protests in Durban that followed the arrest of former president Jacob Zuma in July 2021.

"We had journalists on the scene covering his arrest, and then our team had to stay on the ground for the next few weeks covering the unrest," says Burger. He also notes that it was "difficult and dangerous" for their team of reporters to travel due to the violent protests.

For this reason, focusing on slower-paced journalism tends to be much more economical for most publications, says Newman.

KEYWORD 'COLLABORATION'

Shrinking newsrooms and declining advertising revenue might not mean that all news outlets should veer away



from trying to be the breakers of news but rather that they should take a new approach to doing so.

This is according to Terri-Ann Brouwers, an Eduvos journalism student who was awarded the Sinelizwi Citizen Journalist of the Year award by *Food For Mzansi* in 2021.

In an interview with *SMF*'s Cody Hansen, Ivor Price, editor-in-chief of the Food For Mzansi Group, explained that the Sinelizwi citizen jouralism programme entails training a group of members from the general public in some basic reporting skills.

Brouwers suggests that publications should start collaborating with citizen journalists and community members, who are often the first to share information about potential news stories on social media. She explains that, in her experience, established media outlets are often reluctant to acknowledge citizen journalists as essential contributors to the news media space.

There is a fear in mainstream media that by the time a reporter gets to the story, "someone has already tweeted about it or made a Facebook post about it", claims Brouwers.

"I think that the internet and social media mean that the value of being first on the story has diminished," says Anton Harber, adjunct professor of journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand.

"[This is] partly because social media is usually first and one can only keep a news story exclusive for a very brief time, as it spreads so quickly across social media," he says.

However, Brouwers believes that a symbiotic, collaborative relationship could exist between mainstream news outlets and citizen journalists.

She envisions a relationship in which the breaking of news stories is outsourced to citizen journalists, while news outlets take on the task of sifting through this information, fact-checking it, making sense of it, repackaging it and disseminating it.

This will allow publications to save on the cost of breaking a news story whilst allowing citizen journalists to have a stronger voice in the stories of their own communities, says Brouwers.

> **You can't just give people breaking news because that's commodity news which they can get anywhere for free.**

Collaborating with citizen journalists to break news stories is an approach to reporting that is not completely unheard of. For example, during the April floods in Durban earlier this year, *News24*'s multimedia team made extensive use of footage and information shared online by citizen journalists, says Basson.

He notes that while *News24* does collaborate with citizen journalists, the content sourced from them must go through a rigorous fact-checking process.

Basson explains that a designated team of multimedia journalists are responsible for the verification of video, audio and visuals obtained from citizen journalists, while a team of reporters verifies the content written by citizen journalists and shared with *News24* by doing desktop research, looking at records or going out to the scene themselves, he says.

THE FUTURE OF BREAKING NEWS

Newman emphasises that not all newsrooms will turn away from breaking news completely.

"[Breaking news] still remains very important for certain types of news organisations," he says.

Newman points to CNN, the BBC and *News24* as examples of such organisations. Large media companies that have the financial resources to cover breaking news will continue to do so, he says. But most smaller publications will focus on specific niches, curating news, or opinion pieces, he explains.

In line with this, Basson believes breaking news still has a place at *News24*.

"I think there's still value in establishing yourself as a brand that can quickly confirm whether something is true," he says. "So if you see smoke [...] Is there a fire? What's burning? Why is it burning? How's it going to affect my day? Is someone in danger?"

"But we are consciously and intentionally changing the focus away from being first, to being correct, and to being truthful, and to being fair," says Basson. ●

EDITORIAL

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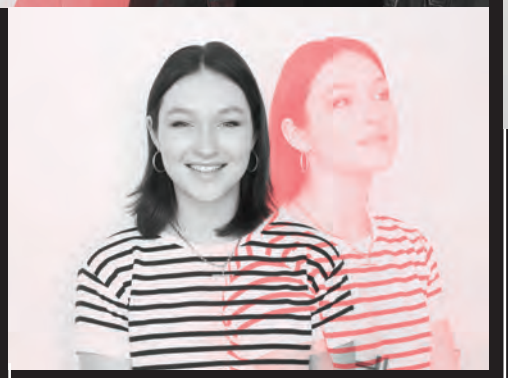

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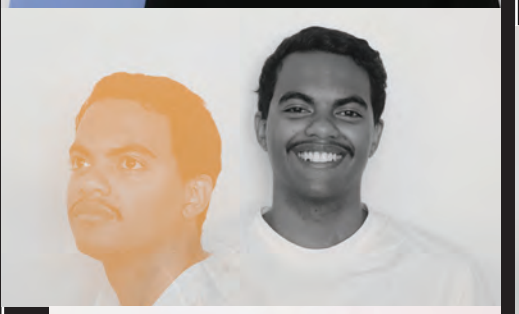

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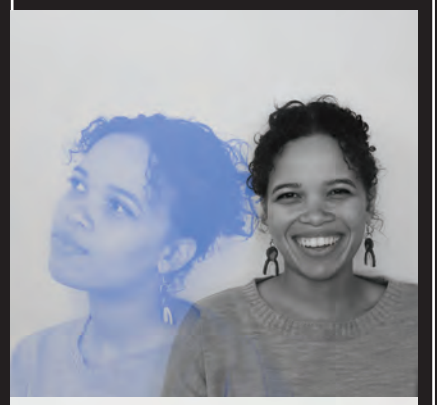

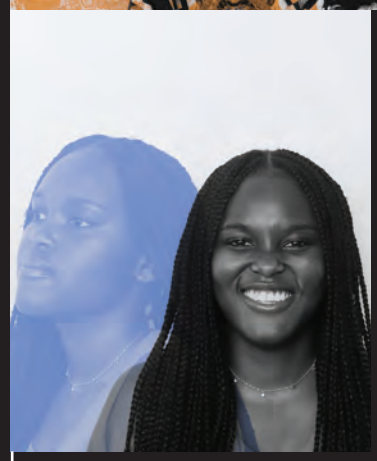

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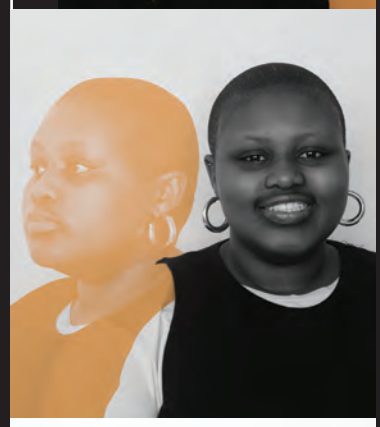

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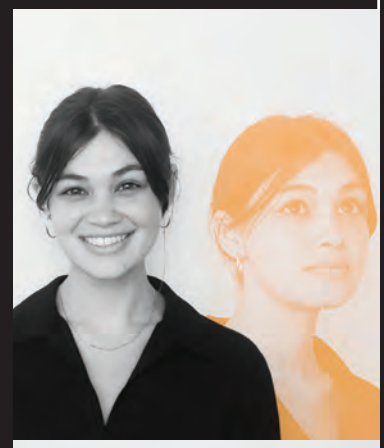

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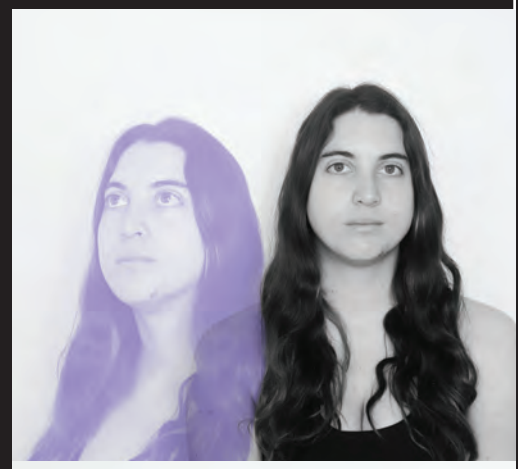

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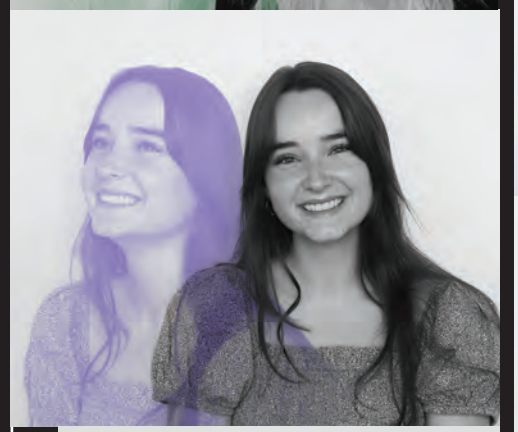

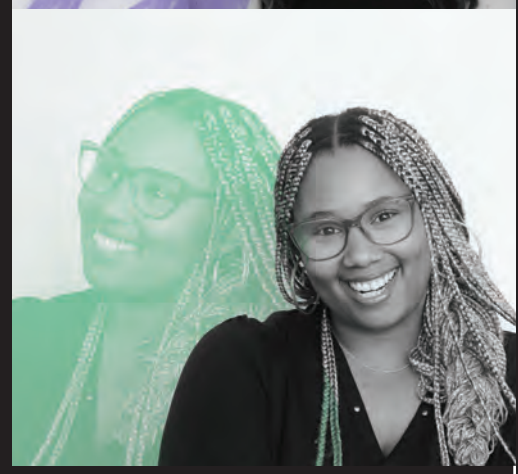

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SPECIAL THANKS TO: ***Anneli Groenewald, Maresa Pretorius, Elizabeth Newman, Dr Marenet Jordaan and African Sun Media***

THE DEATH OF A LETTERPRESS – A SHORT STORY

AS I walk through the door, I am summoned to the back. She's not doing well, they say. She is struggling. Her breathing is slow.

She is in her sixties, and she's been struggling for some time. But we did not expect this. Not so soon.

Yesterday, she was still holding out. Now we don't know whether she'll make it through the day.

I stand by the pump – the ventilator – and listen to her breathing.

The team works silently, like nursing staff intuitively knowing what the patient will need next. They stand by, listening. Moving from one checkpoint to the next; one pipe to the next.

She breathes in, slowly. Then she holds still for a moment before – slowly, slowly – breathing out.

Patrick has her on a steady drip of ink. He moves from the feeder side to the delivery tray to check the ink distribution. Then back. He feeds her a few drops of water.

She continues her painfully slow breathing.

The pauses between her inhaling and exhaling – when we don't know whether she'll be strong enough to inhale again, exhale again – hold moments of silence. Of stillness. Of the fragility of life.

She is no longer spitting out pages the way she used to.

They are now painstakingly released from her insides. Every page a miracle. A sign of mercy, of her serving us as she fights through one last deadline. She is working on a page with an article by a friend of mine – a farming column on weather patterns and synchronicity.

Fransiena moves slowly, respectfully, to remove the pages as they start to pile up.

I stand with a hand on her steel side. Listening as she breathes in, and breathes out.

None of us have spoken a word thus far.

We know that this is a time to be quiet – a time to listen and tend to her needs, as her ink-filled arms continue to roll, ever so slowly, to bring letters to the page.

Overnight, something has gone terribly wrong. But now is not the time to ask what's happened.

Now is the time to stand by and witness her last act.

BY ANNELI GROENEWALD

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