# Exploring how digitalisation has influenced entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group

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## Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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**Abstract**

This study explores how entertainment and lifestyle journalists have been influenced by digitalisation within the broader Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. Presented within the field of journalism studies, the study analyses how digital tools have influenced the news gathering processes. These processes, including the selection and publication of content, are described by theories such as the news net, gate-keeping and news values, while concepts from Pierre Bourdieu's field theory aid the understanding of a specialised field in the newsroom .

A literature review showed the introduction of digital tools has been met with mixed reaction from journalists and media professionals as online journalism faces a myriad of criticism including fake news, sensationalist reporting, a lack of investigative stories and bowing down to the needs of the reader. This study is timeous as South African media houses, including Tiso Blackstar Group, are under fire for the publishing of alleged false stories and reported chequebook journalism. Bearing in mind the pressure digital journalism is under, and the age-old criticism that entertainment and lifestyle journalism produces "little of value" this study aimed to delve deeper into whether these criticisms are still valid in a digital age.

This study used a mixed-methodology. Through semi-structured qualitative interviews with 14 participants, the researcher explored not only how news gathering processes have been changed, but also how story selection and publishing of content has been amended because of the implementation of digital tools in the newsroom. This information was compared to quantitative data in the form of daily diaries over a seven day period, the number of stories published by beats such as news, sport, politics, entertainment and lifestyle, and the number of clicks each beat receives.

Entertainment and lifestyle journalists considered themselves as having high volumes of capital in the field of digital journalism based on the number of articles they produce, their ability to produce news quickly and the number of readers their content attracts.

The research findings reveal that entertainment and lifestyle journalists experience of digital tools is different based on whether they are print or digitally focussed. The findings also showed that despite entertainment and lifestyle journalists believing they had more capital in the newsroom when compared to other beats, this did not amount to tangible results such as financial rewards.

The study concludes that the newsroom at Tiso Blackstar Group remains segregated by journalists who work in digital and journalists who work at print brands. The impact of digital tools, therefore, is more applicable to those who work in a digital environment.

## Opsomming

Hierdie studie ondersoek hoe vermaak- en leefstyljoernaliste binne die nuuskantoor van die groter Tiso Blackstar Group deur digitalisering geraak is. Die studie word aangebied binne die veld van joernalistiek-studies en analiseer hoe digitale hulpbronne die nuusinsamelingsprosesse beïnvloed het.

Hierdie prosesse, wat die seleksie en publikasie van inhoud insluit, word beskryf deur teorieë soos die nuusnet, hekwagterswerk en nuuswaardes, terwyl konsepte uit Pierre Bourdieu se veldteorie aangewend word om die nuuskantoor as gespesialiseerde veld te verstaan.

'n Literatuur-oorsig het aangedui dat die koms van digitale hulpbronne 'n gemengde reaksie ontlok het by joernaliste en professionele mediamense, omdat aanlyn-joernalistiek beskuldig word van allerlei vergrype soos fopnuus, sensasionalistiese verslaggewing, 'n gebrek aan ondersoekende joernalistiek en  dans  na die leser se pype. Hierdie studie is tydig omdat Suid-Afrikaanse mediahuise, insluitende Tiso Blackstar Group, onder skoot kom oor beweerde tjekboek-joernalistiek en die publikasie van vermeende onwaar stories.

In ag genome die druk op digitale joernalistiek en die eeue-oue kritiek dat vermaak- en leefstyljoernalistiek "min van waarde" produseer, mik hierdie studie daarop om dieper te delf om uit te vind of hierdie kritiek steeds geldig is in 'n digitale era.

'n Gemengde metodologie is vir die studie gebruik. Die navorser het deur semi-gestruktureerde kwalitatiewe onderhoude met 14 deelnemers ondersoek hoe die nuusinsamelingsprosesse verander het, maar ook hoe storie-seleksie en die publikasie van inhoud aangepas is weens die implementering van digitale hulpbronne in die nuuskantoor. Hierdie inligting is vergelyk met kwantitatiewe data deur daaglikse dagboeke oor 'n  periode van sewe dae te analiseer, en hierdie dagboeke te vergelyk met gepubliseerde stories; en deur data oor leserstalle op *TimesLIVE* en *SowetanLIVE* te analiseer.

Vermaak- en leefstyljoernaliste het aangedui hulle glo hulle het hoë volumes van kapitaal in die veld van digitale joernalistiek, gemeet aan die aantal artikels wat hulle produseer, sowel as hul vermoë om nuus vinnig te produseer, en die aantal lesers wat hul inhoud lok.

Die navorsing dui aan dat vermaak- en leefstyljoernaliste se ervaring van digitale hulpbronne verskil na gelang van hul fokus op òf digitale òf gedrukte media. Die bevindings het ook

gewys dat hoewel vermaak- en leefstyljoernaliste glo dat hul meer kapitaal in die nuuskantoor het in vergelyking met ander afdelings, dit nie tot tasbare resultate soos finansiële beloning lei nie.

Die studie kom tot die slotsom dat die nuuskantoor by Tiso Blackstar Group steeds gesegregeer is met digitale joernaliste aan die een kant en joernaliste wat in die gedrukte media werk aan die ander. Die impak van digitale hulpbronne is dus meer van toepassing op diegene wat in 'n digitale omgewing werk.

## Acknowledgements

When I filled out the application to study for my masters in journalism at Stellenbosch University, one of the questions was: 'Why do you want to do this degree?' I had no answer. In fact, I think I wrote 'For the Instagram likes' or 'Soz, do not know.' It is only now, as I submit this study, that I have an answer. And even more questions.

My supervisor Dr Gawie Botma said in a feedback session during one of the early course work assignments that the point of a masters is to master the work. This meant mastering my knowledge of the subject, mastering the way I presented my work and mastering academic language. But, most importantly, it was mastering myself. Over the past two years, Dr Botma continually guided me to master my fears, ultimately building a confidence in me as an academic, journalist and editor. It is an invaluable lesson for which I am grateful.

Dr Marenet Jordaan must also be thanked for her tireless patience during my first year. Her guidance prevented me from dropping out during orientation week. Thank you.

Thank you to Pidi and Ivy, whose words of encouragement helped me push through when motivation and lack of sleep abounded. My darling Bugsy, who was by my side for 12 months during this project, and provided me with much solace, your presence will never be forgotten.

My husband, Michael, who planted the initial seed to enrich myself and study further. This would never have happened without you.

To my friends: I'm back, yo.

To Tiso Blackstar Group for allowing me to conduct a study during a tumultuous period for both the media in South Africa and the company. None of this would have been possible had head of digital Lisa McLeod not approved my study. Lisa, you have done so much for me in my professional and personal life. I will always be in your debt. Managing editor Riaan Wolmarans graciously helped me with some of the logistics around this study and answered questions from a management perspective. I am grateful for your help, even on those crazy deadlines.

Most importantly, to the participants who trusted me with their stories. I never thought it was going to be so challenging, revealing and open the door to many lessons. I hope that the

research will contribute towards changing perceptions and improving systems in the work place.

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# Chapter 1

# Introduction

## 1. Working definition: Digitalisation, entertainment and lifestyle journalism

There are numerous definitions around entertainment and lifestyle journalism. Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen (2007: 635) describe entertainment journalism as involving a focus on celebrity news. Croteau and Hoynes (2013:287-288) state that entertainment journalism revolves around the "pleasure of the audience" and creates a space where the real and unreal are deciphered by the audience. Lifestyle journalism can include celebrity news as well as reviews and infotainment content pieces (Klein, 2012: 44). Infotainment is a combination of entertainment and informative content pieces (Klein, 2012: 44).

Sparks (2000:15) classifies the focus on the private lives of individuals, specifically the scandalous aspects, as being part of the infotainment journalism field. Deuze (2005: 862) likens the term popular journalism to tabloid journalism, which focusses on scandalous aspects of a person's private life. Hanusch (2012: 2) describes lifestyle journalism as a way to produce news in an entertaining manner. He continues that lifestyle journalism is

> …a distinct journalistic field that primarily addresses its audiences as
> consumers, providing them with factual information and advice, often
> in entertaining ways, about goods and services they can use in their
> daily lives—has much to offer for scholarly inquiry and is of
> increasing relevance for society. (Hanusch, 2012: 2)

Hartley (2007: 10) describes journalism as a system that is constantly evolving, explaining that lifestyle and entertainment journalism has allowed journalism to express "much more of what it means to be human". In addition, Meeuf (2017: 27) points out that entertainment journalism operating within the realms of celebrity culture allows stereotypes to be disputed and cultural definitions to be negotiated.

> The range of discourses describing and framing a celebrity in
> entertainment journalism manages the central narratives that define
> their cultural meanings, providing a site on which dominant narratives
> can be affirmed (or deconstructed, in the case of celebrity scandals.)
> (Meeuf, 2017: 29)

Entertainment and lifestyle journalists operate as two separate beats within the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. For the purposes of this study, a broad definition of entertainment journalism includes a focus on celebrity news and pop culture. Lifestyle journalism focuses on fashion, cooking, movie reviews, health, theatre shows, books, fitness and music. Although entertainment and lifestyle journalists operate as two beats within the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom, much of the content produced by the journalists are similar in nature. As discussed in Chapter 5, participants pointed out that content between the two beats often overlaps and in some cases the decision on which beat a story falls into is decided purely on "who gets there first." As discussed in Chapter 5, the findings from the two different beats produced similar results. However, although there are similarities in the content produced by the two beats, as discussed it Chapter 5, the workflow processes of the two teams differs. It is for this reason that the researcher investigated both beats in this study, while still acknowledging that they operate as separate teams in the newsroom.

In interviews conducted with14 participants in this study, entertainment and lifestyle journalists agreed that definitions of entertainment and lifestyle journalism depend on the company one works at as well as guidelines set out by editors.

> There are definite grey areas about what exactly constitutes
> entertainment journalism and what constitutes lifestyle journalism. It
> is changing all the time and has a lot to do with the company you
> work at as well as the other editors in the newsroom. (P4)

Digitalisation is a process where media create new ways of producing and distributing content to audiences (Fourie, 2017: 7; Sundet, Ihlebaek & Steen-Johnsen: 2019: 8). This results in the media and the information it distributes

becoming easily accessible (Fourie, 2017: 8). The internet as a medium of news has brought acclaim and criticism (McQuail, 2010: 533). Some academics argue that digitalisation has enabled a true global community to emerge while others argue that technologies create a more fragmented society (McQuail, 2010: 533). Technological tools in the newsroom have impacted the way content is produced in newsrooms (Sundet *et al.,* 2019: 8).

The influence of digitalisation on entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## 1.1 Motivation for study

I have been a full-time working journalist for 14 years. While the first few years of my career were spent covering general news, crime and politics, for over a decade I worked in entertainment and lifestyle journalism. I have covered entertainment and lifestyle journalism in various capacities at the two biggest media houses in South Africa, Media24 and Tiso Blackstar Group. In that time, I have worked at print and digital publications. Through my own experiences and on the basis of anecdotal evidence gathered from colleagues who work in the same field, the impression was formed that the position of entertainment and lifestyle journalism has changed since the arrival of the digital era.

As an employee at Tiso Blackstar Group I had access to the measuring tools used by the company, including Narratiive, Chartbeat and Google Analytics. A preliminary search showed that entertainment news contributed a minimum of 30% of the total unique browsers on *TimesLIVE* between January and June 2019 (Google Analytics, 2019).

A unique browser is a single internet user who clicks on an article (Henry, 2019). *TimesLIVE* is Tiso Blackstar Group's flagship website. Entertainment content accounted for a minimum of 24% on *SowetanLIVE* between January and June 2019 (Google Analytics, 2019). *SowetanLIVE* is the second-biggest website at Tiso Blackstar Group. The number of clicks entertainment and lifestyle journalism contributes towards *TimesLIVE* and *SowetanLIVE*, motivated me to investigate the positioning of this field in the digital newsroom.

## 1.2 Research problem: Exploring the influence of digital changes in the newsroom

Globalisation and new technologies have changed the media landscape over the past ten years (Deuze, 2006: 862; Weaver, Willnat & Choi, 2013: 163). The digital revolution has resulted in print publications circulations dropping while online news websites fight over audience numbers (Deuze, 2006: 862; Skovsgaard, 2014: 201; Vu, 2014: 1095). This has resulted in media companies focussing on digital news strategies to attract more readers (Henry, 2019).

Recently, digitalisation of newsrooms has affected how news is gathered, produced and published (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 112). The use of new technologies as well as sources of information such as social media has changed traditional ways information is gathered (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 111). This has also resulted in the audience having more power over content produced (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 111; Henry, 2019; Ferrucci, 2017: 23; Vu, 2014).

Tiso Blackstar Group is still in the process of changing to a digital first newsroom (Henry, 2019). Although the process was started more or less three years ago, a fully functional system whereby all content is put on a digital system and later published in a print publication if the editors deem it suitable is still in the final stages of being implemented (Henry, 2019).

Traditional views of news values have been impacted by the digital changes. News values is a set of often unstated and internalised criteria which determine what makes a story newsworthy (O'Neill & Harcup, 1995: 161). These are guidelines that editorial staff members use to help them decide whether to publish a story or not (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 25). These values are always changing and are influenced by various factors including directives by editors, media companies and personal values of the journalists writing the stories (O'Neill & Harcup, 1995: 203).

This raises several questions about how entertainment and lifestyle journalism has been affected by digital changes to the news production process. This includes the impact on news values, the news net and gatekeeping. The influence these digital changes in the newsroom and the impact on the position of entertainment and lifestyle journalism will be explored.

## 1.3 Preliminary study

A preliminary database search on the internet, including on Google and Google Scholar search engines, shows that there were no studies about the influence of digitalisation on

entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group. A catalogue search at the APK library of the University of Johannesburg showed the same result.

However, there have been studies about the influence of digital changes on newsrooms, which include the criticism that much content has become simple and sensational. The focus of these studies included the attitudes of journalists in adapting to news reporting skills required for multimedia newsrooms, changing roles and news values and new skills sets required in newsrooms (Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 277; Skovsgaard, 2014: 200-218).

A survey with over 29,000 journalists from 31 countries showed that technological changes have resulted in constant changes in news production processes (Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 277). Respondents in the study agreed that the internet has resulted in their roles becoming more multi-faceted (*Weaver et al.,* 2013: 173).

In a study conducted by Deuze (2005: 443) news values of editorial staff involved in producing popular journalism was interrogated. For the purposes of this study entertainment journalism is not considered popular journalism. There are however similarities in the focus on the personal lives of celebrities. The study by Deuze (2005) found that these popular journalists viewed themselves as outsiders in the traditional journalism space. Another study involving Danish journalists produced similar results (Skovsgaard, 2014: 200-218). The findings showed journalists who produce content that focuses on the personal lives of newsmakers view themselves as highly skilled and an asset to the newsroom (Skovsgaard, 2014: 216).

Academics argue that there is a hierarchy in journalist culture and entertainment and lifestyle news is generally on the bottom of that hierarchy (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626). Priority is often given to news and current affairs (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626). In terms of status and position, this study hopes to establish whether these hierarchies still exist and whether entertainment and lifestyle journalism has changed position in the ranks. Through interviews with participants and quantitative data, this study will attempt to understand why hierarchies may still occur and investigate the reasons why entertainment and lifestyle journalism may have changed positions within the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom.

**1.4 Problem statement**

This study aims to explore how the digitalisation of the newsroom at Tiso Blackstar Group has impacted entertainment and lifestyle journalism at the Group.

Entertainment and lifestyle journalism are under researched fields, specifically in South Africa. The findings could arguably shed light on how entertainment and lifestyle journalism have been affected by the digital changes at the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. The focus of these changes includes whether the news production processes have changed, whether news values involving entertainment and lifestyle journalism have adapted and if lifestyle and entertainment journalism's position in the newsroom has changed, resulting in a possible change of status.

## 1.5 Theoretical points of departure

The theoretical points of departure for this study is situated in organisational theory and field theory.

### 1.5.1 Organisational theory

Organisational theory refers to the selection, production and publishing of journalistic content (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 126). Academics argue that news production processes have become routine and as a result, theories have emerged in order to describe them (Berger & Luckman, 1987: 13; Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 126; Ndlela, 2005: 73; O'Sullivan, Dutton & Rayner, 2001: 19).

Organisational theory includes the news net, agenda-setting and news values (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 126). During the investigation into whether digitalisation had an impact on the news production processes of entertainment and lifestyle journalists, participants in this study were asked questions around how they define news, how a story is selected and what digital tools they use in the daily routines.

News values are used by media companies and their editorial staff as an informal compass to guide which stories are selected and eventually published (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008:25). Traditionally these values have included factors such as celebrity, relevance and prominence (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008:25). Digitalisation in newsrooms has impacted these news values, with editors and journalists citing the use of digital audience measurement

tools being a priority in deciding what content gets published (Henry, 2019; Nthonga, 2019; Thakurdin, 2019, Vu, 2014: 1094).

While the production processes introduced by new digital technologies can influence the decision to produce content, the ultimate decision on whether to publish a story or not remains at the hands of the journalists (Stadler & O'Shaughnessy, 2008: 26). This is a judgement call that is influenced by their personal experiences, the influence of their editors and the guidelines of the company they work at (Stadler & O'Shaughnessy, 2008: 26; Fourie, 2007: 264).  However, technological changes may have changed how these processes work. In order to fully grasp the extent of news production processes as a result of technological changes, this study will examine how entertainment and lifestyle journalists select, produce and publish content.

Previous studies on digitalisation in newsrooms have shown how technological advancements have changed the way journalists produce and present news (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 126; Ferrucci, 2017: 11). The news production process has also been influenced by changing news values, evolving professional roles, financial limitations and developing digital tools (Coleman, McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1995: 147; Ferrucci, 2017: 8; Vu, 2014: 1097). Participants in this study were asked questions around how they use digital measurement tools and to what extent this has an influence in the work routines.

Debates on how these digital tools have changed the power gap from editors to the audience will also be discussed with participants. This is in relation to the idea that the introduction of digital tools in the news production process has the ability to give the audience more power over the media (Ferrucci, 2017; Vu, 2014; Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 126). Access to information is easier and the audience has more choice, which puts the media in a more competitive environment (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 126).

**1.5.2 Field theory**

Bourdieu (1986: 242-243) describes a social field like journalism as a "structured space of positions" which involve power struggles where there is competition for capital. Bourdieu argues that capital has influence over status, resulting in a higher social standing in society (**Bourdieu, 1993: 73; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 340**). As a result, capital has influence over hierarchal positions in society (Bourdieu, 1993: 73; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 340).

Capital has different forms including economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1993: 73; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 340). This study will also analyse how entertainment and lifestyle journalism's capital, and thus influence and power, has been affected by the digitalisation of newsrooms.

## 1.6 Personal experience

It is not only the status of entertainment and lifestyle journalism that has been affected. In my experience, the way in which entertainment and lifestyle journalists gather and publish news on digital platforms is different to journalists who focus on news, politics and sports beats in the newsroom. Social networking sites are considered a worthy source of information and are also used as a valid indicator of what the reader is interested in. For instance, I often get questioned by fellow editors about story selection and why trending topics (the most popular hashtags on Twitter are referred to as trending topics and change in a live-time format according to how many people are using the hashtag) are used as a news value on when deciding to choose a story. I have also noticed the blurring of beats as a result of digitalisation in newsrooms. For example, if a politician comments on a celebrity news event, the entertainment team would cover this.

Having spent much of my career covering entertainment news and for the past five producing content on digital platforms, this study is borne out of my personal experiences as a journalist. By exploring how entertainment and lifestyle journalism has been affected by the digitalisation of newsrooms, this study hopes to shed light in the under researched field of entertainment and lifestyle journalism (Skovsgaard, 2014: 215; Perreault & Stanfield, 2018: 4; Wasserman, 2004: 143).

As an employee of Tiso Blackstar Group I had access to newsroom strategies and audience numbers. While beneficial for the study, my independence as a researcher is under scrutiny. However, to ensure my independence as a researcher, measures will be implemented to ensure reliable results. These measures include permission from [1]Tiso Blackstar Group and ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University.

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[1] While this study was being conducted it was announced that Tiso Blackstar Group sold its media business to Lebashe Investment Group (Gavaza, 2019). It was reported in June that the sale of South African assets would be finalised in November (Gavaza, 2019). This study was completed prior to the sale being finalised and the change in business ownership had no impact on this study.

**1.7 Research questions**

The **general research** question in this study is:

How has the digitalisation of the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom influenced entertainment and lifestyle journalism?

Following on from that, **specific research questions** can be formulated:

a) How has the digital news production process influenced entertainment and lifestyle news values?
b) How have news production processes at Tiso Blackstar Group been influenced by digital changes?
c) How has the field of entertainment and lifestyle journalism been impacted by digital changes at Tiso Blackstar Group's newsroom?
d) Have the entertainment and lifestyle journalists gained cultural capital in the newsroom?

**1.8 Research design and methodology**

Situated in the field of journalism studies, this study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative research focuses on interpretation of data and relies on the communication experience of respondents (Du Plooy, 2009: 35). This approach assumes that reality is subjective, and subjects interpret meanings (Babbie, 2009: 94; Du Plooy, 2009: 35). Quantitative research analyses data using scientific evidence (Du Plooy, 2009: 30). Quantitative data relies on numerical data to establish patterns and reach a conclusion based on evidence provided (Babbie, 2009: 24).

**1.8. 1 Qualitative approach**

Fourteen participants were interviewed in this study using purposive sampling. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants. Five participants were entertainment and lifestyle journalists. One participant was an entertainment editor while two participants were lifestyle editors. Four participants were senior editors at Tiso Blackstar Group. One digital audience analyst and one senior manager at Tiso Blackstar Group was interviewed.

The participants selected by the researcher to be part of this study was done based on their daily work routines revolving around entertainment and lifestyle journalism as well as their knowledge of the impact lifestyle and entertainment journalism has in the broader Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. All of the participants are based in the Johannesburg newsroom as they are the only journalists who are focussed only on entertainment and lifestyle beats.

Babbie (2009: 193- 220) defines purposive sampling as a process whereby the researcher selects participants for a study. This is done using the researcher's judgement based on the idea that the candidates chosen will be the most suitable to take part in the study.

For the purposes of this study, the target population was all editorial and management staff employed at Tiso Blackstar Group who were involved in the news production process. The accessible population was all permanently employed entertainment and lifestyle journalists who contribute towards content for Tiso Blackstar Group, senior editors from different beats in the newsroom, content managers and senior Tiso Blackstar Group staff, including management.

## 1.8.2 Quantitative approach

Data on readership figures for *SowetanLIVE* and *TimesLIVE* was provided to the researcher by the digital audience analyst (Variawa, 2019) at Tiso Blackstar Group. *SowetanLIVE* and *TimesLIVE* were selected as they are the two biggest news sites at Tiso Blackstar Group. This data was analysed to understand how many readers entertainment and lifestyle journalism stories attract compared to other beats such as news, politics and sport.

Google Analytics is an industry tool used in South Africa to determine readership and demographics (Variawa, 2019). These tools can determine how many people are reading a specific story, how long it takes to read the story, the person's age and the readers region (Variawa, 2019).

The news diary from the digital team, which includes various beats such as entertainment, sport, politics and news was also analysed. As a staff member at Tiso Blackstar Group I have access to internal information, such as a news diary. The daily diary was analysed over a seven-day period. An analysis of all published stories in the same period was then conducted by the researcher. This analysis was done by manually going onto Tiso Blackstar Group's

operating system where content is produced. The interrogation of diary entries and published stories was done to investigate which teams produced more content.

### 1.9 Ethical considerations

Several measures were implemented to validate the results. Only one person reported directly to the researcher. This person was not interviewed as part of the study on the news production process or the position of entertainment journalism in the newsroom, but was rather interviewed to provide general information on the entertainment team, including how the team joined Tiso Blackstar Group and the general strategy used by the team. All staff who are interviewed were given the option to remain anonymous. Their identities will never be revealed to management. Management has agreed that respondents will not be identified, and answers will remain confidential.

### 1.10 Chapter outline

This study will be presented in 6 chapters:

### Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter I introduced the background of the study as well as the motivation behind the decision to focus on lifestyle and entertainment journalism in the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. Working definitions of entertainment and lifestyle journalism were presented as well as digitalisation in the newsroom.

### Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter will investigate the ongoing influence of digital tools on news production processes in newsrooms globally and in South Africa. The use of social media and its place in newsroom will also be discussed. Journalism hierarchies in the newsroom will also be explored.

### Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

This chapter focusses on two theoretical points of departure: organisational theory and field theory. This chapter will explore concepts related to organisational theory such as the news net, gatekeeping and news values. For field theory, the concepts of capital and its place in journalism will be investigated.

**Chapter 4: Research design**

This study uses qualitative and quantitative research methods. This chapter will explain the various methods used and why they were selected for this study.

**Chapter 5: Discussion of findings**

This chapter will detail the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study. The information from semi-structured interviews with participants will be analysed. The data from Google Analytics as well as the diary entries compared to the number of published stories will also be provided and interpreted.

**Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This chapter will summarise the previous chapters of the study and give recommendations for further research to be conducted. This chapter will answer the research questions as well as the broad question of: Exploring how digitalisation has influenced entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group.

**1.11 Summary**

This chapter provided background information for the study as well as the researcher's motivation to embark on the study. Working definitions of lifestyle and entertainment journalism were provided as well as the reason to conduct a study exploring the influence digitalisation has had on both beats in the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom.

The next chapter will focus on existing literature on digitalisation in newsrooms and the existing issues facing entertainment and lifestyle journalism.

## Chapter 2

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, digital media technologies have affected the news production processes in newsrooms, including at Tiso Blackstar Group. This study focuses on how entertainment and lifestyle journalism has been affected by digitalisation in the newsroom and whether these changes have influenced the work and position of entertainment and lifestyle journalism at the company.

This chapter evaluates existing literature on the influence of digital changes in newsrooms which includes the changing roles of journalists as well as evolving news values in a digital newsroom environment. The literature reviewed focuses on the news values that entertainment and lifestyle journalists prescribe to in a digital environment and whether this has changed the position of these journalists compared to other beats, including general news, political and sports journalists. The discussion also includes new skill sets journalists employ in a digital newsroom environment.

Babbie (2009: 523) argues that the aim of a literature review sets the foundation for individual researchers to contribute to "the general body of scientific knowledge."

In presenting previous literature about relevant topics, the researcher "lays the groundwork" for their research (Babbie, 2009: 523). By analysing articles from peers, the strengths and weaknesses of other articles can be established (Du Plooy, 2009: 65). A sound literature review enables a clear understanding of the current research available, as well as points to future analysis on the topic (Babbie, 2009: 526).

Academics and media professionals have examined the disruption caused by digitalisation in newsrooms, including its influence on news values, work flows, writing styles, journalistic roles and the impact on journalism and media as a whole (Gillis & Johnson, 2015: 184-196; Jordaan, 2012; Moyo *et al.,* 2019: 490-506; Skovsgaard, 2014: 200-218; Weaver *et al*., 2013: 277).

While this study explores the influences of digitalisation on entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group, it is important to note some of the criticisms against

digitalisation of the media. Set against the backdrop of decreasing print circulations and a loss of advertising revenue, the future of journalism in the traditional media space is a question that has being explored by academics and media professionals extensively since the introduction of technological advancements (For example: Bird, 2009: 293-295; Brennen, 2009: 300-302; Edmonds, 2014; Finberg, 2013; Franklin, 2012: 663-681; Henry, 2019; Lepore, 2019; Mosco, 2009: 350-352; Pavlik, 2013: 181:193).

The changing landscape of journalism and what it means to be a journalist has been driven by a constant influx of technological changes and economic uncertainty (Edmonds, 2014; Finberg, 2013; Franklin, 2012: 663-681). Newspaper circulation figures for the first quarter of 2019 (January-March) showed an overall drop of 10% in year-on-year circulation figures in South Africa (Manson, 2019b). South African print magazines faced a similar downward trend, with an overall drop of 13.1% in the first quarter (January-March) of 2019 (Manson, 2019a).

## 2.2. Internet penetration in South Africa

Even though print circulations continue to drop, internet penetration was recorded at 54% of the population in January 2019 (De Villiers, 2019). A study investigating the state of digital penetration across the globe found that South Africans with internet access spend an average of eight hours and 23 minutes on the internet daily (De Villiers, 2019). The study found 40% of South Africans with internet access have active social media accounts, with WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Facebook Messenger and Instagram topping the list of the most popular accounts (De Villiers, 2019).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Tiso Blackstar Group has adopted a digital first strategy based on the changing media landscape and the growing internet audience in South Africa (Henry, 2019). The company is in the final stages of incorporating a digital first strategy (Henry, 2019). This strategy means that all content, bar some exclusive stories for titles like *Sunday Times* and *Business Day*, will publish online first (Henry, 2019).

> The idea is that editors from different sites can repurpose this content
> to be most relevant for their audience. The final stage of this strategy
> means that all content, even for print, will be produced on the same
> operating system. This means that editors will be able to download

this content onto their sites, cutting out a lot of the middle-men and
processes that were previously in place. (Henry, 2019)

## 2.3 Negative perceptions of digitalisation in newsrooms

The growth of internet users and the impact of technological advancements and its use in the
newsroom and media companies has not being without criticism. In the face of traditional
print publications downward trends, digital journalism and media companies who have
turned their attention to digital first strategies, face accusations of spreading fake news,
creating clickbait and sensationalist content, encountering ethical conundrums in the face
being first amongst competitors, bowing to pressure from advertisers, shrinking newsrooms,
low morale and juniorisation of newsrooms (For instance: Al-Rawi, 2018: 1-18; Benson,
2017: 38-40; Christin, 2018: 685-687; Conlan, 2017: 7-8; Elridge, 2018: 856-878; Freedman,
2018: 604-618; Holmwood, 2013: 197-199; Sambrook, 2017: 6-17; Wasserman, 2017: 1-14).

The Poynter Institute, a well-known and globally recognised journalism education centre,
named misinformation and fact-checking as one of the biggest downfalls in some journalistic
quarters (Grau, 2019). In a newsletter published by the institute, it explained the need for the
Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), elaborating on the idea that
ordinary citizens should be enabled to "sort fact from fiction" (Grau, 2019). The director of
IFCN, Baybars Örsek, said the spread of misinformation "knows no borders" in an
"interconnected society" (Grau, 2019).

These concerns, as well as the criticisms mentioned above, are reflected in the 2018 State of
the Newsroom report released by Wits Journalism in South Africa. The report suggests the
dissolving of traditional newsrooms is imminent, crediting the proliferation of social media
and so-called reportage from those at the scene as strong competitors for journalists out in the
field (Wits Journalism, 2019: 22).

> Traditional journalism is under pressure from advertising going
> online, especially to Facebook and Google. Sales and revenue have
> declined steeply as a result. The international political landscape is
> becoming increasingly populist, making use of technology to peddle
> misinformation and propaganda ("fake news"). This is often conflated

> with journalism, resulting in good or factual content being treated
> with undue suspicion. (Wits Journalism, 2019: 22)

Credibility, a lack of quality reporting and investigative journalism and media freedom were issues that were highlighted in the report, with concerns raised about the end of beats in journalism and the bowing down to pressure of clicks (Wits Journalism, 2019: 22).

> In South Africa, the trend towards fewer beat reporters appears to go
> hand-in-glove with training out in media companies having closed
> down due to budget cuts, well-staffed sub desks being culled to a
> minimum, young reporters being thrown in the deep end in,
> newsrooms with no mentors, and news desks which re-write copy as
> there is no time to train reporters in what was wrong or right with a
> story. (Wits Journalism, 2019: 22)

The influence of digital technologies like Facebook and Google Analytics on entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group will be investigated in this study. Respondents will be asked about the criticism that digital journalism has, in some cases, resulted in the spread of misinformation and sensational content.

## 2.4 Gaps in the field of research

There have been numerous studies about the influence of digitalisation and technology on newsrooms (See for instance: Ashton & Cottle, 1999: 22-43, Douglas, 1998: 43-48; Zeng, 2019: 34-37; Zhang, 2009: 330-347). Some of the main themes to emerge from these studies include concerns over superficial content as a result of digitalisation in newsrooms, changing work routines in the newsroom, tracking audience data using web analytics and exploring shifts from print to digital journalism in a newsroom (Ashton & Cottle, 1999: 22-43, Douglas, 1998: 43-48; Zeng, 2019: 34-37; Zhang, 2009: 330-347). This study will discuss similar issues during semi-structured interviews with entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a thorough search on the internet, including on Google and Google Scholar search engines, as well as the catalogue of the APK library at the University of Johannesburg, showed that the influence of digitalisation on news production processes involving entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group has not been the main focus of an academic study.

Tiso Blackstar Group has, however, been referenced as part of a larger study or source. This includes a study by Moyo, Mare and Matsilele (2019: 490-506) which investigated the impact of editorial metrics on news production processes. Four Tiso Blackstar Group staff members formed part of a larger study which included journalists from newsrooms in South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe (Moyo *et al.,* 2019: 490-506).

Media Monitoring Project (MMP, 2006) conducted a baseline study investigating arts coverage in South African media. Journalists from Times Media, now known as Tiso Blackstar Group, took part in the study. Some of the key issues discussed in the study included how advertising influences the way arts content was covered, a lack of critical analysis in arts journalism and international artists receiving more coverage than local artists (MMP, 2006).

Tiso Blackstar Group is also briefly mentioned in a research report by Makhudu (2018) about the challenges newspapers face in South Africa. Various publications that are owned by Tiso Blackstar Group including *Sunday Times, Sunday World* and *Daily Dispatch* have formed part of broader case studies by academics (For example: Amner, 2011: Cowling, 2017:25-48; Gunnink, 2014: 161-171; Marschall, 2012: 409-423; Naude & Froneman, 2010: 84-98; Serino, 2010: 99-110; Van Zyl, 2012: 221-235; Worthington, 2011: 608-623).

This is the first study since 2006, as far as could be established, to conduct research on entertainment and lifestyle journalists working at Tiso Blackstar Group. Senior staff members (Henry, 2019; Nthonga, 2019; Thakurdin, 2019; Wolmarans, 2019) also confirmed they had no knowledge of entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group taking part in an academic study.

## 2.5 Entertainment and lifestyle journalism

Several studies around entertainment and lifestyle journalism in South African have been conducted (Such as: Botma, 2011; Steenveld & Strelitz, 2010: 531-547; Tomaselli, 2003:

427-441; Hyde-Clarke, 2011: 41-55; Wasserman, 2008: 287-297). Claassen (2011:21) investigated the impact of entertainment on news presentation and found that news presentation lacked in-depth analysis, resulting in superficial content. Claassen (2011:21) called on journalism teaching to educate students on "historical knowledge and cultural literacy."

Botma (2011) investigated the positioning and discursive role of arts journalism at *Die Burger* between 1990-1999. Botma (2011) explored how power shifts during a turbulent period in South Africa's history affected the positioning of arts journalism at the publication. Botma (2011: 250-279) found that arts journalists at the newspaper responded differently to the post-apartheid discourses. Botma (2011: 250-279) argued that some arts journalists "embraced a legacy of editorial independence" while other arts journalists disagreed with "cultural boycotts supported by the ANC."

In a book written about tabloid journalism in South Africa (Wasserman, 2010) mapped the history of tabloid journalism in South Africa, examining the impact and importance of tabloids on South African society. Wasserman (2010) detailed how tabloids gave recognition to people of colour during apartheid, providing a platform for their issues to be voiced.

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are many definitions around entertainment and lifestyle journalism. Broadly, and for the purposes of this study, entertainment journalism is a focus on celebrity news that centres around the amusement of the audience as well as providing information (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 635; Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 288; Klein, 2012: 44).

Fourie (2007: 217) said entertainment journalism's role has become increasingly popular and important as it not only provides context around who the reader is, but also what values that reader espouses.

Lifestyle journalism includes content that focuses on the experience of the human and the cultural experience of content (Meeuf, 2014: 209). Participants who took part in this study were asked to provide definitions of entertainment and lifestyle journalism within the parameters of how they work at Tiso Blackstar Group.

There are similarities between tabloid, entertainment and lifestyle journalism in the sense that the focus is generally on the private lives of personalities. Deuze (2005: 862) compares

popular journalism to tabloid journalism as both focus on the private lives of celebrities. The content produced by entertainment and lifestyle journalists is a combination of news involving celebrities as well as music and movie reviews, theatre coverage and restaurant reviews (Klein, 2012:45).

### 2.5.1 Tabloid news and popular journalism

The introduction of tabloids and its popularity amongst its audience, changed the landscape of celebrity news, thrusting it to the forefront of journalism debates because of its focus on so-called sensational news (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 397).

The tabloid press was developed as a cheaper form of media that focussed on the personal lives of sports and entertainment personalities, which resulted in an instant rise in circulation (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 397). The emergence of a culture addicted to celebrity news has also resulted in dramatic changes in the media, with celebrity news making headlines based on its ability to not only draw in readers, but also advertisers (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008 :397). Despite the reaction from readers, tabloid journalism remains a volatile topic for journalists, with some considering tabloid journalism the epitome of low journalistic standards (Zelizer, 2010).

Entertainment and lifestyle journalism face similar critiques as tabloid journalism as it focuses on the personal lives of newsmakers (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626). This study will investigate the culture of hierarchies in newsroom and in Chapter 5 will explore how digitalisation has influenced the position of entertainment and lifestyle journalists in this hierarchy at Tiso Blackstar Group.

### 2.6 Journalism hierarchies

Tabloids and consequently journalism which focuses on celebrity news or content around the pleasure of the audience has been viewed sceptically by some academics, creating a hierarchy in journalism culture (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626). These hierarchies are structured positions that journalists place themselves in at the work place (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626).

In a study conducted with arts journalists in the United Kingdom, findings showed that political and current affairs news is placed on the top of the hierarchy (Harries & Wahl-

Jorgensen, 2007: 626). Respondents said arts journalism was considered soft news and was placed below political and current affairs news (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626). This means that arts journalism and by association, entertainment and lifestyle journalism, is at the bottom of the hierarchy (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626).

Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen (2007: 626-627) argue that this type of journalism often focuses on the personal lives of celebrities and personalities. Researches have pointed out that because of the "nebulous professional category" that arts journalism finds itself in, and other genres that fall into so-called soft news categories, it is difficult to make generalisations about individual experiences (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 621).

### 2.6.1 Hierarchies demolished?

Despite the argument that these hierarchies are still present in a digital era, Zelizer (2010) points out that the history of journalism shows that there has always been a form of journalism that has been judged, whether it be the medium or style. Zelizer (2010) argues that tabloids should allow for journalism to be "self-examined" despite fears that it lowers journalistic scandals.

Hanusch, Hanitzsch and Lauerer (2015: 41-158) argue that lifestyle journalism is often overlooked because it "deviates from normative ideals" resulting in it being placed at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Deuze (2006: 862) maintains that journalists producing popular content consider themselves in the same position as journalists who produce more traditional journalism (current affairs and politics) despite being placed in a different hierarchy by their colleagues.

Zelizer (2010) argues that while tabloid journalism has received a bad reputation for embracing sensationalist news stories, which has "evoked a moral panic," there are benefits to tabloid journalism that are often overlooked. These concerns can be applied to entertainment and lifestyle journalism as entertainment and lifestyle journalism also focuses on lighter content pieces.

> It offers a continuum of practices, which exist in degrees which must
> be judged against their immediate context. Fears over the potential

loss of elevated standard in this scenario thus become an illusion, a persuasive tease, but a hard reality. (Zelizer, 2010)

Zelizer (2010) contends that while many criticise tabloid journalism, it is important to acknowledge that this type of journalism has benefits and pitfalls. The contribution made by entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group will be discussed in Chapter 5. The participants were asked what they considered their capital to be in the newsroom. The amount of readers entertainment and lifestyle journalism attracts compared to other beats in the newsroom will also be investigated.

## 2.7 Technological changes affecting journalism

The impact of technological changes on journalism has been a focal point for researchers over the past decade (for instance: Caple & Bednarek, 2016: 435-455; Gillis & Johnson, 2015: 184-196; Vu, 2014: 1094-1110; Weaver, Willnat & Choi, 2013: 163-183; Yang & Cannon, 2017: 259-270). The focus of many studies has revolved around new skills required in a digital journalism age, changing roles and news values, the use of digital tools in the newsroom and the impact of technology on work flows (Gillis & Johnson, 2015: 184-196; Jordaan, 2012; Moyo *et al.,* 2019: 490-506; Skovsgaard, 2014: 200-218; Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 277).

A survey was conducted with over 29,000 journalists from around the globe, and results showed that technological changes have resulted in journalists describing their jobs as multi-faceted (Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 173). Many journalists noted the impact of the 24-hour news cycle on their day-to-day routines, citing internet penetration as the biggest influence on their roles (Weaver *et al*., 2013: 173). An increase of technology and the ability of news to be consumed through a number of ways resulted in the participants naming producing news as a main role (Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 173). The respondents pointed out the ability to have a range of skills to perform daily duties becoming a pre-requisite to perform their jobs.

One of the most pressing needs mentioned by journalists in various countries was the acquisition of new multimedia skills. With digitalisation and convergence reshaping newsrooms and news practices, journalists increasingly need to be able to produce and

process text, video and sound in their reporting.  (Weaver *et al*., 2013:
179)

In another study conducted by Beam, Weaver and Brownlee (2009: 277-298) with over 1,000 journalists in the United States of America, findings pointed toward newsrooms becoming more market-driven. This means that the needs of the consumer/audience are given priority, which has been influenced by global trends such as celebrity culture and civic journalism (Beam *et al.,* 2009: 283). In becoming market driven, news organisations have embraced the internet to reach larger audiences (Weaver *et al*., 2013: 175).

Gillis and Johnson (2015: 184-196) found that while social media played a big role in news gathering, it was favoured amongst younger journalists. The findings also showed that traditional methods of news gathering such as face-to-face interviews and telephonic interviews were still considered a better way of gathering news.

The literature reviewed shows how globally, newsrooms have been influenced by digitalisation. These findings will contribute towards central themes such as changing news production processes, the growing trend of celebrity culture and journalists becoming audience-centric in Chapter 5.

**2.7.1 The use of social media in newsrooms**

In examining the use of technology and the impact on news processes, the findings showed that journalists do use social media platforms as a source of information for research on stories (Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 164). The journalists said that social media made it easier to monitor what competitors were doing (Weaver *et al*., 2013: 164). The findings from the study also found that digital technologies have had an impact on the relationship between media organisations and consumers, which has allowed for better engagement between the two (Weaver *et al*., 2013: 164).

In South Africa, Jordaan (2012:1-164), conducted a study investigating the use of social media and its impact on news selection and presentation at *Rapport* and *Mail & Guardian*. The findings showed little impact of social media on newsroom routines, though journalists did say social media formed part of their professional lives (Jordaan, 2012: 1-164).

**2.7.2 Digital measurement tools**

Digital analytical tools had an impact on the way in which news is gathered and produced (Moyo *et al*., 2019: 490-506; Vu, 2014: 1094-1100). In a study examining the impact of digital analytical tools on journalistic practices in African newsrooms, the findings showed that respondents said that the benefits of using digital analytics tools enhanced reporting as it enabled editorial staff to understand their audience (Moyo *et al.,* 2019: 490-506). These tools are used to quantify reader numbers and engagement amongst online audiences (Henry, 2019; Vu, 2014: 1095).

The findings also showed that there was a dual benefit for advertisers as it showed exactly what kind of advertisements attracted their readers (Moyo *et al*., 2019: 501-503). These editorial analytical tools also have an influence on the news production process as stories are measured in real-time (Moyo *et al.,* 2019: 500). Findings showed that adjustments to stories are made based on the response to the analytics by readers (Moyo *et al*., 2019: 501).

> These architectural innovations and the move from old to new are
> providing newsrooms in Africa and elsewhere a chance to re-invent
> the use of physical space. Organisations like the Tiso Black Star
> Group have constructed elaborate news hubs to facilitate breaking
> news and better collaboration and communication between digital
> teams and reporters. (Moyo *et al.,* 2019: 499)

These findings are similar to a study conducted with editors in the United States of America (Vu, 2014: 1094-1100). The respondents said they made amendments to editorial choices based on results from digital analytical tools (Vu, 2014: 1096). The influence of metrics on news gathering has influenced the gatekeeping selection process, which has pivoted towards audience interests as opposed to previous news values (Vu, 2014: 1097). At the same time, while editors are aware of the economic benefit of adjusting stories to get better readership, the respondents said this did not influence the decision in the adaptation of content (Vu, 2014: 1096).

> It was found that editors perceived economic benefits of getting high
> readership do not drive them to monitor web metrics. However, this

perception was a predictor of editors' likelihood to make editorial changes. Perhaps this finding shows such an uncertainty in newsrooms today: journalists are trying to cope with rampant financial problems that have hit the industry but are still unsure whether allowing deeper audience interference on their professional turf is the solution. (Vu, 2014: 1096)

### 2.7.3 Digital changes impacting news values

O'Neill & Harcup (1995: 161) argue that news values are a set of guidelines used by journalists to decide on whether a story a published or not. This is based on numerous influences, including but not limited to factors such as, celebrity, prominence, location, company guidelines and personal values (O'Neill & Harcup: 1995: 161).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a previous pilot study by this author (2018) showed that editors use digital tools to help determine the newsworthiness of a story. In an interview with Henry (2019) it was explained that real time measurement tools help editors to decipher audience interest and, in this way, content can be adapted and followed up on. In this sense, the news values have changed to largely include audience interest (Henry, 2019).

### 2.7.4 Digitalisation in newsrooms: Benefits and pitfalls

The ability to break news faster and self-promotion were the two other main benefits of using social media (Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 164). At the same time, respondents mentioned several pitfalls as a result of using digital tools, such as social media, in the newsroom. Emphasis was placed on factual and superficial reporting because of the pressure to be first (Weaver *et al.*, 2013: 164).

The multiple and blurred roles that have emerged in newsrooms because of the multiple responsibilities that journalists now occupy were also highlighted as a concern amongst journalists (Weaver *et al.,* 2013: 164). Burnout and stress were also factors, with many journalists stating that while technology has enabled journalists to be connected 24/7, it has also resulted in constantly being connected and the expectation of being available all the time for a 24-hour news cycle (Weaver *et al.*, 2013: 164).

Online media has been met with positive and negative reactions. Zelizer (2019: 344) argues that digital technologies enhance the reach of journalistic practises. These practises have enabled journalism to make news more relatable to its audience than ever before, which has impacted the audience's desire to consume news (Zelizer, 2019: 344). However, Zelizer (2019: 344) cautions against defining journalism along with technology, claiming that the fact that technology is always changing could "blind us" to the negative influence on journalism. Zelizer (2019: 345) argues that despite the changes journalism, at its core, remains the same.

> The stability of journalism's core—the idea that individuals associated with certain recognized and reliable enterprises are entrusted with collecting and disseminating information for the public good—matters. (Zelizer, 2019: 346)

## 2.8 Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter shows the evolving nature of journalism. It also demonstrates the impact digital tools has had on news production processes, including the use of social media and digital analytical tools. None of the literature reviewed focussed on entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group nor did it investigate whether these journalists considered that their position in the journalism hierarchy has changed. This is the focus of the analysis in Chapter 5.

# Chapter 3

# Theoretical framework

## 3.1 Introduction

The selection and processing of content in newsrooms includes the work routines involved in all steps of the news production process (McQuail, 2010: 308). These decisions are all influenced by what is defined as news, news values employed, agenda-setting, gatekeeping and the news net. This chapter first discuss organisation theory as a central theoretical departure point followed by a discussion of these key terms.

This study demonstrates how the analysis of news production processes remains relevant to the field of journalism studies. Theories such as agenda-setting, gatekeeping and the news net can still be applied, although they have been impacted and to some degree also changed by the phenomenon of digital technologies. In Chapter 2, it was indicated that editors agree that processes have changed because of digitalisation. A shift occurred from the media deciding on the news agenda to a point where the reader and consumer are now in a more powerful position.

## 3.2 Central theoretical points of departure

The central theoretical departure points of this study are organisational theory and field theory.

## 3.3 Organisational theory

Organisational theory refers to the idea that journalists produce news based on systems employed which contribute towards the selection, processing and publication of content.

It has been argued by academics that these processes have become formulaic, resulting in "empirical generalisations" (McQuail, 2010: 308) to emerge. Some of the theories that have developed as a result of these routines include news values, agenda-setting, gatekeeping and selection and the news net (McQuail, 2010: 308-334).

The routines in the selection and processing phases in newsrooms also have an impact on the decision-making process (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 130; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 24). In a sociological study conducted by Tuchman (1978) examples of routines practised by journalists in newsrooms were revealed. Tuchman (1978: 303) found that these routines were entrenched in the work place to such an extent that there was very little scope for deviation nor the will on the part of professionals involved in the process to drift from these patterns.

### 3.3.1 What is news?

Although journalists decide what is newsworthy, their decisions are as a result of social constructs (Fourie, 2007: 264). As a result, it is fair to suggest the media give meaning and create realities for the audience (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 128; Fourie, 2007: 264; McQuail, 2010: 310). These meanings and realities are, however, being challenged by the rise of new technologies and internet penetration (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 129).

Professional values of journalists, editors and the media company at which these staff work are still used as the basic premises on which to decide on whether content is produced (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 25). These values are ever-changing and continue to be influenced by technological advancements and reader demands (Galtung & Ruge, 1965: 65; Hall, 1973: 226; O'Neill & Harcup, 1995: 165).

### 3.3.2 What makes a story newsworthy?

Croteau and Hoynes (2013: 124-127) argue that the content produced by media is deemed to be newsworthy by journalists. This means that journalists act as gatekeepers on information and decide what information needs to be reported on and disseminated to audiences (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 125). Although journalists report on events, it is the day-to-day routines and practises that influence these routines.

> Ultimately, if we are to understand what news really is, we need to understand how journalists form their judgements and construct their accounts. In other words, we need to examine the day-to-day work of the professional journalist because this is where news is defined, and news stories are written. (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 125)

**3.4 News net**

Tuchman (1978: 294) was the forethinker in the concept of the news net, which revolves around processes that are used by journalists and media professionals to gather news. Tuchman (1978: 260) argued that news can, to some extent, become predictable and this has in many cases resulted in the news selection process becoming routine. Tuchman (1978: 263) argued that journalists, guided by how they gather news as well as different value sets, tend to rely on the same daily routines, resulting in a definitive news agenda being presented to the audience.

Tuchman (1978: 263) argued that the news net consists of a system of beats which can lead to pre-determined news guided by "bureaucratic" decisions in the newsroom. Tuchman (1978: 276) explains that the news net is also influenced by hierarchies in the newsroom, which is guided by a value system on the part of editors and managers.

Tuchman (1978: 262) argued that judging the value of a news item has resulted in journalists and editors offering legitimacy to certain values.

> In the act of judging the relative value of diverse items caught in the
> news net, the editors perpetually create and recreate negotiated
> standards of judgment. These judgments affirm the legitimacy of
> established institutions. By accomplishing judgments, the editors in
> turn affirm and reaffirm the validity of the anchoring of the news net
> as a frame imposing order and coherence on the social world.
> (Tuchman, 1978: 276)

McQuail (2010:204) points out that the selection of content also includes the consideration of readers and what they will find interesting. Croteau and Hoynes (2013:130) say considering the audience has left room for criticism, as news can tend to be pre-determined and have a bias and stereotypes being repeated on a mass scale. Although these stereotypes may occur, the idea that it is done purposively has been cautioned against, with academics instead explaining this pre-determined selection or unconscious selection is routine practise that happens to occur (Berger & Luckman, 1987: 13; Ndlela, 2005: 73; O'Sullivan, Dutton & Rayner, 2001: 19).

## 3.5 News values

News values are used by journalists, editors and media companies as a set of guidelines to decide on what makes something newsworthy (O'Neill & Harcup, 1995: 161). These guidelines have been revised numerous times and are unique to a region, the company, editors, publications and individual journalists (O'Neill & Harcup, 1995: 170; Hall, 1973: 226-243). The basic premise of these values is that they are considered an ideological guide of sorts and as such, are in a constant state of flux, as ideologies are constantly shifting (Hall, 1973; O'Neill & Harcup, 1995).

Features which can contribute towards making a story newsworthy include timeliness, relevance, locality, celebrity and novelty (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 25). These values are prioritised as they are the ultimate guideline on what becomes news at a media organisation (O'Neill & Harcup, 1995).

Although technologies have made access to information easier, the mass media are still considered a main source of information (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 128; McQuail, 2010: 310). As a source of information, the media plays an integral role in shaping ideas and influencing readers (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 128; McQuail, 2010: 310). The power of the media and its ability to inform society has resulted in calls for news values to be interrogated as they can present a certain version of reality, leading to stereotypes (Berger & Luckman, 1987: 13; Ndlela, 2005: 73; O'Sullivan, Dutton & Rayner, 2001: 19).

While stereotypes can occur, and agendas revealed, academics caution that stereotyping is most often unintended and is as a result of personal judgements on the part of journalists and editors as well as the continuous cycle of news, which results in some stories being neglected (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 128; Tuchman, 1978: 303).

## 3.6 Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping broadly refers to the distribution of news content to a wider audience (McQuail, 2010: 309). As with news values, there have been several revisions of this term as it was initially presumed there was one process to decide on how news was released (McQuail, 2010: 309). As the media evolved, the influence of other factors over how and why news is selected and released has developed (McQuail, 2010: 309).

The rise of technologies has allowed the audience to negotiate the meanings they create through more access to different media, social media and their ability to influence content (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 129; Deuze, 2003: 208-218). This ability to influence content and, in turn, journalists who adapt content, even after it has been published, has not only changed the news production process but journalism as a whole (Deuze, 2003: 208-216).

> Living up to the characteristics and potential added value of journalisms online particularly challenges perceptions of the roles and functions of journalism as a whole. The suggested added values and characteristics of online journalisms cannot simply be incorporated one-by-one without fundamentally changing the 'nature of the beast' – the beast being that particular newsroom culture and the professionals involved. (Deuze, 2003: 216)

Singer (2001:65) argues that journalists have neglected their traditional gatekeeping roles, relying more on the audience to guide the content that is released. Singer (2001: 65) suggests that the internet has allowed readers more scope to choose the content they want to read, creating a more inter-connected world.

While the internet has broken down the doors of traditional gatekeeping, allowing access to more ideas, it also opens the door for the spiral of silence theory. The spiral of silence theory points to the idea that individuals who do not agree with a majority opinion are isolated (Fourie, 2007: 246). Instead of voicing their opinion, these individuals remain silent. This has a spiral affect in the media and results in one dominant view being represented (Fourie, 2007: 246).

**3.7 Agenda-setting**

The media has the ability to not only shape the news agenda, but can elevate certain agendas, ultimately leading to the idea that some stories are more worthy than others (Coleman, McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1995: 147). This is often referred to as a form of "media management" and is a process where journalists and editors decide to set the news agenda of the day (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 125). The repetition of a big news story, or emphasis on a

certain topic, can lead to a "snowball effect" which also creates the perception that a single event is more important than any other event (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008:25).

Given that digital changes have impacted how the news agenda is decided, there have been calls for more research into the role of the audience on agenda-setting (Coleman *et al.,* 1995).

Academics and media professionals agree that the news production process has also been influenced by the emergence of technologies and it has resulted in various pressures amongst media groups (O'Neill & Harcup, 1995: 165). Examples of these new struggles include but are not limited to the fight to publish content first, economic instability, audience involvement and producing content for clicks (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013: 124-130, Deuze, 2003: 204-218, Vu, 2014: 1097).

The introduction of live time audience metric systems available to editors and journalists is one example of how technology can influence the day-to-day news gathering process (Ferrucci, 2017: 202; Henry, 2019; Vu, 2014). These measuring systems allow for journalists and editors to decipher audience patterns including which stories are garnering the most readership, where the reader is located and how many times a story is being shared (Henry, 2019; Lepore, 2019; Vu, 2014: 197, Wolmarans, 2019).

### 3.8 Agenda-melding theory

Against this backdrop, many academics refer to the agenda-melding theory, which proposes that the media employs a combination of values to establish whether a story is newsworthy (Coleman *et al.,* 1995: 154). Agenda-melding involves a mix of personal values, the values promoted by the company and senior staff as well as reader interest in a story (Coleman *et al*., 1995: 154). Although these values are given varying levels of importance, the idea that all facets are considered is critical in establishing a more objective news selection and processing formula (Coleman *et al.,* 1995: 154). This formula ultimately results in the news net being extended to include a number of influences such as societal norms and expectations, as well as personal values in the selection of news (McQuail, 2010: 308).

### 3.9 Concerns around digital news production processes

As mentioned above, editors and academics have referred to the impact of digital measuring tools in the news production process. In a study conducted by Vu (2014: 1098) involving

over 300 editors in the United States, findings showed that editors would willingly change decisions based on these metrics. This, said the participants in the study, was because of the belief that "popular content would produce higher ratings" (Vu, 2014: 1098). Similar studies on the influences of these audience metric systems on the news production process have concluded that the gatekeeping role of the media has been changed (For instance: Anderson, 2011: 550-566; Arenberg & Lowrey, 2018: 131-149; Belair-Gagnon, 2018: 1-17; Edson & Tandoc, 2014: 559-575; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2013: 65-76).

Concerns around this challenge to professional news values, quality of work and sensationalist news content have been raised, with researchers and editorial staff arguing that basing news values on audience demands has resulted in superficial content, a simplification of the news and allowing the masses to dictate the news agenda (Coleman *et al.,* 1995; Henry, 2019; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 28).

In reference to the media covering content based on commentary posted by public figures on social media, and integrating the feedback from the audience in their stories, Lepore (2019) explains the conundrum that (American) journalists face in a digital age.

> Do editors sit in a room on Monday morning, twirl the globe, and decide what stories are most important? Or do they watch Trump's Twitter feed and let him decide? It often feels like the latter. Sometimes what doesn't kill you doesn't make you stronger; it makes everyone sick. The more adversarial the press, the more loyal Trump's followers, the more broken American public life. The more desperately the press chases readers, the more our press resembles our politics. (Lepore, 2019)

As discussed in Chapter 1, entertainment and lifestyle journalism has a long history of being labelled tabloid reporting. Bearing in mind that journalism as a whole now faces similar criticisms because of the impact of digitalisation in newsrooms, this study investigates how these audience metric systems have impacted the news production processes of entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group.

**3.10 Field theory and capital**

According to Bourdieu (1986: 242) a field is filled with social positions in society which results in a competition for capital. This capital presents itself in various forms including social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital (Benson & Neveu, 2005: 23; Bourdieu, 1993:71; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 342).

The acquisition of capital results in monetary rewards, status and social recognition (Benson & Neveu, 2005: 23; Bourdieu, 1993:71; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 342). Economic capital is the most important capital that can be acquired as it leads to financial rewards (Benson & Neveu, 2005: 23; Bourdieu, 1993:71; Boshoff & Garman, 2016: 617; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 342; Vos & Singer, 2016: 156). The acquisition of economic capital has the ability to influence an agent's position in other fields and can lead to the acquisition of other forms of capital (Benson & Neveu, 2005: 23; Bourdieu, 1993:71; Boshoff & Garman, 2016: 617; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 342; Vos & Singer, 2016: 156).

Symbolic capital is acquired when power is reinforced by social groups (Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 343). This reinforcement by groups leads to an acceptance of norms and values, increasing the power of these symbols (Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 343). Social capital is as a result of groups and individuals who have a trusting relationship (Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 343). This relationship allows for the sharing of resources, ideas and support for agents in that field (Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 343).

Cultural capital is as a result of skills and knowledge in a specific industry shared and used by agents in the field (Bourdieu, 1986: 242; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 341). Field theory suggests that social actions and the battle for various forms of capital underpin human behaviour (Benson & Neveu, 2005: 3). In the case of cultural capital, the shared knowledge by agents is considered a currency (Bourdieu, 1986: 242; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 341).

Nissenbaum and Shifman (2017: 484) state cultural capital is the result of cultural knowledge in a social field which results in an elevated position within that field. Nissembaum and Shifman (2017: 486) conducted a case study whereby internet memes were considered a form of cultural capital as it encapsulates an inherent acknowledgement of cultural understanding, including nuances that may only be applicable to a certain audience at a certain time. Nissenbaum and Shifman (2017: 486) expand on this be saying that this deep knowledge allows capital to be built.

> Simply knowing a cultural item is not sufficient to build capital; the item must belong to a particular, desirable canon, one defined by a constant normative differentiation. (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017: 486)

Building on this idea, this study investigates how entertainment and lifestyle journalists use their knowledge of their audience to boost their cultural capital in the newsroom and whether digital tools have helped this process.

Academics have pointed out that although Bourdieu did not specifically mention digital communication in his field theory, it remains relevant as it has been used to explain concepts such as power relations in the media as well as the impact of digital technologies (Robinson & Ignatow, 2017: 955; Tandoc & Jenkins, 2017: 490).

A form of cultural capital also revolves around language, which is considered a major influencer of power (Van der Waal, 2012: 447). The birth of the internet has allowed more ideas to be freely available, allowing for hegemonies to be challenged (Bourdieu, 1993: 62; Granville *et al*., 1988: 257). Using this idea as a foundation, this study also establishes how entertainment and lifestyle journalists make use of language to bolster their cultural capital in the newsroom.

### 3.10.1 Applying capital to the newsroom

Edson and Tandoc (2014: 559-575) argue that journalists have incorporated the information from metric systems into the daily news process. This has resulted in a simplification of news and the audience becoming a form of capital (Edson & Tandoc, 2014: 561).

Edson and Tandoc (2014: 562) proposes that journalists operate within the field of journalism and are in a constant battle for capital. Edson and Tandoc (2014: 562) uses a "mechanism of influence" to explain how journalists are susceptible to influence in gaining capital when they feel their capital – social, symbolic, economic and cultural – is under threat. Edson and Tandoc (2014: 570) found that the audience is the single most important form of capital as it can result in all forms of capital being gained by the journalist. The findings showed the audience relates to financial capital as this is "where the money comes from," social capital

in the form of power within a group, symbolic capital as trust is built between the audience and the media and cultural capital as knowledge and skills were shared (Edson & Tandoc, 2014: 570).

> Faced with the reality of declining economic capital for traditional journalism still unmatched by the slow increase in digital revenues, journalists clearly perceive capital instability within the journalistic field. This instability has opened up the gates to the influence of the audience, conceived of by journalists as largely a form of economic capital that can be maximized to preserve capital stability in the journalistic field. This mechanism explains why the editors used web analytics mainly to inform strategies to further increase web traffic. They used web analytics to monitor stories doing well, so these can be placed more prominently on the homepage and be promoted on social media to attract traffic. Backed by web metrics, editors predicted which topics, headlines, and story assets were more likely to generate traffic. (Edson & Tandoc, 2014: 571)

Lewis, Holton and Coddington (2013:229-241) expand on the idea that audience interaction, and clicks, can cause participatory journalism. This produces an exchange between readers and the media and can achieve social capital in the form of trust and a sense of connectedness (Lewis *et al.,* 2013: 229).

Using this interpretation, this researcher has conducted research based on the idea that entertainment and lifestyle journalists are experts in their field. These findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

## 3.11 Summary

This chapter explored the central theoretical points of departure which included organisational theory and field theory. The two are linked in the sense that this study investigates how digital tools influence the news production process of entertainment and lifestyle journalists as well as explore whether these digital tools have had an impact on the position of these journalists in the newsroom. Further to this, an understanding of whether digital tools have impacted the capital of journalists in the newsroom, including cultural, social, symbolic and economic, are discussed in the findings.

**Chapter 4**

**Research design**

## 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of a research design is to lay out a plan of how the research is going to be conducted, with information on who the participants are as well as details on the study such as when and where the study will take place (Du Plooy, 2009: 88). According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011:2) the aim of research is to "discover something." This research aims to discover how digitalisation has influenced entertainment and lifestyle journalism in the broader Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom.

This study uses a triangulation research design within the field of journalism studies. Information is gathered from participants through interviews and by analysing graphs, and diaries by the news, entertainment, lifestyle and sports teams to investigate the difference in the type of stories they produce as well as the quantity thereof.

Triangulation refers to different research methods being employed by the researcher in order to further validate findings (Babbie, 2009: 118; Du Plooy, 2009: 39). Academics argue that the use of qualitative and quantitative methods benefits the study as well as the researcher as results are considered more thorough as both approaches have been applied.

## 4.2 Promoting triangulation

Wodak and Meyer (2009: 33) elaborate on triangulation by explaining how different processes benefit each other

> The principle of triangulation implies a quasi-kaleidoscopic move
> towards the research object and enables the grasp of many different
> facets of the object under investigation. (Wodak & Meyer, 2009: 33)

Babbie (2009: 118) explains that triangulation is a valuable research strategy as it can validate findings.

> Because each research method has particular strengths and weaknesses, there is always a danger that research findings will reflect, at least in part, the method of inquiry. In the best of all worlds, your own research design should bring more than one research method to bear on the topic. (Babbie, 2009: 118)

Academics have elaborated on the promotion of a mixed-methods approach by suggesting that researchers employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to increase the reliability of findings as well as to increase the scope of the study (Du Plooy, 2009: 41, Rubin & Babbie, 1993: 322; Sosulski & Lawrence, 2008: 122). While triangulation has been promoted to increase the validity of findings, researchers warn that qualitative and quantitative methods should be used to complement each other and not be used as a replacement (Creswell & Garrett, 2008: 322).

> Most researchers have now come to realize that both methods are important in understanding any phenomenon. In fact, the term triangulation, commonly used by marine navigators, frequently emerges in conversations about communication research. (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 49)

Babbie (2009: 156) argues that while scientific research can result in a lack of "richness", qualitative research fills the gaps. Qualitative research compliments quantitative research by measuring the way knowledge is constructed and interpreting the human experience (Burr, 2003: 5; Johnson, 1997: 282). Examining the subjective experiences of participants does, however, still allow researchers to identify patterns that may exist (Babbie, 2009: 56; Du Plooy, 2009: 35).

**4.3 Qualitative research method**

As discussed above, a mixed method was used in this study to gather data from participants as well as information from Tiso Blackstar Group. The researcher discusses the qualitative aspects of the study below.

### 4.3.1 Purposive sampling

A research design involves the collection of data from participants (Du Plooy, 2009: 109). The selection of participants involves sampling which is used to reflect the ideas of the target population (Du Plooy, 2009: 109). The target population refers to the entire population while the accessible population are the units within the target population that the researcher had access to during the data collection phase (Du Plooy, 2009: 109). It is critical to acknowledge the difference between the two in a study as it influences the outcome of the study (Du Plooy, 2009: 109).

The target population of this study consists of all permanent entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group. This study makes use of purposive sampling. Babbie (2009: 220) states purposive sampling is also referred to as judgemental sampling. This is when the researcher selects respondents to take part in a study using his/her judgement.

> A type of nonprobability sampling in which the units to be observed
> are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which
> ones will be the most useful or representative. (Babbie, 2009: 220)

Du Plooy (2009: 123) adds that previous knowledge of the potential sample audience on the part of the researcher contributes towards the selection. As an employee at Tiso Blackstar Group and having previously managed the entertainment team, this researcher was well-placed to select participants most suited to take part in the study. This was based not only on the idea that those participants would have the most knowledge around the study, but also based on availability and willingness of participants to take part in the study.

Babbie (2009:220) elaborates on the benefits of purposive sampling by explaining that although a larger number of participants is beneficial to the validity of the study by increasing the scope, that does not necessarily mean that these respondents represent a "meaningful population." Du Plooy (2009: 124) adds that even though a purposive sample may limit the

number of participants, this does not affect the validity of the study as the sample still reflects "representativeness, accuracy, level of confidence and external validity."

### 4.3.2 Tiso Blackstar Group: Purposive sampling

Fourteen participants were selected to be part of this study through a purposive sampling method. The respondents interviewed were between 25 and 54 years old. Of these 14 participants, five were entertainment and lifestyle journalists. Three editors working in the entertainment and lifestyle beats were selected. These participants were purposively chosen to be part of the study based on their day-to-day involvement in the entertainment and lifestyle beats. They consist of print and digital journalists in the newsroom. The researcher selected print and digital entertainment and lifestyle journalists to accurately gage the influence of digital tools in news production processes.

Four participants were senior editors at Tiso Blackstar Group. These participants were selected based on their role in overseeing entertainment and lifestyle content on various sites at Tiso Blackstar Group. One digital audience analyst was selected to provide information on data relating to the various beats including news, politics, sports, entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group. One senior manager was interviewed to provide insight into the digital strategy of entertainment and lifestyle journalism and the overall strategy at Tiso Blackstar Group.

The first step in selecting entertainment and lifestyle journalists and editors to take part in the study was through informal conversations with colleagues in the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. Much of the lifestyle content is created by a network of contributing freelancers. To fully grasp the influence of digitalisation in the daily work routines of entertainment and lifestyle journalists, these informal conversations helped the researcher establish who were permanent staff members.

The sample of entertainment and lifestyle journalists was extended to include journalists on long-term contracts. The idea behind this decision was for the study to have more validity by including journalists who work in a day-to-day digital environment. This allows them to more accurately answer the questions around the news production processes. The majority of these journalists also work or have worked in a digital first environment. A digital first environment in this case means that their stories are published on digital sites first. However, given the fact that Tiso Blackstar Group also compromises of prominent print publications

such as *Sunday Times* and *Sowetan*, entertainment and lifestyle journalists from these publications were also included.

Secondly, the researcher considered access to journalists for this study**.** Tiso Blackstar Group has four offices across the country: Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth. All of the participants interviewed in this study are based in the Johannesburg offices. Although journalists in the other branches do create entertainment and lifestyle content, they also focus on other beats if necessary (Wolmarans, 2020).

> At this time we no longer have full-time journalists in our Cape Town
> or Durban bureaus, or in our Port Elizabeth and East London
> newsrooms, dedicated solely to lifestyle and entertainment reporting.
> This reflects the tough times our industry is experiencing:
> unfortunately such positions were either lost through retrenchments or
> left unfilled when journalists left the company. (Wolmarans, 2020)

Bearing in mind that face-to-face semi-structured interviews were being conducted, whereby non-verbal responses are critical to assess, the researcher also selected Johannesburg-based journalists so that journalists could be interviewed face-to-face.

The senior editorial staff were included as part of this study to extend the validity of the assertions made by the entertainment and lifestyle participants. These participants also offered background to the impact entertainment and lifestyle journalism has had on a broader scale in the general newsroom when referring to readership as well as strategy.

Time was the biggest problem in gaining access to the participants as journalists are often in and out of the office as well as working on strict deadlines. All of the participants approached to take part in this study agreed. Written permission from Tiso Blackstar Group management was given to conduct this study. The researcher had informal conversations with the participants ahead of the interviews to discuss what the study was about and give an idea of general questions that may be asked.

### 4.3.3 Tiso Blackstar Group: Data gathering

Interviews were conducted over a seven-month period. These interviews were conducted in person. Interviews were set-up with respondents a week ahead of time, but because of time constraints, these were often changed at the last minute. This resulted in some interviews occurring when the respondent said he/she was available. Based on previous experiences of interviewing journalists in the newsroom, the researcher prepared questions for participants in advance. This preparation allowed for last minute changes to occur and not affect the outcome of the interview process. Respondents were told interviews would be between 20-40 minutes. Most of the interviews lasted between 30-minutes and one hour, depending on follow-up questions asked in the semi-structured interview.

**The following interviews were conducted:**

Reuben Goldberg amplify editor

Kate Henry, former *TimesLIVE* editor

Lebogang Nthonga, *TimesLIVE* editor

Karishma Thakurdin, group entertainment editor

Riaan Wolmarans, digital managing editor, Tiso Blackstar Group

Rizwana Variawa, digital audience analyst, Tiso Blackstar Group

P1, entertainment content producer

P2, senior entertainment journalist

P3, entertainment journalist

P4, lifestyle editor

P5, lifestyle editor

P6, lifestyle journalist

P7, senior manager

P8, entertainment journalist

The qualitative data-collection method used in this study is semi-structured interviews.

Du Plooy (2009: 198) explains that semi-structured interviews consist of standard questions and topics while at the same time allowing the researcher to deviate from these pre-determined themes. This, argues Babbie (2009: 78), provides the researcher with a general framework of ideas that needs to be focussed on. Semi-structured interviews therefore use a combination of closed-ended questions focussing on specific themes. These themes can be deviated from based on the answers by the respondents (Du Plooy, 2009: 198). This method allows for a deeper interpretation of how participants decipher their experiences (Du Plooy, 2009: 198).

> The objective of the in-depth (unstructured) part of the semi-structured interview schedule is to understand how the respondents frame of meaning is constructed. (Du Plooy, 2009: 198)

This method is useful to the study as it involves individuals and their personal experiences. Each participant has a different interpretation of the way digitalisation has affected entertainment and lifestyle journalism. The perceived impact of the work flow on the news production process because of digital tools such as social media and audience measurement tools also varies from person to person. As explained by Wimmer and Dominick (2011:49), qualitative interviews allow for a more thorough understanding of the subject matter as all subjective experiences are considered.

> In addition, qualitative techniques can increase a researcher's depth of understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This is especially true when the phenomenon has not been investigated previously. (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 49)

In the case of the lifestyle and entertainment journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group, all participants confirmed they had not previously been asked to take part in an academic study involving questions around how digitalisation has affected their news production processes. On understanding their position in the newsroom, the participants confirmed they had never been asked, whether as a part of an academic study or other means, to describe how technology had an impact on their status and position in the newsroom.

The semi-structured interviews will help to answer **RQ1, 2, 3** and **4**.

1) How has the digital news production process influenced entertainment and lifestyle news values?

2) How have news production processes at Tiso Blackstar Group been influenced by digital changes?

3) How has the field of entertainment and lifestyle journalism been impacted by digital changes at Tiso Blackstar Group's newsroom?

4) Have the entertainment and lifestyle journalists gained cultural capital in the newsroom?

Although the questions were perceived by the researcher not to be sensitive in nature, some participants felt that questions around comparisons to themselves and other journalists in the newsroom could result in tensions arising. It was for this reason that participants decided to remain anonymous. The participants admitted that the focus of the study, how digitalisation has influenced news production processes, is not sensitive.

**4.3.4 Semi-structured interviews: Data analysis**

Wimmer and Dominick (2011: 139) explain that the interview process also allows the researcher to interpret both verbal and non-verbal responses. Du Plooy (2009: 198) warns that this interpretation is a "difficult process" as it is used to explore individual meanings with little value judgement while still remaining objective.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants to understand the impact of digitalisation on new production processes. These processes are detailed below under the following categories:

- Defining news
- News gathering and social media
- Dumbing down and the internet
- Work flow changes
- Understanding audience interest
- Measuring success and capital

These categories were determined by questions posed to the participants as well as other topics that emerged during the semi-structured interview process. They include questions around news values, agenda-setting, gatekeeping and selection of the news .

Babbie (2009: 130) explains the difficulty in interpreting semi-structured interviews, elaborating that because individuals have different experiences, patterns may not be easy to determine. These patterns, or lack thereof, may therefore be difficult to understand and determine (Babbie, 2009: 130).

To mitigate the challenge, recordings of interviews with participants were done. Themes, including social media tools, news production process, and value (capital) in a newsroom, were used to structure the discussion of the findings (see Chapter 5). The questions posed to participants were structured along these themes and answers grouped accordingly.

During the interview process, Wimmer and Dominick (2011: 29) refer to a process of cross-validating. This is where the researcher asks the same question in a different way to ensure that any discrepancies are evident. The researcher made use of this technique of questioning to establish whether answers given were as accurate as possible. These answers were cross-referenced with each other to ensure they were similar in nature.

**4.4 Quantitative research method**

Quantitative research is based on the idea that there is a value-free society that exists and these patterns and data can be measured using scientific evidence (Du Plooy, 2009: 30). This approach is used when data can be quantified (Du Plooy, 2009: 30). The quantitative aspect of the study is discussed below.

**4.4.1 Tiso Blackstar group: Random sample**

Du Plooy (2009: 115) describes a simple random sample method as a process whereby each unit of analysis in the target population has the same chance of being selected as part of the sample. In quantitative research, sampling is used to generalise findings as the results point towards the same finding being applicable to the entire target population.

In this study, the group diary from the Tiso Blackstar Group digital hub was analysed over a seven day period. The seven days were chosen randomly by the

researcher. This was done to eliminate bias on the part of the researcher. Given that the researcher works in the newsroom and could unwittingly choose a week where it was a busy news week or a busy entertainment week, a pre-determined selection could include this bias.

Du Plooy (2009: 109) states the bias in sampling can occur if the data collected is not authentic. This researcher concurs and therefore made a random selection.

This method was also applied to the choice of the data selected over a three-month period showing the number of clicks entertainment and lifestyle beats gets compared to other beats such as sport, news and politics in the newsroom. This information was gathered from a digital audience analyst in the newsroom. The digital audience analyst selected the three months of data and explained it as follows:

> It made sense to include the most recent statistics, so I selected the past three months. Statistics are in constant flux and comparing them over a three month period also made sense as it included a larger pool of data. (Variawa, 2019)

## 4.4.2 Tiso Blackstar Group: Data gathering

The quantitative aspect of this study focusses on comparing the answers provided by participants during semi-structured interviews to daily diaries over a seven day period and published stories of entertainment and lifestyle journalists over a seven day period.

The examination of the daily diaries and published stories is used as a cross-reference to the information provided by participants in the study. This is done by comparing the number of stories produced by the entertainment team when compared to other journalists' teams in the newsroom. As discussed in Chapter 3, some journalists and media professionals view their capital in various forms. This can be the number of clicks they receive on a story, how many stories they produce or their ability to write for a certain audience. The aim of comparing these diaries to other beats in the newsroom is to establish whether the entertainment and

lifestyle journalists have increased cultural capital as a result of the number of stories they produce when compared to other teams. In this case, cultural capital refers to the number of stories produced by the entertainment and lifestyle journalists.

As previously mentioned, as an employee at Tiso Blackstar Group, the researcher has access to information such as diaries. Management at Tiso Blackstar Group gave permission for diaries to be analysed and information gathered to be presented. A sample of a diary (Appendix A) illustrating the difference between the number of stories produced by the teams is included. However, some information, including extensive details on diaries, is omitted due to confidentiality concerns.

This researcher also received permission to publish information from digital measuring tool Google Analytics which shows the impact that entertainment and lifestyle content has on the total audience on *TimesLIVE and SowetanLIVE.* Variawa (2019) states that tools like Google Analytics are used by editors to measure readership. It is also used to gather additional information like pageviews (the number of times a single story was clicked on) and how many times the story has been shared (When a user shares a story onto their individual social media accounts) (Variawa, 2019).

In illustrating the number of clicks entertainment and lifestyle content produces compared to other beats in the newsroom, the researcher aims to show how this has increased the position of entertainment and lifestyle journalists in the newsroom, which can lead to an increase of all forms of capital (This will be discussed during participant findings in Chapter 5).

The numerical data will help to answer **RQ4,** which stated:

4)  Have the entertainment and lifestyle journalists gained cultural capital in the newsroom?

**4.4.3 Random sample: Data analysis**

As mentioned above, the researcher has access to daily diaries at Tiso Blackstar Group. A random sample was taken from 18-26 September. The entries were manually collated by the researcher and presented in a graph to show the amount of stories entertainment and lifestyle journalists said they would be working on compared to other beats in the newsroom.

This diary is produced by the fast news team, which focusses on producing breaking news and so-called fast news, the politics team, sport, entertainment and lifestyle. All of these teams produce content that is shared internally amongst different publications at the company. Various publications like *Sowetan* and *Business Day* have their own diaries, but these are not always shared.

The researcher then compared these diary entries to the number of published stories on *TimesLIVE. TimesLIVE* serves as the primary home of all content published and therefore accurately represents the number of published stories produced by journalists. The researcher manually counted the number of published stories by accessing the Tiso Blackstar Group's operating system, Cosmos, where all content is prepared and published. All records of published content is available on Cosmos and was easily accessible to the researcher.

Further to this, the researcher was provided readership figures on *SowetanLIVE* and *TimesLIVE* by the digital audience analyst (Variawa, 2019) at Tiso Blackstar Group. Using information from Google Analytics over a three-month period, Variawa (2019) provided information which compared the number of clicks entertainment and lifestyle beats received over a three-month period compared to other beats. On *TimesLIVE* a comparison of the three biggest beats in terms of readers was provided. These are politics, news and sport. On *SowetanLIVE*, entertainment and lifestyle journalism was compared to news, sport and opinion. As Variawa (2019) explains, the analysis of beats was done based on the most number of readers each section on the sites received.

> There are several sections on the site, many which have smaller sub-
> sections within them. As a site, we consider news, politics, sport,
> entertainment and lifestyle as the big five as these are the biggest
> traffic drivers. (Variawa, 2019)

Babbie (2009:24) argues that quantitative data can simplify complicated information.

> Quantification often makes our observations more explicit. It also can
> make it easier to aggregate, compare, and summarize data. Further, it
> opens up the possibility of statistical analyses, ranging from simple

averages to complex formulas and mathematical models. (Babbie, 2009: 24)

The aim of analysing this data is to answer **RQ4,** which stated:

4) Have the entertainment and lifestyle journalists gained cultural capital in the newsroom?

An analysis of the data will be provided in Chapter 5. An investigation of the data aims to show how the strategy employed by entertainment and lifestyle teams at Tiso Blackstar Group contributes to the overall readership at the company. This will arguably indicate capital – economic, social, symbolic and cultural - that entertainment and lifestyle journalists have in relation to other journalists in the newsroom.

## 4.5 Ethical considerations

Several ethical questions arise in this study. These are discussed below.

### 4.5.1 Navigating personal bias

Babbie (2010: 110) maintains that for credible research to be conducted, the risk of bias must be eliminated. In doing this, Babbie (2009: 110) advocates that researchers must acknowledge "our human shortcomings" to understand any of entrenched ideological values that may affect findings of a study (Babbie, 2009: 110).

The researcher of this study is an employee at Tiso Blackstar Group and, as such, acknowledges that results may be considered biased, although deliberate steps have been taken in the research design to guard against it.

Therefore, this researcher believes that the findings were not  influenced by the position of the researcher.

### 4.5.2  Data validity

There are several measures that can be implemented to ensure that research remains as objective as possible. Babbie (2009:321) suggests that researchers always remind themselves

that they are not having an informal discussion but are conducting research to establish general patterns. The ability to include follow-up questions also enables researchers to gather additional data for studies (Ferrucci, 2017: 361). To help legitimise the validity of interviews, recordings of interviews as well as taking of notes are promoted to ensure that the researcher can revert back to answers in the case of uncertainty (Ferrucci, 2017: 361).

This researcher recorded all interviews on a recording device. These interviews were then saved on a flash disk as well as automatically saved on iCloud. As a secondary measure, the researcher also took down notes from interviews. These notes included observations such as participants sighing, rolling their eyes, laughing and hesitating before answering questions.

### 4.5.3  Research environment

Du Plooy (2009: 207) argues that the validity of studies designed in natural environments of the participants results in high validity. This can be for a number of factors including that participants feel more comfortable in their own environment and have more time if they are in their own environment (Du Plooy, 2009: 208).

All of the interviews for this study were conducted in the Johannesburg office. The participants got to choose a venue of their choice. In most cases this was any available boardroom at the time that the interview was conducted. In one case, the participant requested that part of the interview was conducted in an outside area where she could smoke.

### 4.5.4 Protecting participants

In anticipation of concerns around anonymity, precautionary measures were implemented to limit the impact of any concerns. Permission by Tiso Blackstar Group was granted to conduct this study. Managers also agreed that participants would remain anonymous and would under no circumstances would the researcher be asked to reveal their identities.

Management also agreed that should participants choose to reveal their identities, findings would not affect their job in any way.

Permission to access digital measurement tools was also given. An analysis of daily diaries was also granted by management, however, details of these diaries were declined on the basis that media competitors may gain insight into strategies once this study is published. It was therefore agreed that some information from diaries would not include content, but instead be

reflected in a quantitative diagram illustrating the number of stories produced by the entertainment and lifestyle teams on a daily basis.

The respondents selected to take part in this study had the option to participate in an anonymous capacity. The participants signed informed consent forms. Most of the participants choose to remain anonymous.

**4.6 Summary**

The study is mainly qualitative in nature and uses information obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with entertainment and lifestyle editorial staff members as well as several senior editors and management. A quantitative aspect is added by presenting data from daily diaries from the entertainment and lifestyle journalists as well as information from the digital measurement tool Google Analytics.

The aim of incorporating quantitative data is to compare it to the answers provided by participants during interviews. This form of triangulation will contribute towards a description of the cultural capital of entertainment and lifestyle journalism in the broader Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom.

**Chapter 5**

**Discussion of findings**

**5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the findings of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered. Themes emerged based on the research questions and literature review. These themes were addressed during the semi-structured interviews with participants. The themes were then used to structure the discussion of quantitative findings, where evidence was compared to the information provided by the participants during the study.

**5.2 Understanding entertainment and lifestyle beats at Tiso Blackstar Group**

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are various definitions of entertainment and lifestyle journalism. This study inquired how the editors of entertainment and lifestyle journalism defined their beats and how they decide which content falls under their auspices.

Thakurdin (2019) is the group entertainment editor at Tiso Blackstar Group. Thakurdin (2019) manages the entertainment hub, referred to as *TshisaLIVE*. This content is published on *TimesLIVE* and is then distributed to an internal news stream where editors amend the copy to suit their individual brands (Thakurdin, 2019). This includes print and digital titles within Tiso Blackstar Group (Thakurdin, 2019).

Thakurdin (2019) defines the entertainment beat as Tiso Blackstar Group as any news related to celebrities. This can extend to plays, theatre shows and book reviews if there is a celebrity angle.

> Entertainment news covers the celebrity and arts sector in South
> Africa. It is light-hearted compared to heavy and hard news. Lifestyle
> has a bigger umbrella which includes food, fashion and movies. That
> is not to say entertainment journalists do not cover that content. It is a
> case by case basis. (Thakurdin, 2019)

A senior entertainment reporter, (P2), added to this by explaining that entertainment journalism uses celebrities to add a voice to serious issues. As an example, P2 says that the entertainment team will produce content on social justice issues once a celebrity has commented on that topic.

> Entertainment journalism is not just about the fluff. In fact, the stories that do well with our audience is when a celebrity speaks out about issues affecting normal people in the country. Their voice adds weight to a story. For example, when a celebrity speaks about being targeted because of the colour of their skin or about political issues in the country, people tend to listen more. (P2)

A digital lifestyle editor, P4 (2019), defined the lifestyle journalism beat at Tiso Blackstar Group as a combination of entertaining and informative news.

> Lifestyle journalism is best defined by topic. It is all the stuff you would do on the weekend. What is in your closet, what you are eating, what you are eating off. It is your home and it is travel. It is informative as it almost offers advice or explainer articles on these topics. (P4)

The participant (P5) said that lifestyle journalism is not genre specific and can delve into politics and serious news issues.

> Lifestyle is everything that is not hardcore blood and gore. Entertainment news is more celeb focussed. Lifestyle is home, travel, food and fashion. (P5)

### 5.2.1   Blurred beat boundaries

The participants (P1-P8) agreed that there is a lot of cross-over between lifestyle and entertainment journalism in the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. As a general rule, the

entertainment team focusses specifically on local celebrity news while the lifestyle team focusses on fashion, food and international celebrities. The participants agreed that while some beats have merged, there are still beats in the newsroom.

> You can have journalists who work in news and get asked to do lifestyle content and vice versa. Lifestyle and entertainment journalism will often do a different spin on a news story. (P6)

Participants P5 and P6 said that often where the story is placed in a certain section is based on who the journalist is who wrote it. The participants (Nthonga, 2019, P2, P5, P6) admitted that there are often heated debates about where content is placed in different sections (under the lifestyle beat or entertainment beat).

> Ultimately the decision is with the site editor on where content is placed. Journalists and editors fight about which stories are placed in the sections because that section gets the clicks and editors are rated on clicks. There can be so much cross-over between stories. For instance, a celebrity being murdered: is that entertainment or news? Julius Malema doing a funny dance: is that politics or entertainment. The editors and journalists will pitch their argument and then the site editor makes the decision. In extreme cases the argument is taken to the executive editor to make a final call. (Nthonga, 2019)

Although the entertainment and lifestyle teams work in a broader newsroom environment, the findings show that their workflow process differs significantly. For this reason, this chapter is divided into separate sections to illustrate the various ways digitalisation has impacted the news production process.

**The findings discussed below will be presented in three sections:**

- The influence of digitalisation on entertainment journalism
- The influence of digitalisation on lifestyle journalism
- Statistics on unique browsers as well as diary comparisons between beats

## 5.3 The influence of digitalisation on entertainment journalism

### 5.3.1 Background

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the entertainment team hub at Tiso Blackstar Group consists of a team of two journalists, one content producer and one editor. Although individual brands like *Sowetan* and *Sunday Times* employ journalists who focus on lifestyle and entertainment news, the entertainment hub, known *TshisaLIVE*, focuses on producing digital content first (Thakurdin, 2019). *TshisaLIVE* is the brand name for the entertainment team and is reflected as such on *TimesLIVE* (Thakurdin, 2019). When other publications use copy from *TshisaLIVE,* the text will reflect this.

In 2016 Tiso Blackstar Group decided to strengthen its entertainment component and hired a team of three journalists and one editor to create the entertainment hub, which would be responsible for creating content for both print and digital brands (Nthonga, 2019). The idea behind the start of the team was to streamline operations and create a central team that could provide a fast and continuous stream of content that editors could use at their discretion (Wolmarans, 2019).

Wolmarans (2019) says the move was a strategic decision as the creation of the entertainment hub formed part of the larger newsroom strategy to increase the volume of entertainment content across sites (Wolmarans, 2019).

> Tiso Blackstar as a big publisher had fallen behind in digital thinking in early 2010, unfortunately, and then we had new ownership and new management team from 2014/2015 onwards. And the task was clear: to relaunch all of our websites and digital properties and really make sure that we do it in a way that would stand us in good stead and would allow us to build, over the years, long-term revenues from readers, through paywalls etcetera. (Wolmarans, 2019).

Wolmarans (2019) said the decision was made to hire a team that would boost numbers so that *TimesLIVE* would immediately become a "player" in the digital space.

> We were looking at ways to boost the traffic on our website, even
> before we built the technology. We wanted fresh content that speaks
> to a market that doesn't exist yet. We knew about the existence of a
> very cool entertainment team working for our competitors and we
> approached them. We welcomed to our team a group of people
> writing incredibly hot celebrity content in an engaging and
> entertaining way. (Wolmarans, 2019)

Thakurdin (2019) adds to this, explaining that there were previously several entertainment journalists from the same company attending one event. The digital team eliminated much of the duplication of content and resources, by producing a daily diary and publishing a steady stream of content (Thakurdin, 2019).

> When we first started we used to go to an event and there would be
> seven entertainment journalists from the same company. Our aim is to
> break down the silos between the different brands and simplify
> processes, including the attendance of events. We also produce copy
> that different publications can use to suit their audience, helping
> brands when they are short-staffed or may not have thought of a story
> or angle. We are not brand-specific and often create content that
> specific editors request. (Thakurdin, 2019)

## 5.4 Digital tools impacting news production processes

As discussed in Chapter 3, researchers and journalists have stated that digitalisation has impacted how news in gathered, selected and processed. The aim of this study is to examine how digital tools have influenced these processes and if so, to what extent. The participants were asked to give practical examples that they believe have affected their daily routines. Taking into consideration these impacts and changes to their daily routines, journalists were asked whether they believed this influenced their capital (economic, social, symbolic and cultural) in the newsroom.

### 5.4.1 Defining news

The selection, processing and publishing of news stories is determined by what makes a story newsworthy. As discussed in Chapter 3, newsworthiness is a subjective stance and incorporates a number of factors including the values of the journalist, editor, company, region and audience. These findings establish whether digital tools have had an impact on the news gathering process and therefore it is important to understand how digital technologies have affected what makes a story newsworthy.

### 5.4.2 The influence of technology on story selection and publishing

Participants in this study (P1-P4) agree that new technologies have changed what makes a story newsworthy, arguing that digital tools like social media have had a significant impact on deciding which content is selected and produced.

> Ultimately the audience guides us on deciding what is newsworthy. If people are talking about an issue or there is a trending topic on social media, then we not only add that to our daily diary, we make sure the story is given priority and is produced first. (P2)

The trending topic mentioned by the journalist refers to social media, as Goldberg (2019) confirms. On Twitter, topics are given hashtags (Goldberg, 2019). If many people are talking about the same topic using the hashtag the topic goes onto a trends list (Goldberg, 2019). The trends list is constantly evolving and there is no set number of people needed to talk about an issue required to make it trend (Goldberg, 2019)

> There are many factors that influence whether a topic trends. One of them, for example, could be pure numbers. For example, on a Sunday night it may only take 100 tweets for something to trend, but the same thing will not trend on a Monday morning. This is because the threshold for something to trend may be 1,000 because of the heightened online activity. (Goldberg, 2019)

The participants (P1 - P3) agree that while traditional news values are considered, trending topics as well as posts by celebrities on newsmakers and the amount of "talkability" those posts are receiving, are the single-most important factor determining what news is ultimately selected.

P3 elaborates on the "talkability" of posts on social media, explaining that when a newsmaker or celebrity posts something on social media accounts, the post is liked on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. P3 states that a post by a journalist can also be retweeted (Twitter) and re-shared on Facebook and Instagram. Posts also allow for people to comment on them. P3 explains that the more comments a post has, the more journalists know that people have an interest, which in turn leads to news selection.

> As journalists we have a sense of what is going to do well. But we
> back that up by using reader responses to social media posts and
> make a joint decision. So, if there is a picture of a celebrity doing
> something that may seem insignificant to us, but it has received a lot
> of comments and likes, then I will put it on our diary. (P3)

P3 explains that often when journalists are unsure about whether the story is strong enough to pitch to the editor, a supporting argument is that the story is getting lots of likes and comments.

> As much as we think we know our audience, our ultimate guide is
> social media. The editor will often ask us how many likes the post has
> received or how many comments there are. There is no set number of
> likes or comments that determines a yes or no, depending on other
> content on the diary, but it does add to the argument. (P3)

### 5.4.3 Agenda-melding theory applied to a digital newsroom

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the agenda-melding theory suggests that the media employs a combination of values in deciding if a story is selected and published (Coleman *et al*., 1995: 154). This can include a number of factors including reader interest, personal values and the

values of the media company (Coleman *et al*., 1995: 154). This results in a more balanced selection of content (Coleman *et al*., 1995: 154).

P2 agrees that even though social media and the so-called popularity of posts by newsmakers and celebrities are a priority, other factors are also considered.

> Our priority is the reader, yes. But there are other factors that
> contribute towards deciding whether a story is published or not. The
> angle has got to be new and interesting. We each consider what
> makes a story interesting to be different, but we motivate for this. We
> are all different people and will see different things on our timelines.
> (P2)

This demonstrates that the agenda-melding theory provides a valid description of the processes that the entertainment team follow to determine what is newsworthy. The influence of digital tools is a major factor in deciding what stories are published, but other factors such as immediacy and novelty also play a part.

**5.4. 4 News gathering and social media**

As was discussed in Chapter 3, Tuchman (1978: 294) developed the idea of the news net, which refers to the systems that journalists use to gather news. The news net describes places or sources journalists use to gather news and then select stories and publish them (Tuchman, 1978: 295). Places could include hospitals, court rooms and police stations (Tuchman, 1978: 294). However, as the literature review in Chapter 2 indicated, the introduction of digital tools has changed this news gathering process.

The participants (P1-P3) said that their primary method of collecting entertainment news is social media. The participants (P1-P3) attribute this to the fact that celebrities and entertainment newsmakers have created brands for themselves on social media and use their social media platforms to distribute news, almost eliminating the media.

> I cannot remember the last time I simply cold-called a newsmaker.
> Whether we are reporting on what they said on social media, or

> phoning the person as a follow-up, almost 100 percent of our content
>
> comes from social media posts. (P2)

P3 adds to this by explaining that social media is used as a tool to not only produce content, but also to build relationships with celebrities. P1 said that celebrities manage their own news and when contacting them for information, journalists are now able to create a bond, based on the fact that they know what is going on in their lives.

> Celebs now feel comfortable about being in control of what they put
>
> out. [2]David Tlale announced his mom's passing via Instagram. It is
>
> more authentic comes from celebs. This has strengthened
>
> relationships with journalists because we now know what is going on
>
> in that person's life and are able to sympathise. (P3)

### 5.4.5 Story selection: Social media as start point

Two participants (P1-P2) said this does not mean that follow-up interviews are not done and insist the content is not a repeat of the news that has already been spoken about by celebrities.

> We try to do at least one interview a day based on social media posts.
>
> It is the nature of our environment. Very often, a follow up does not
>
> need to happen because the celebrity has given a lengthy explanation
>
> about a certain issue. (P1)

Although the content can appear to be a repeat of posts by newsmakers on social media, the participants (P1-P3) argue that journalists add depth by explaining the background and context of stories for the reader and are able to highlight main issues. The participants explain that even though a post has been put on social media by newsmakers, that does not mean that everybody has seen it (P1-P3).

---

[2] David Tlale is a South African fashion designer (Zeeman, 2019).

> Our job is to turn that post around into an entertaining and interesting read for the audience. We add pictures, videos and are able to link it to various topics. (P3)

## 5.5 A print entertainment perspective

P8 is not part of the digital entertainment team, but instead works for a newspaper. Although the participant produces content for online sites, which can be shared amongst the other titles at Tiso Blackstar group, for the most part the focus is on creating stories for the print publication. These stories are then posted online on the day the paper is released (P8).

P8 argues that while social media plays an important role in the news gathering process, relationships with celebrities, attending events and calling newsmakers are still important.

> Social media is a God. On bad days, my content will be about 70% social media based. It is all depends on how you take a story forward. For example, the #AmINextMovement after the murder of [3]Uyinene Mrwetyana. Many groups from so-called victims of abuse allegedly by the hands of celebrities were posted. Instead of just talking about these group, it was my job to call police, call the celebs and find out more. It is not enough to just report though. You have to strengthen sources and relationships. It makes you a better journalist. (P8)

P8 said although newsmakers want to reveal their news on their social media platforms instead of talking to the media, the building of relationships does allow for a negotiation to occur.

> You can find yourself in a situation where you are able to approach people and ask them to hold on posting something on social media and offering you the chance to publish your piece on your website

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[3] Uyinene Mrwetyana was a 19-year-old student who was raped and murdered in Cape Town in August (Nkanjeni, 2019). Her death resulted in an outpouring of outrage in South Africa, with protests and social media campaigns occurring in the wake of her murder (Nkanjeni, 2019)

> simultaneously. That way we both win. The celeb gets to tell their
>
> story while the journalist gets the scoop. (P8)

P8 elaborates on the use of WhatsApp in the daily news flow, explaining that interviews are very often conducted over the platform with newsmakers.

> I love WhatsApp as a digital tool. I do interviews on voice notes on
>
> WhatsApp. I will send someone questions with voice notes and they
>
> will reply. That means it is exclusive to me. It is easy and liberating
>
> for me as the journalist and for the newsmaker. There is no reason to
>
> meet in person or do things over a phone-call. (P8)

The journalist (P8) admitted that he did not pay attention to digital audience measurement tools, explaining that he did not base his selection of stories based on what was popular with readers.

> I will only know of the editor tells me that a story did well. It is not an
>
> obsession. I do not measure my worth based on how other people
>
> feel, but I do give them what they expect. And as an entertainment
>
> journalist that is to entertain. (P8)

Although based on a single view, this example points to different approaches between teams that are focussed on producing content for digital first brands compared to journalists who produce content for print first. This interview indicates that in the case of print journalists, the influence of digitalisation on entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group has had little impact on daily work routines.

## 5.6 Using digital tools to break stereotypes

P2 said that  digital tools allows the entertainment team to report on what could be termed as sensational news as well as addressing important issues.

> Sure, our audience likes to read about [4]Zodwa's panties more than enriching African relations between Zimbabwe and South Africa. But that does not mean we neglect important issues. There is a debate around producing content that enriches society compared to content that is popular, and for the most part, we produce popular content. But when celebrities speak about important issues like xenophobia, racism and homosexuality, then we cover those. (P2)

P3 disputes this and said that her daily diary is filled mostly with stories directly from social media sans any follow ups.

As was discussed in Chapter 3, Tuchman (1978: 260) argued that the news net does allow for news to become predictable. This allows for routine practises to emerge, stereotypes to occur and could result in a pre-determined bias (Croteau & Hoynes, 2013:130).

P2 disputes this by explaining that even if the routine is formulaic, news changes on a daily basis.

> We may cover the same celebrities but, in our world, that is the same
> as telling a news journalist not to cover Jacob Zuma. They are
> newsmakers, so you cannot ignore them. The issues related to them
> vary and that is what makes news variable. (P2)

P8 said the internet allowed journalists to challenge stereotypes, not reinforce them.

> We are changing how a generation used to think. It is about being part
> of the conversation. We are in a woke society. We have stopped
> telling stories because someone is sexy. There is a deeper meaning
> that we are uncovering in our story-telling methods. (P8)

---

[4] Zodwa Wabantu is a South African entertainer who is famous for her skimpy outfits and posting images of herself nearly nude on her social media accounts (Seemela, 2019).

## 5.7  Workflow changes

In explaining how digital tools have affected the workflow process, participants (P1-P3) explain that WhatsApp plays a big role in the way they communicate with each other and with newsmakers. Although the journalists operate from Tiso Blackstar Group's Johannesburg newsroom, working from home or out of the office is promoted.

### 5.7.1  The power of an internet connection

> We are very flexible from where we work from. On Fridays, only one person from the team is in the office and that is based on a rotational calendar. Our editor allows us to work from home whenever we need to, so there is no need to come into the office. (P1)

However, even though working out of the office is allowed, for the most part journalists do come into the office (P2). The reasons for this are different for each journalist, with one participant (P2) explaining working from the office feels more productive, while the other journalist (P3) said her internet connection at home was unstable so she prefers to come into the office.

### 5.7.2  WhatsApp as a communicator

The participants (P1-P3) said that WhatsApp is their primary mode of communication. They send diary ideas via WhatsApp and these stories are approved or scraped by the editor on the same communication platform (P2, P3).

> We do not have diary meetings. We do not need to, because WhatsApp is perfectly okay to discuss these ideas. We have a group chat and ideas are either sent on the group chat or to the editor directly. The editor will then ask questions about ideas and then either approve them or scrap them. (P2)

The participants (P1-P3) said that the entertainment editor often works from home and when there are queries on stories, these are also communicated via WhatsApp.

> Changes and queries to stories are often communication via
> WhatsApp. If it is unclear about what we need to do, then we will
> make a phone-call, but that's hardly necessary. (P2)

P2 does however admit that this system may not necessarily work for all teams, as each team has its own system. P2 explains that the entertainment team has worked closely together for several years, so the relationship, albeit even on WhatsApp, is easy to understand and communicate with.

P4 said that diary ideas are sent to news editors via email and diary meetings are still held in the office. P4 explains that the print news team prefers that stories be explained in person so that exact angles and queries can be communicated clearly.

## 5.8  Understanding audience interest

While the participants use social media to gauge audience interest and as a source of news, digital measuring tools also play an important part in understanding what the reader is interested in and very often determines content (P1-P3). As was discussed in Chapter 3, academics have conducted several studies which show that these audience metric tools have impacted the daily news process and have influence over the way news is selected, processed and produced (See for example: Anderson, 2011: 550-566; Arenberg & Lowrey, 2018: 131-149; Belair-Gagnon, 2018: 1-17; Tandoc & Edson, 2014: 559-575; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2013: 65-76, Vu, 2014: 1098).

### 5.8.1 How digital tools enhance news selection

The participants (P1-P3) who work on producing digital entertainment news agreed that digital tools play a critical role in their job. They describe the newsroom as being reflective of this environment, with large screen TVs with a live feed of the digital measuring tools being televised (P1-P3).These live feeds give minute to minute statistics on which stories are getting the most clicks (P1-P3).

> Digital tools give us a clear picture of how our audience is responding
> to content. This very often determines whether a story is followed-up
> or similar stories on the same topic or person are written about. (P2)

## 5.9 Changing positions in the newsroom

The participants (P1-P3) believe that there are still hierarchies in the newsroom. P2 said that digital entertainment stories are between 180-250 words. In comparison to news stories, which vary to between 400 words to 700 words, entertainment journalism is often criticised as being easy (P1-P3). Replying to the idea that this could simplify news, P2 said simple news is what the reader reacts best to.

> Society has transformed from a decade ago. People either want a long
> form or digestible news. Digital journalism is supposed to be short
> and punchy. It is meant to be small bits of information. We simplify
> complicated or longer news pieces. Journalism needs to adapt and that
> means telling the story quickly. (P2)

P2 did admit that in a digital age the fight to be first over right is problematic, referring to several mistakes made in the newsroom which resulted by the need to be first. However, P2 points out that it is not just an entertainment problem, but a general digital problem.

> I myself have made these errors. When a story is breaking, there is
> pressure to be first. Not from our editors, because they always stress
> the need to be right rather than first. But when you see other
> publications going with a story or the news being told on social
> media, you immediately feel a push. These mistakes are not generally
> factual, but rather an incorrect image or spelling mistakes that
> generally would not occur. (P2)

Talking about the news flow process, Nthonga (2019) said that once a story is selected and written, a news editor looks at the story and changes angles and wording. The story is then put through a subbing process where a sub-editor will check the story. The story will then go through to a senior sub-editor and then places in a section called ready. The entertainment

editor will then give the story a final look and publish it so it is live on the site. However, some of the processes are skipped when there is a breaking story.

> We have just implemented this structure to improve the quality of all
> of our stories and to make sure it meets all the checks and balances.
> Previously the entertainment editor was acting as a sub-editor and
> publishing after looking at the first version of the story was produced.
> Now entertainment stories go through the entire subbing process. But
> when there is a breaking story, some of these steps could be missed,
> but these are very far and few between cases. (Nthgona, 2019)

On the issue of producing sensational news, P3 argues that sensational is a subjective term. P3 argues that what used to be sensational reflects relevant topics that were previously considered taboo. Using a local entertainer, Zodwa Wabantu, as an example, P3 said that Wabantu is known for wearing skimpy clothes without underwear, posting images of herself dancing in bars filled with men grabbing her and having various cosmetic surgeries.

> There are important issues that Zodwa reflects in her actions. Why do
> women have to be clothed? Is it really clickbait if we do a story on
> her dancing at a club when men are trying to grab her? We present all
> facets of the story: the criticism, those applauding her for being proud
> of her body and the idea that women should not cover up. The digital
> world has broken down barriers of what is considered sensational.
> (P3)

The participants (P1-P4) argue that society has not only adapted to be more understanding of what was previously considered sensational news but welcome it. The participants (P1-P4) state that breaking down of stereotypes and the emergence of people being proud of their cultures, bodies and ideas has led to a new movement of consciousness which is reflected in content.

**5.10 Using clicks for personal gain**

P3 described the digital measurement tools as an opportunity to compare yourself to other journalists at the company.

> There is one chart that measures the clicks each individual journalist
> at the company receives, essentially creating a leader board in the
> company. I am very competitive, so besides it being used to
> understand audience interest, it is also a motivator if I see one of my
> colleagues in entertainment doing better than me. (P3)

P3 said that analysing the way other journalists whose stories do consistently well helps improve not only story selection but the way in which future work is presented.

> When I see that another journalist in entertainment is ahead of me,
> then I will go back at look at that story. Was the headline great? How
> was the picture used. How did the journalist write the story. All of
> that influences my work. (P3)

**5.11 News selection and gate-keepers re-evaluated**

As was indicated in Chapter 3, criticism about the use of digital tools include the simplification of news and choosing popular content over important issues (Coleman *et al.,* 1995; Henry, 2019; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 28). It has also been argued that these tools have allowed the reader to be the news gatekeeper and dictate content (Coleman *et al.,* 1995; Henry, 2019; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008: 28).

P2 and P3 agree that readers have become gatekeepers to some extent but say that journalists are still picking a unique angle and presenting a comprehensive and quality piece of journalism to the audience. Henry (2019) adds that this is not a new development with journalism.

> Of course readers are our gatekeepers. They have always been.
> Newspaper and magazine editors would do the same if they had a

> front-page story and they knew one particular topic or person did
> well, they would choose that over a story with similar weight. To say
> that digital journalism is bowing to the needs of the consumer is not
> fair as it has always been like that. (Henry, 2019)

On the criticism that allowing readers to influence news judgement by analysing digital tools, the P2 and P3 said that the reader is just the starting point.

> Social media and digital tools are a bridge between ourselves and the
> reader. Celebs and readers feel comfortable sharing their stories on
> social media and as journalists we reflect that and find ways to take
> their thoughts and ideas and turn them into newsworthy stories. (P3)

## 5.12 Applying capital to the newsroom

As was discussed in Chapter 3, applying concepts from Bourdieu's (1986) field theory and concepts of capital, this study investigated the capital of entertainment journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group. Tandoc and Edson (2014: 559-575) argue that digital measurement tools and the use of these tools in newsrooms has resulted in the audience becoming a form of capital. This points towards the idea that understanding the audience and getting clicks results in entertainment journalists gaining capital.

As was outlined in Chapter 3, economic capital refers to the acquiring of finances (Benson & Neveu, 2005: 23; Bourdieu, 1993:71; Boshoff & Garman, 2016: 617). The participants agreed that capital in the form of clicks may result in financial gain.

> We undergo performance management evaluations and a lot of the
> feedback revolves around numbers. This is not to say if your stories
> do not do well, you will not get an increase, but obviously your
> chances are improved. (P2)

As was stated in Chapter 3, symbolic capital results in power that is reinforced by social groups (Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 343). P2 and P3 agree that clicks and the ability to be the consistent top-performing journalist is acknowledged and applauded by management. But P2 said that while this is recognised by management, reinforcing your worth, fellow journalists on the floor do not necessarily view it in the same light.

> Entertainment journalism remains undervalued and underappreciated. Several managers have congratulated me on my stories getting high numbers and for being able to produce stories quickly, however, other journalists and hard news editors do not necessarily view the work we do as that important and still consider it an easy job. (P2)

As was stated in Chapter 3, the idea that clicks are the new capital can also translate to social capital (Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 343).

> When newsmakers or PR people know that you are the highest read entertainment site in the country, they know they are speaking to a bigger audience so they are more willing to speak to you. This also opens other opportunities, such as advertising. (P2)

As was stated in Chapter 3, another form of capital that emerges as a result of clicks is cultural capital. This is the capital shared amongst agents as a result of knowledge in a specific industry (Bourdieu, 1986: 242; Ceron-Anaya, 2010: 341).

P2 argues that the entertainment team has been asked to hold several workshops in the newsroom teaching other journalists how to produce news quickly and explain strategies when a story is breaking.

> A lot of the news journalists come from a print background and have had to adapt to a fast-paced digital environment. It is not only about breaking a story, but also keeping the reader interested and maintaining a momentum. We are really good at that and when we first joined we passed on this knowledge to our teammates. (P2)

**5.13 Whose capital is it anyway?**

Despite the capital that is acquired, P2-P3 argue that entertainment journalism remains at the bottom of the newsroom hierarchy. P2 recounts a breaking news story on the death of former Bosasa boss Gavin Watson and how an entertainment story related to reality TV star Bonang Matheba gained more clicks.

> On the day that [5]Gavin Watson died, our story about [6]Pinky Girl being Bonang's cousin, who had to quit her job when people found out she was related to someone famous, was the most read story. News journalists would walked past and laughed, commenting on how their work was undermined by trivial content. (P2)

P3 said that fellow journalists often comment on entertainment journalism being easy.

> When I leave the office, news journalists will still be sitting at their desks and then I get the comment of 'Ah, but what you do is easy.' I have been a news journalist. I have been a business journalist. I have done politics. Entertainment is by far the most difficult. Taking one post, dissecting it and still making it easy for the reader is a tough task. Much tougher than writing a story from a generic press conference from a political party. (P3)

P1 disagrees and said that journalists acknowledge that entertainment has a place in the newsroom and colleagues respect the work done by entertainment journalists.

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[5] Gavin Watson was the former CEO of controversial company Bosasa. The company was linked to alleged corrupt deals (Bhengu, 2019). Watson died in a car accident that many have claimed is shrouded in mystery (Bhengu, 2019). Watson died a day before he was due to testify at a tax inquiry (Bhengu, 2019).

[6] Pinky Girl is the cousin of TV presenter Bonang Matheba (Thakurdin, 2019). She regularly appears on Matheba's reality TV show and has become well-known in the entertainment world (Thakurdin, 2019).

> I have not experienced anybody commenting about my work. I am
> sure there have been comments, but in general, I am respected
> because I bring something valuable to the table. (P1)

P2 attributes the belittling of entertainment content as being institutionalised from university level.

> When you are at university, you are taught that to have your by-line
> on the front page is everything. Translated to digital, the front page
> equates to the first three blocks on the main page. Entertainment
> never gets those spots, despite being more popular with readers. I
> stood in for a team that focuses on viral news content and even
> though I am one of the top writers in the company in terms of clicks,
> when I saw stories I wrote placed in those top three blocks I got more
> satisfaction. It is what we have been taught. (P2)

The discussion of findings above investigated the impact of digital tools on entertainment journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group. The participants provided varied responses depending on whether they produced news for digital publications first or are print orientated. This shows the difference in the importance of digital tools in the workflow process.

**5.14 The influence of digitalisation on lifestyle journalism**

It is important to differentiate between the lifestyle and entertainment journalists in this study as the lifestyle journalists do not form part of the internal digital entertainment hub. Although two of the participants (P4-P5) job description is more digitally orientated, their daily routines are impacted by the needs of the print publication they are associated with. P6 is a print lifestyle journalist.

**5.15 Work routines explained**

Two of the participants (P4-P5) are in senior editorial positions at Tiso Blackstar Group, which means that they are involved in all steps of the news production process. As mentioned

above, although the participants work in a digital environment, much of their routines are linked to the print publication they work with. P4 explains that although her job should be focussing on creating "worthy content" she spends a lot of time reworking pieces from print journalists to make them suitable for the website.

> I am a phenomenal panel beater. In print, journalists do an interview with someone assuming that everyone will know who that person is. Most of my time is spent re-writing and fixing content and it should not be. (P4)

## 5.16 Enhancing content using digital tools

Elaborating on the difference between content that is suitable for a print publication compared to content that is published on a digital site, P4 explains that as a digital journalist, it is important to optimise content for readers.

> It is essentially my job to resurrect content from print onto digital sites. Making it web friendly means enriching it with bells and whistles. As a basic example, if there is a movie review, I will add in a movie trailer to an online piece. A lot of time print headlines do not work for online. For example, typically, if you were doing something on bedrooms in a décor feature for print then the headline would be 'just dreamy.' 'Just dreamy' has no context online. (P4)

P4 said the use of digital tools such as the ability to embed movie trailers, links to other stories, social media posts and adjusting headlines to a different audience is a necessity.

> A headline has to have keywords that will stick out so that if a reader is searching for a topic, your story will come up. Or if they see your headline, you have to know what it is about. Sometimes I will change content around to make it easier to read. I would turn a very long print story into two stories or make it a listicle. So instead of 'just dreamy' it would be 'five reasons why white in the bedroom is just dreamy.' (P4)

Adding to this, P4 said that the online audience has expectations and using digital tools to enhance content is no longer a nice to do but part of the job.

## 5.17 Incorporating digital tools in news production processes

P5 is in a senior editorial position at Tiso Blackstar Group and said much of her daily routine revolves implementing digital strategies around the publication she produces content for. P5 said that these strategies are guided by online trends from social media.

> I curate content that is tailored for my audience. I have daily themes
> that I group my content around. For example, online everybody
> knows that the hashtag #TravelTuesdays is a trend on social media
> platforms. So, on Tuesdays my content revolves around travel. This
> can be travel reviews, what to pack around travelling, beachwear,
> celebrity holiday destinations. In this way I capitalise on an online
> trend to my advantage. (P5)

P4-P5 agree that while they are not focussed on the selection of stories as this is done mostly by print journalists, they are responsible for processing and publishing content. It is during these two stages that their news production process has been impacted by digital changes in the newsroom as they not only have to adapt content to make it suitable for online readers, but have also changed the way they publish content, using the digital reader as a guide.

## 5.18 Social media as a news source

P4-P6 agree that social media is a critical factor in all stages of the news production process. The participants (P4-P6) agree that whether they are writing original content or adapting print content for a digital audience, the use of social media has become a non-negotiable part of the work-flow.

The participants explained that social media is particularly useful for lifestyle journalists as it tends to be the home of 'softer' news. P4-P6 agreed with the entertainment team on the use

of social media as a news source, explaining that it is very often a starting point for journalists:

> It is a social gage. If something is trending on Twitter and you can get it up, then it tends to do well. It gages the pulse of what is happening in the real world, which I think is something that print journalism tends to forget. I find with online you get a feedback loop; social media helps you to gage. In print it is very rare for someone to write into the editor these days. Whereas people are very quick to comment on a Facebook post or on Twitter. (P4)

## 5.19 Using social media to attract readers

The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the amplify editor (Goldberg, 2019) at Tiso Blackstar Group around social media and the way it is used to attract readers as well as create brand profiles for the company, its publications and journalists. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

However, P4-P5 made reference to how the use of social media, specifically how Facebook has impacted their daily work-flows. While Goldberg (2019) oversees general social media strategy at Tiso Blackstar Group, some individual publications run their own social media pages. There is not a social media team at the company, so the posting of stories from the sites onto social media is part of the job responsibility of journalists and editors. P4-P5 said that social media has impacted their work-flow as it is a major source of traffic.

> Facebook is our biggest source of traffic, so on our brand's Facebook account I post seven stories a day. Three of these are new stories which I re-post twice a day. This is because we are struggling to produce fresh content, so I re-post the same story, but at different times in the day. The seventh story is generally a story that has performed well from the month before. (P5)

P5 said that timing of Facebook posts is critical as the number of readers that a single post (link to story) receives can be measured:

> In June we had a massive dip and that was because there was a lack of content, which in turn means a lack of Facebook posts. I did some research through digital tools like Facebook insights and CrowdTangle and saw that our competitors were re-posting old stories. So, I did that, and we jumped up by 10,000 unique browsers. (P5)

P5 mentions CrowdTangle as a digital analytical tool that shows competitor content on social media as well as your content. P5 said the tool allows users to see what engagement a post is receiving, and this provides useful information on what strategies are working for other media groups.

## 5.20 Social media as a digital tool for brand awareness

Although the participants focus on social media as a news source, P5 explained that social media is also a tool to develop brand awareness amongst readers. P5 made specific reference to Facebook and Instagram, explaining that as a brand "you have to live where your reader is" and as a media company this means focussing on ensuring your brand is on those platforms. P5 said that just as individuals have profiles on social media pages, so to do publications.

> Social media is a critical part of the job. Facebook is a big traffic driver for every newsroom. I focus on Instagram because it lends itself more to lifestyle type of content. I rely on social media to promote my content. The focus is brand awareness and the biggest way to do that is to market yourself on social media. (P5)

## 5.21 Using digital tools to analyse trends and competitors

P4-P5 said one of the biggest ways digitalisation has affected their news processes is the ability to analyse trends quickly. Elaborating on this, P4-P5 agreed that digital tools, specifically social media, have created the ability to analyse data from social media.

P4 said that trends change by the minute and the beauty of online journalism and the influence of digital tools on the profession, is the ability to have these tools to select the trends, produce content around them and publish them. P5 agreed, explaining that digital tools offer an in-depth look at what readers really want, opposed to what editors think they should have.

> The digital world has opened us up to trends and competitors. With this information, we come up with our own ideas. There is no set process any more. We see something that sparks an idea and create it immediately. (P5)

## 5.22 Adapting content based on audience measuring tools

P4-P5 said that content published on their websites always has the potential to be adapted based on the clicks that it is receiving. P4-P5 said that monitoring audience measuring tools such as Google Analytics is probably one of the most important aspects of their jobs.

P4 explained the use of digital measurement tools as a link between the reader and the journalist.

> As a starter, I use Google Analytics to pick up patterns. I want to understand what kind of stories did well and if there is a thread between them. If there is a similar story that has been done well, then we can narrow it down beyond general topic. (P4)

P5 said the ability to analyse a content piece using digital measuring tools allows editors to make amendments to copy immediately as reader interest is quickly quantifiable. P4-P5 said that understanding what makes stories successful is key to creating additional content. P4-P5

said that previous knowledge and experience of the topic enables editors and journalists to make informed decisions.

> If something really does not do well I will not do content like that again. But if there is a story that has traditionally done well and for some reason a similar story does not do as well, using digital measurement tools, I will make adaptions to my story. (P5)

P4-P5 explained that these changes can include the way the story is presented, headlines, embeds and adding other digital tools to enrich copy that will make it more appealing to a digital reader.

> My readers typically enjoy luxury phone accessories. Tech is one of the biggest interests on our site. But when the story was published, people were not engaging with it the way I thought and thought it should be doing better. I simply changed the headline by looking at what headlines do well in terms of styling. And the next thing, it shot up on Google Analytics. So, definitely, statistics from Google Analytics inform my editorial decisions. I would not necessarily cancel something because the reader is not interested, but it does allow us to adjust content. (P5)

### 5.22.1 Secondary benefits of digital analytical tools

P4 said that monitoring Google Analytics for other content that is doing well within the group is also useful to adapt and guide decisions. Staff members have access to Google Analytics and can easily monitor which stories are doing well across the group, as well as at specific publications and beats (Henry, 2019). Bearing this in mind, P4 explained how journalists and editors from other publications create content that does well results in an analyse of their numbers to understand what the audience has found interesting. P4 said that when stories do particularly well, it offers an opportunity for editors to capitalise on this.

> I also use Google Analytics to look at content across our group and see if I can do something that spins off that. For example: people had

stuff stolen from them while sleeping on a plane. I tried to see how I could put a lifestyle spin on a news story by getting a travel editor to do a story on how not to get robbed while sleeping on a plane. I will also sometimes go into stories and add my related article to try and steer traffic that way. (P4)

**5.23 The internet and "dumbing down of news"**

As discussed in Chapter 2, online journalism has been criticised for creating fake news, sensationalist content and lack of depth, which can lead to stereotypes (Karlsson & Clerwall, 2013: 65-76). In particular reference to entertainment and lifestyle journalism, Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen (2007: 626) refer to a hierarchy of journalism in which entertainment and lifestyle journalism is at the bottom. This means that entertainment and lifestyle journalism is not considered as important as other beats such as crime, politics and general news (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 626).

Participants P4-5 explained that as a general rule they do not agree that this is true, but did admit that in some ways, digital journalism can fall into the trap of emphasising stereotypes by only focussing on news that gets clicks as opposed to other stories that should also be published.

> Using tools like Google Analytics enables journalists to follow a rinse and repeat routine. So, if a particular type of story does well, you try and look at rinse and repeat – so you do the exact sort of thing. For example: a best and worse dressed celebrity list. You would do the same for a different event, but the concept is the same. (P4)

In Chapter three the pitfalls of news processes becoming routine were discussed. P4-P5 agreed with these downsides, explaining that digitalisation in newsroom has resulted in the focus on clicks, and understanding what stories do well, has become routine.

> It is almost like you have friends over for a dinner party and you serve them something that they liked. Next time they come around

your either going to serve them the same dish or something in a
similar line. (P4)

### 5.23.1 Quality journalism over digital and print

The participants (P4-P6) agreed that whether content is produced for print or digital
platforms, quality is still important. Participants dismissed criticism of doing stories based on
social media posts, insisting that if content was produced well, it did not matter what the
source was, but rather how it was presented.

> As journalists the rule has always been what makes content good. It is
> digital journalism, so that means it has to be engaging, it must contain
> additional assets, have media aspects and pictures. Journalists
> maintain their respect from the reader if they have this and if the story
> is well written, has a logical flow and in some cases, has an opinion.
> (P5)

P5 said more than clicks, editors should be trying to understand what the reader wants. P5
said producing content, understanding reader interest and presenting readers with things they
should care about is the priority for the media.

### 5.23.2 Digital vs print: Divides in the newsroom

The participants (P2-P6) spoke about divides in the newsroom amongst print and digital staff
members. The digital participants said that print editors did not understand the urgency of a
digital environment and did not make use of digital tools to their advantage.

> I will never stop being loud, and never stop having an opinion and
> trying to impress upon them that digital tools are actually a great way
> to use the numbers to create content that people want and enjoy.
> Ultimately that is the business that we are in: producing content that
> people want to read. (P4)

The print journalists were unanimous about the use of audience measurement tools, insisting that it would result in journalists determining their worth by popular content instead of doing news that mattered (P6, P8).

P6 said that while digital journalism is always evolving, at Tiso Blackstar many senior editors have not embraced digital tools and these actions have filtered through to younger journalists.

> It is an entrenched system in print. The so-called legends, the older
> people who work here, are not adaptable to changes. And no-one
> really monitors them. (P6)

## 5.24 A print lifestyle perspective

P6 is a lifestyle journalist at a print publication at Tiso Blackstar Group. P6 writes content that is published in print and later made available online. If stories are not used online, these stories are provided to digital editors to use. This, however, does not mean that they always get published online as it as at the discretion of the digital editor on whether to publish the content or not.

P6's news production process resembles a more traditional journalism format in that P6 will sources stories, pitch them to the editor and then write them. P6 said that she has no guideline on the number of stories she produces weekly. She said that some weeks she writes one story a week and other times she could write nothing in a week. The articles range between 1,700 words and 700 words.

P6 said that in terms of her news net, she gathers news from chatting to friends, going to events and watching TV. It was only when asked by the researcher whether social media played a role in her news gathering process did she acknowledge that it is a source of information.

> It does have an impact, yes, but the danger of social media is that it is
> such a niche group of people. If you are only looking at things on
> Instagram, you are seeing a minority. As the media, you are then
> saying this is the trend, but that is just a portion of reality. I do not

think it is an accurate reflection of society but consider it a helpful

tool to understand what people are talking about. (P6)

P6 states that digitalisation has had little impact on her news production processes but admits
that she wishes some tools like WhatsApp as a communicator was used more amongst the
team she works with.

I do not like meetings. I find them counter-productive. I still have to

have an informal conversation with my editor about my diary. It is not

like other teams that do a lot of things, like their diaries, over

WhatsApp. My environment is different. I do think it is generational.

My editor is older. I sent my editor a WhatsApp this morning and it is

now the afternoon and there has not been a reply. I am not micro-

managed, but there is a static process that we follow in terms of

processes that have always been in place. (P6)

P6 admitted to paying little attention to digital audience tools. At first, P6 could not really
explain why tools were not used. P6 explains that clicks do not matter to her as a journalist as
she does not "want to get caught up in gratification."

What do clicks mean? This week I have a great story then next week

not. Does it mean the story was crap? I do not know if I would be able

to handle that. Constantly chasing numbers as opposed to just doing

the thing. Someone else can look at numbers and figure out if I am

reaching numbers. (P6)

P6 said that her editors had never told her whether a story had done well or not.

I do not think my editors check the numbers. That is a legacy thing at

many companies. Journalists tend to think everyone is reading our

articles because we are this title. But if we looked at the numbers,

> maybe it would be a case of, 'wait a minute, how many people
>
> actually reading?' I think we might be shocked. (P6)

Unlike digital teams in the newsroom, P6 said that although there were no set rules about working from home, she has only worked at home once in the past three years.

> In my previous role work hours were a big thing. We were told our
>
> hours were between 9-5. If we got to work late, we would be
>
> questioned, but of course, no-one would say 'go home at 5:30.' (P6)

## 5.25 Digital capital in a newsroom

P4-P6 said that while hierarchies in the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom are still prevalent, each beat and individual is able to gain capital in various forms. However, all of the participants ranked what they considered to be their biggest source of capital differently. Like the entertainment journalists, P4 said that clicks, or readers, was the single most important form of capital a journalist and editor could have.

P4 said that while her personal talents included the ability to enrich content, spot trends and make print copy suitable for a digital environment, all of this was ultimately to get clicks. P5 on the other hand explained that while clicks were a focus, creating brand loyalty was more important.

> People who are investing time on our site are the ones we want to
>
> focus on. Maintaining a loyal reader and brand awareness is
>
> important. If you have that, the rest will follow. (P5)

P6 emphasised that her capital lay in her ability as a journalist to tell a story. P6 said that in a new digital environment, print journalists have to work even harder to entice readers to spend money to buy a publication.

> My worth is determined on my ability to make a story different to
> what is already out there. Anybody can write news. It is five w's and
> an h. That does not change. It takes a certain type of spunk and
> attitude to write an entertainment story that brings someone into the
> room with you. (P6)

P4-P6 agreed that once clicks, quality journalism and loyal readers align, financial rewards in
the form of readers buying the publication by signing up as subscribers was the ultimate form
of capital in the newsroom.

**5.26 Understanding social media in a newsroom**

In order to understand the significance of social media in a digital newsroom, the researcher
conducted an in-depth interview with the amplify editor at Tiso Blackstar Group. Goldberg
(2019) described his position as "amplifying work that we are doing on the newsroom using
social media and its insight tools."

**5.26.1 The importance of Facebook as a traffic driver**

Goldberg (2019) said that Facebook has evolved as a platform of sharing personal
information to a tool that publishes content in newsrooms to promote content and gains
readers.

> I would describe social media as that guy on side of road shouting
> about what is in the newspaper. We are alerting people on Facebook
> to the work we are doing on our sites. The reason we do that is
> because we know a lot of people sit on Facebook. So, we go to where
> our audience is. (Goldberg, 2019)

Describing the importance of Facebook as a traffic driver for *TimesLIVE*, Goldberg (2019)
said that in 2017 about one third of *TimesLIVE*'s traffic was from social media. Goldberg
(2019) said one third was direct traffic, meaning people who go straight to *TimesLIVE* and

the other third was search, referring to a reader who had Googled a story and *TimesLIVE* came up as a link.

Goldberg (2019) said of the third of traffic that was driven by social media, 90% was from Facebook. Goldberg (2019) said Facebook then experimented with its algorithm and these traffic drivers changed.

> In my anecdotal experience, major changes where implemented to Facebook which impacted publishers. They de-emphasised news from outlets in the news feed and emphasised news from friends and relatives. In that change, on *TimesLIVE*, we have since seen only about 21-25% of our traffic as a result of Facebook. Of that percentage, about 80% is from Facebook and around 20% from Twitter. (Goldberg, 2019)

### 5.26.2 Using Facebook in the newsroom

Goldberg (2019) heads strategy for social media at Tiso Blackstar Group while content producers publish stories from sites to Facebook pages. Goldberg said that there is pressure from various beats to have their content put on Facebook because editors know it is a big source of traffic.

Goldberg (2019) said as a general rule, four stories are posted to Facebook every hour from 6 am to 10 pm. He said the selection of which stories goes onto Facebook are based on a number of factors.

> It is just deep experience. Eight times out of ten, you know if something is going to fly or not. The Facebook audience is different to the site audience. Facebook is demographically more female and younger, so you have to bear that in mind when selecting stories. Obviously, a breaking news story will go. Or if an editor from the desk says something needs to go, you will put it up. (Goldberg, 2019)

### 5.26.3 Facebook advertising

Goldberg (2019) explains that there is a specific budget put aside by the company for Facebook. Facebook allows publishers to advertise to a selected audience.

> We can choose the adverts an audience gets shown. You can also choose to narrow it down. It is similar to Google Ads. It is essentially a bidding for words. If you have a big story about Cyril (Ramaphosa) about three out of four outlets will have similar headlines. Everybody is bidding for same words and your advertising helps promote your story into a feed and make it more visible. (Goldberg, 2019)

### 5.26.4 Digital tools mingled with Facebook

Goldberg said that he also used digital measurement tools like Google Analytics to help him decide which stories to put money behind.

> In general, any story that goes into the top ten on Google Analytics is more likely to be advertised. If a story doing well, we will put money behind it. But this does not mean that the algorithm will allow your content to be viewed. Advertising on Facebook does not offer a set result. You could do an ad and not get a single click. And you can see the results instantly. (Goldberg, 2019)

Goldberg (2019) said that after the move by Facebook to change its algorithm, there was a concerted effort to focus on other social media channels to gain readers. Goldberg said that Facebook, which owns Instagram, insists Instagram is where the next big audience lies.

> We are not particularly seeing that. It was largely ignored until this year in our newsroom. Nobody wanted to take ownership. I have played around with it and doubled number of followers. I post about five to 7 stories in the news feed. Right now we are focussing on sharing the work of our photographers. We are just experimenting.

> Once there is steady growth, we will probably focus on it more and
> put money behind it. (Goldberg, 2019)

## 5.27 Management perspectives on the future of capital

Three managers from Tiso Blackstar Group were interviewed as part of this study. The participants (Wolmarans, 2019; Nthonga, 2019 and P7) agreed that each beat adds a different asset to a publication. Speaking about the digital entertainment team, Wolmarans (2019) said that the ability to produce news quickly and consistently is one of the entertainment team's biggest assets.

> The big lesson that was taught to everyone by this team is that if there
> is big breaking news story, you have keep feeding the popularity of
> the topic you're covering. In other words, once you break a story, you
> do not just publish one article, you break the news, and then
> continuously publish supplemental content to keep up that traffic.
> (Wolmarans, 2019)

Wolmarans (2019) said that digital journalism entails an extensive strategy where building a loyal audience is more important than clicks.

> After the relaunch of our sites in 2014/2015, the task was clear: we
> had to make sure that we do it in a way that would stand us in good
> stead and would allow us to build, over the years, long-term revenues
> from readers, through paywalls et cetera. So, to do that, to run a
> successful paywall strategy, is a long game. Say you have a paywall
> and ask people to read your website. Unless you have technology to
> make it easy for them to do so, there is a gap. So, you have to have
> the journalists in place to write the right kind of content at the right
> time in the right format. This is to get you traffic and secondly to turn
> them into subscribers. (Wolmarans, 2019)

Wolmarans (2019) said that while in some ways readers are currently a form of digital capital for journalists and news organisations, international models point towards paying subscribers being a form of economic capital.

> Right now, our aim is switching completely to reader revenue. In other words, subscriptions and paywalls because that it where our future lies. That brings with it opportunities in this regard in terms of performance management: On the one hand, we know of very successful Scandinavian paywalls where they have tied targets for converting readers to subscribers so tightly into what editorial teams do. Let's say 'you have to publish articles behind paywalls and those have to convert into subscribers.' It does allow for church and state to get confused, but I think it is a fantastic way of telling journalists how, literally, what they do every day can make or break the future of this company. Ultimately subscribers are a fantastic way to secure our future. If journalists can understand just by virtue of a headline that they write for an online article that it could actually sell subscriptions, they become so much more valuable. In South Africa I believe we will see more and more models like this implemented in newsrooms. (Wolmarans, 2019)

Wolmarans (2019) admitted that this did not mean journalists who produce results in the form of consistently providing stories that get lots of clicks are not rewarded. Wolmarans (2019) said that management would always look towards the influence of content produced. This means the traffic, the subscriptions and the time a reader spend on site (Wolmarans, 2019). He said this may, in some cases, allow for management to allocate discretionary bonuses or discretionary increases if the budget allowed.

P7 agreed, explaining that capital in a newsroom will consist of a number of factors, but ultimately authentic reporting and a paying reader will outweigh clicks.

> There is much more than clicks. Journalism has the ability to make a difference to people's lives. Doing stories on hospital wards closing because we reported on babies dying is critical. It is not about clicks,

but how your story affects the reader. Authentic reporting results in loyal readers. And loyal readers would be willing to subscribe and go behind a paywall. You have to have the full package otherwise you are no different from a blog site. And nobody pays for a blog. (P7)

## 5.28 Quantitative method

As mentioned in Chapter 4, this study includes a quantitative element. Information around the number of clicks the entertainment and lifestyle beats received was compared to other beats in the newsroom. A comparison of the number of stories the entertainment and lifestyle teams did in comparison to other beats in the newsroom was also done.

This aims to describe the levels of capital entertainment and lifestyle journalists may have in the digital newsroom.

### 5.28.1 Diary comparisons

An analysis of diary entries from editors that form part of the digital diary at Tiso Blackstar Group was done by the researcher. This sample was from 18-26 September. The sample list includes five working days as diaries are not sent over weekends and public holidays.

It must be noted that although the information provided by editors to form part of the group diary is distributed to all staff at the company, this does not necessarily mean that all content provided on the diary is published. News changes all the time and there are numerous reasons a story can be dropped or not published.

At the same time, it is noted that much of the content from the sport and news teams are provided by freelancers or sourced from service providers. This was not excluded as each team has its own strategy and cannot be excluded simply to illustrate how many permanent journalists contribute towards content. The entertainment team consists of two journalists, one content creator and one editor. The news team, sports team and politics team also have journalists working at offices across the country, all of whom contribute towards the content list.

Bearing that in mind, the contribution made by the entertainment team is significant. This researcher acknowledges that the lifestyle team does not contribute towards the daily diary as much of their content is dependent on what print journalists have produced. These have different lead times and therefore cannot accurately be reflected as part of the group digital diary.

Entries from the lift and multi-media teams were included as they form part of the diary for the digital hub.

The digital diary at Tiso Blackstar Group was analysed from 18-26 September
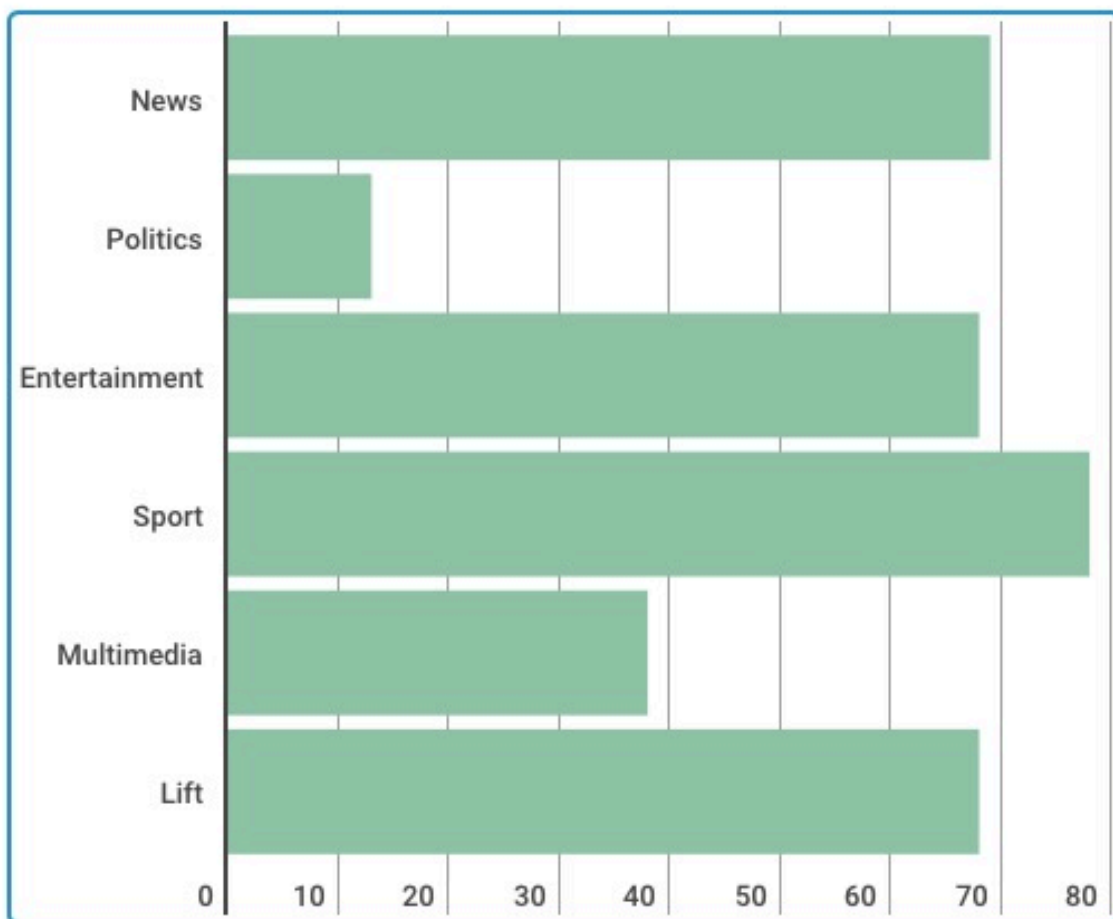


### 5.28.2 Comparing diary entries to published stories

As stated above, proposed diaries change for a number of reasons. The below graph represents the published stories on *TimesLIVE over* the same period of the diary entries

above. *TimesLIVE* was used as the sample as all stories from the digital hub are published on *TimesLIVE* first and then distributed amongst the rest of the brands.

The published stories were measured from 18-16 September
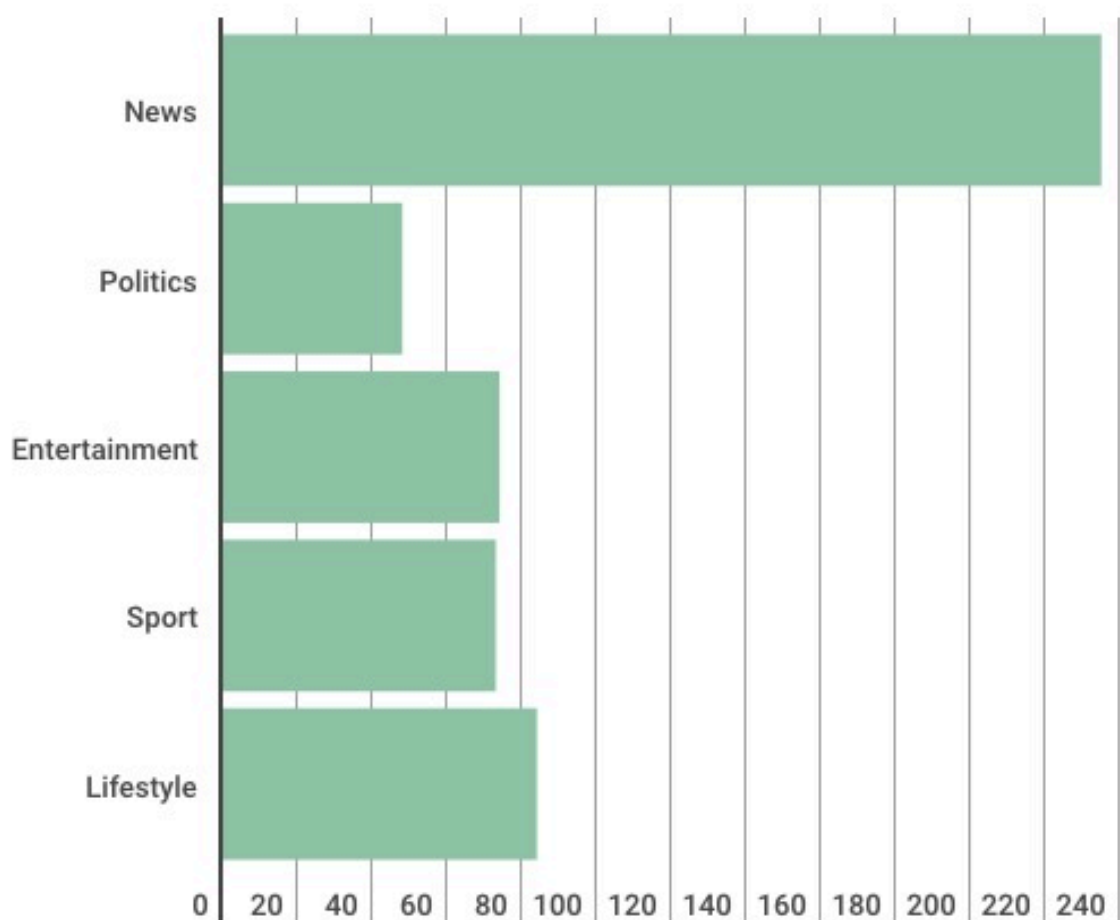


Although entertainment and lifestyle journalists (Thakurdin, 2019; P2, P4-P5) said that entertainment and lifestyle journalists produced more content than the news teams, an analysis shows the results are different to their perceptions. The number of news stories produced is almost more than double the number the entertainment and lifestyle teams contributed.

**5.28.3 An analysis of readership**

Data was gathered to illustrate readership over a 3-month period on *TimesLIVE* and *SowetanLIVE*. As discussed in chapter four, this time period was selected by the digital

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audience analyst who said that the most accurate reflection of audience numbers is produced by analysing data over a three-month period.

*SowetanLIVE*
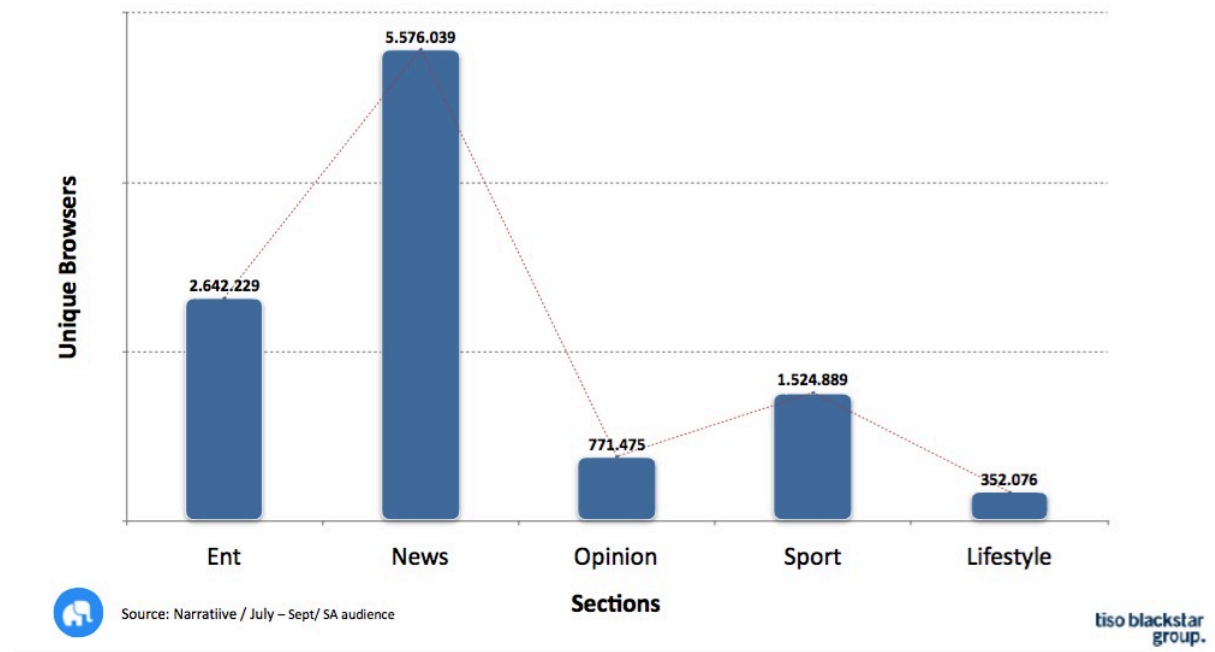


*TimesLIVE*
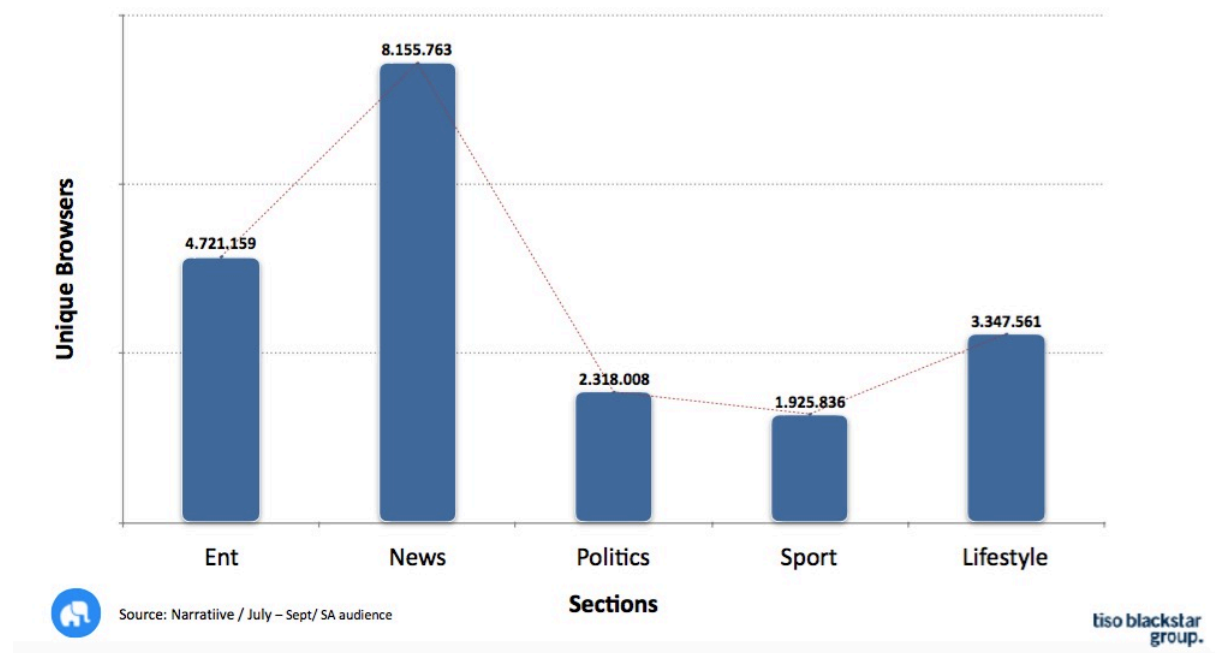
**5.29 Summary**

The quantitative data presented produced mixed results in terms of showing the capital of entertainment and lifestyle journalists. While the number of stories they produced where less than they perceived, in terms of clicks, on both *SowetanLIVE* and *TimesLIVE*, the entertainment and lifestyle content contributed greatly to the overall numbers. This aligned with the idea that clicks are a commodity in the newsroom and in the eyes of some journalists and editors working in the digital hubs, are a source of evaluating whether you are performing well or not in your daily duties.

# Chapter 6

# Conclusion

## 6.1 Summary

This study explored how digitalisation influenced entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group. The focus was on how technology influenced news production processes as part of the daily work-flow of entertainment and lifestyle journalists.

This chapter summarises the study and discusses the contribution this study made towards the field of journalism and journalism studies. It will also include the study's limitations as well as future research recommendations. These recommendations will apply to both the academic field of journalism studies and to journalists and editors at Tiso Blackstar Group.

## 6.2 Research project summary

**Chapter 1** explained the researcher's motivation for the study as well as presenting evidence that entertainment and lifestyle journalism is under-researched. As far as the researcher could ascertain, recent studies involving entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group had not been conducted over the past 5 years. This was established by doing an extensive search on Google Scholar. Staff members who have been working at Tiso Blackstar Group also confirmed that, to the best of their memory, no recent research involving qualitative research with entertainment and lifestyle journalist had been conducted.

In **Chapter 2** relevant literature to this study was presented and discussed. Given the broad nature of globalisation and the impact thereof in the newsroom, previous studies on the topic in newsroom around the world and in South Africa were presented. The rate of internet penetration was critical to note as it helped with background information showing that while print circulation was dropping industrywide, internet penetration in South Africa was increasing (De Villiers, 2019).  This chapter also discussed changing landscapes in South African newsrooms, referring to the recently released State of the Newsroom Report (2018,

2019) . The report detailed issues affecting journalism in South Africa such as credibility, the lack of quality and investigative reporting and media freedom. Bearing these challenges affecting journalism in mind, the researcher illustrated the growing pressure beats like entertainment and lifestyle journalism face, given the fact that they are considered "soft news" and give coverage to the personal lives of personalities, resulting in them being at the bottom of the journalism hierarchy. The use of digital tools such as social media, digital audience measurement tools and WhatsApp was discussed.

**Chapter 3** focussed on the central theoretical point of departure relevant to the study. This is organisational theory and following from this, field theory. Organisational theory describes the selection, processing and publishing of content. As part of these processes, journalists undergo a process of establishing what is news-worthy. They are guided by what is considered news-worthy, a process described by gatekeeping and agenda setting theories. These processes are important to understand as the media are still disseminators of news and capable of shaping public opinion. Following from this, field theory was used in this study to explore whether different forms of capital obtained by entertainment and lifestyle journalists have placed them in different positions in the newsroom.

**In Chapter 4**, the research methods used in this study were outlined. The researcher opted for a triangulation approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to bolster the validity of the findings. Semi-structured interviews were used as the qualitative method. Fourteen participants working at Tiso Blackstar Group took part in the study. Information gathered from digital audience measurement tools was used to illustrate the number of readers each beat contributes towards the total readers on *TimesLIVE* and *SowetanLIVE*. The number of stories presented for the diary over a randomly selected period from various beats was also provided. The aim of this was to further show whether clicks and the number of stories echo what journalists said in their interviews.

**In Chapter 5**, the findings of the study were presented. Here the participants answered questions around how digital tools influence their daily work routines, whether news production has been affected by technologies implemented at Tiso Blackstar Group and if they believed that entertainment and lifestyle journalism has changed hierarchies because of the capital they bring to a digital journalism environment. The results from quantitative data gathered was also analysed. These showed that the number of stories published by the team was less than they perceived. An analysis of the readership figures across *TimesLIVE* and

*SowetanLIVE* showed that entertainment and lifestyle journalists contributed greatly to the total number of readers across both sites.

**Chapter 6** concluded with a summary of the research project, recommendations for future research as well as the contribution made to the journalism field.

**6.3 Response to research questions**

**6.3.1 Response to the first specific research question**

*How has the digital news production process influenced entertainment and lifestyle news values?*

The participants in the study who were part of digital hubs said news values had changed to place the interests of the audience as the number one decision when selecting a story. There was some debate around this issue, as participants debated the influence of changing news values. The end conclusion was that even though some stories would not get clicks, important stories were not neglected. However, participants did admit that this did allow for nuances to occur in the sense that although the stories were still published, they may not be put onto Facebook, which is a large traffic driver for the websites.

**6.3.2 Response to second specific research question**

*How have news production processes at Tiso Blackstar Group been influenced by digital changes?*

Although this study focussed on the influence of digital tools on entertainment and lifestyle journalism, Wolmarans (2019) spoke about the broad digital strategy at Tiso Blackstar Group. This included the development of one newsroom, opposed to newsrooms from different brands operating out of different spaces in a building. Wolmarans (2019) also detailed how a digital hub was created to service different publications as well as future plans to drive a subscription-based policy at the company.

**6.3.3 Response to third specific research question**

*How has the field of entertainment and lifestyle journalism been impacted by digital changes at Tiso Blackstar Group's newsroom?*

This study investigated whether entertainment and lifestyle journalism has been influenced by changes in the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. Traditionally, these beats are considered at the bottom of the journalism hierarchy as they focus on the private lives of newsmakers and do not revolve around journalism that is more serious, such as news and politics. Entertainment and lifestyle journalists said they believed that their hierarchy in a digital environment had increased their status in the newsroom, as their content received more clicks and their content was more suited to a digital environment. However, despite this perceived hierarchy shift in the newsroom, the participants said they still believed news and political journalists were given preferential treatment in the newsroom.

### 6.3.4   Response to fourth specific research question

*Have the entertainment and lifestyle journalists gained cultural capital in the newsroom?*

The participants who worked in digital environment agreed that technological adaptions have added to their capital in the newsroom. They argued that the number of the stories they produce, the clicks these stories receive and the way in which they produce stories has helped them gain recognition by colleagues and managers. This has also resulted in a trust from readers. In terms of competitors, the entertainment team specifically has created a brand based on trust. All of these factors combined have the ability to influence financial rewards. However, bearing this in mind, the participants agreed they had not received financial rewards because of their contribution to the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. Therefore, it can be concluded that the entertainment and lifestyle journalists mainly gained cultural capital.

The **general research question** was: How has digitalisation in the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom influenced entertainment and lifestyle journalism?

Through interviews with the participants it was established that the impact of digitalisation on entertainment and lifestyle journalists at Tiso Blackstar Group varied based on whether journalists were focused on print or digital publications. Despite Tiso Blackstar Group positioning itself as a digital first company, the answers from the participants showed that in practice this was only true if you were part of the digital hub or worked in a digital capacity. For those who work in the digital hub, digital tools such as social media and audience measurement tools proved to be the most widely used technological tools. For print

journalists, digital tools had some impact on the news production process. This was in the form of social media as a news source and WhatsApp as a form of gathering news and communicator.

## 6.4   Recommendations

### 6.4.1 Recommendations for Tiso Blackstar Group

"Journalists and people in the media are great communicators except in their own environments" This is what P5 said about the state of the Tiso Blackstar Group newsroom. Although the company is focussed on a digital first strategy, it must be noted that this is still in infancy stages. As remarked by Wolmarans (2019) Tiso Blackstar Group had fallen behind with its digital strategy and it was only in 2014/2015 that it became a focus. Bearing this in mind, the following observations were made based on interviews with the participants as well as an analysis of quantitative data.

- Journalists who are focussed on producing content for print publications do not prioritise digital strategies and therefore their work routines were not influenced by digitalisation. P6 attributed the lack of attention to digital strategies on her line managers, explaining that managers do not monitor readership numbers nor make use of digital tools such as Facebook and CrowdTangle.

- Some journalists have not been taught the importance of technology such as audience measurement tools.

- Entertainment and lifestyle journalists feel under-valued, despite the contribution made towards the numbers at Tiso Blackstar Group

- The quantitative data shows hierarchal perceptions are misplaced, particularly in the lifestyle beat

- Silos between print and digital are still prevalent in the newsroom.

### 6.4.2 Recommendations for future research

This study focussed on how digital tools have influenced entertainment and lifestyle journalism. This could pave the way for future research of other digital teams at Tiso Blackstar Group, including the so-called lift team and multi-media team. Various digital tools

which mainly affect operational functions of the website have been implemented to increase traffic. These include tools which increase the speed at which an article is opened as well as the automatic embedding of pictures and videos into articles, which eliminates the manual work done by staff members. The influence of these tools of news flow processes could be a fruitful avenue to explore.

## 6.5   Final thoughts

Although this study focussed on the influence of digitalisation on entertainment and lifestyle journalism at Tiso Blackstar Group, during the interview process it emerged that silos between print and digital journalists are still prevalent in the newsroom. The use of digital tools such as Facebook, CrowdTangle, WhatsApp and audience measurement tools are more widely used amongst entertainment and lifestyle journalists who focus on producing digital content.

There was a sense during the interviews that journalists who work in a strictly digital environment are more willing to embrace technology and the disruption to news production processes that this causes. The print journalists interviewed were more hesitant about the use of some technologies, alluding to the idea that embracing some technologies results in a lack of quality content. In one case, the journalist (P6) said the lack of interest around digital tools, such as monitoring audience metrics, was because of a "legacy culture" passed on from line managers.

One of the most dominant themes that emerged during this study revolved around the future importance of clicks. While some journalists said it was their number one focus, managers at Tiso Blackstar Group disagreed, emphasising the importance of changing readers into subscribers and later paying readers. However, the conundrum around mixing "church with state" remains a big bone of contention amongst journalists. As Lepore (2019) remarks in a piece on the future of journalism which was widely shared amongst my colleagues: "Good reporting is expensive, but readers don't want to pay for it."

As a journalist I remain focussed on quality journalism and finding new ways to attract readers. As a manager I realise this is not the total picture. To keep journalism afloat as part of media organisations as we know it, radical changes to the relationship between journalists and advertisers will have to be considered

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**Personal Interviews**

*Transcripts available on request*

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P2. 2019. Senior entertainment journalist. Tiso Blackstar Group. 27 August. Johannesburg.

P3. 2019. Entertainment journalist. Tiso Blackstar Group. 22 August. Johannesburg.

P4. 2019. Lifestyle editor. Tiso Blackstar Group. 29 August. Johannesburg.

P5. 2019. Lifestyle editor. Tiso Blackstar Group. 29 August. Johannesburg.

P6. 2019. Lifestyle journalist. Tiso Blackstar Group. 28 August. Johannesburg.

P7. 2019. Senior manager. Tiso Blackstar Group. 18 September. Johannesburg.

P8. 2019. Entertainment journalist. Tiso Blackstar Group. 28 August. Johannesburg.

**Appendix A: Example of a digital diary**

**TOPS**

#Amil/Thapelo: Duduzane Zuma at state capture inquiry

#Kidnaps for ransom

_Orrin: Malawian kidnapped in Durban yesterday. Kidnappers tried to obtain ransom from a friend, they were nabbed later in the day

_Iavan: Arrest made over kidnap for ransom involving Potch businessman

#Ernest: Janusz Walus parole bid returns to court

Naledi: Judges interviews get under way this afternoon

_AfriForum opens case over land deals in Tshwane

_Thulsie twins trial, check

Dan: Kword used against traffic officer in Western Cape

_Protests

Iavan: Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng says he turned down R600 million from American billionaire to revamp courts

Nonku: Air Chefs strike, interdict ruling set down for 2pm

_Check with correctional services over warders' booze purchase

_UJ strike update

Lwandile: Rabies case in KZN

BDLift: Record-high claims for service delivery protests push Sasria to first loss

Herald: Three NMU students die over weekend

Mvumvu: In his weekly newsletter, President Ramaphosa emphasises the need to promote economic integration on the continent.

**IN TIMES SELECT TODAY**

Shain Germaner

Four innocent men spent a combined 52 years in prison for crimes they did not commit.

Liam del Carme

Boks brace for the unknown against blazing Blossoms

Justice Malala

Exalting Mugabe proves Cyril & Co don't care about ordinary Africans

**MULTIMEDIA**

Deepa

* Journalists hit by petrol bomb in Hong Kong (Reuters WATCH)

* Duduzane Zuma at the Zondo commission: Monitor the ground for any action outside

Zama

* Hot under the collar: What you need to know about SA's new 'revenge porn' laws EXPLAINER WATCH

* Timothy Omotso trial resumes in PE


Emile


* Duduzane Zuma at the Zondo commission…cut piece. WATCH

* Two men burnt alive in Alex mob justice attack (Try arrange interviews with the affected)


Anthony


* Styling the Daisies | The best dressed from Rocking the Daisies festival WATCH

* Protests flare up in Cape Town (Monitor: See if there's sourced content)

* Last moments: Does CCTV footage hold the key to UCT student killing?


**LIFT**
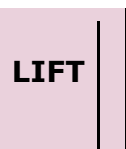

ISSUED

Snaps | 10 pics of Kylie and Travis serving us goals

Man accidentally kills son-in-law who was trying to surprise him

**CEBELIHLE**

1  - POLL | Are the calls for Mmusi to step down valid?

2 – IN QUOTES | Duduzane Zuma before Zondo

3 – Phumzile van Damme says there's 'no black caucus' in DA

4 – Baby dies after being thrown into ceiling fan by dad

5 -  Maps delves into buns: WYNTK TUES AM

**UNATHI**

1 – Panyaza Lesufi wants harsh action against thieves who broke into school

2 – Helen Zille on 'racist' Mapimpi video: Context is everything

3 – Jackson Mthembu on gender-based violence

4 – Wait, did you know Chicken Licken has a secret menu? Here's what's on offer

5 – The Nike Oregan doping programme: WYNTK TUES AM

## ENTERTAINMENT

ISSUED

Shota on making sacrifices to care for his son with eye cancer: 'The home was so heavy'

Rebecca Malope u-turns on retirement

Scandal! actress Nqobile Khumalo scores international award for Black Tax story

## LIFT

1. Snaps | 10 pics of Kylie and Travis serving us goals

2. WATCH | Vegan guests and showing skin at Somizi's wedding 'Whooo shem

## MASEGO

1. Nolo impresses on Idols SA, but was it enough to beat fan favourite Virginia

2. Emtee and Amanda Black call out former record label for their awards

3.Moonchild doesn't plan to stop posting her bum: "I'll post my bum until you stop being shocked" – TUES AM

4. Prince Kaybee defend negative backlash after manager fails to recognize Msaki – TUES AM

5. Shona Ferguson poses with Brock Lesna and the internet can't deal- WEEKEND

 6. Inside Skeem Saam Clement Maosa nae's babyshower - WEEKEND

**KYLE**

1. Minnie Dlamini  opens up about heartbreak after brother's death: I'm drained

2. Snakes and muthi show Jub Jub flames on Uyajola

3. Nasty C didn't win a BET, but he is no sore loser- Nasty C congratulates Sarkodie on winning best international flow

4. Ntsiki Mazwai accuses Metro FM of protecting Moshe amid body shaming claims

5. Cassper defends Moshe and Phelo after the pair receive homophobic comments for sharing a pic of them kissing

6. AKA shuts down the hip-hop vs Amapiano debate, causing a storm online

7. Ndlovu Youth Choir sell out first international gig since AGT final – TUES AM

| SPORT |
|---|
| CRICKET<br><br><br>Enoch Nkwe on the first Test defeat to India – VICE<br><br><br>RUGBY |

Boks play a team with whom they famously had beef — DEL CARME

Stick happy for Japan but not worried about them — DEL CARME

What Canada thinks of the Boks — DEL CARME

Khoisan Defiance Campaign gives Saru sponsors 48 hours to respond to racism and criminal allegations against Springboks lock Eben Etzebeth — MPHAHLELE


SOCCER

Bafana Bafana media briefing – NDEBELE

Trott Moloto and Arthur Zwane to remain as technical advisor and assistant respectively for the international friendly against Mali – MPHAHLELE

Bafana Bafana coach Molefi Ntseki on Mali – MPHAHLELE

Percy Tau suffers ankle injury and could miss out for Bafana – GLEESON

Enigmatic Mali await Bafana at the weekend – GLEESON

Dark clouds ahead of African U-23 Championship for SA – GLEESON