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UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
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An analysis of South African media companies' strategies for Generation Z news media consumption.

Main Question: Are South African media companies innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences?

By

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A full dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research in Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Supervisor

Professor Glenda Daniels

Date

27 May 2020

ABSTRACT

Drawing on the nexus between journalism and news production studies and focusing on social media and mobile media in particular, this research combines the study of news productions and the study of audiences to research news journalism and young audiences (Generation Z)[1]. The study examines how and why digital natives (Generation Z) engage with media, whether legacy news or digital media. Furthermore, focusing on African journalism in the digital era, this research examines how three South African news media organisations (namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings) are responding to changes in technology, consumer preferences and generational change in terms of how they gather, produce and distribute news. The interconnection between journalism, mobile media and news production theories provide a perfect perspective that can be applied in examining Generation Z as their lived reality cannot be experienced separate from or outside of the revolutionising media landscape. Using qualitative methodologies to conduct this research, it contributed to the understanding of how mainstream media are engaging with younger audiences. A qualitative methodology helped to provide a snapshot of the situation regarding Generation Z and assed how the three news media organisations are responding with the change or revolutionising media platforms. Lastly, this research argues based on the resulting findings emanating from interview material that the three investigated news organisations have innovation strategies in theory – meaning that there is an execution problem in terms of applying some of those innovative approaches to attract young audiences. Furthermore, this research presents the chasm between the strategies of the three news organisations and Generation Z news consumption preferences. In addition, this research shows on the one hand how the three news organisations have to some extent, similar and equally different approaches in their newsroom operations to news production and on the other hand, how they have not yet explored the full potential of the networked digital media vis-à-vis the youth market.

Keywords: *Generation Z, digital natives, journalism, news consumption, Twitter, mobile phones, innovation.*

[1] Generation Z is the demographic cohort succeeding the Millennials. They are early adopters of Internet services and have been described to be teenagers and young adults, often with a high education level (Weslund2008, p. 447). Consequently, they use the internet to go about their day browsing, buying, sharing and searching for content online. This generational phenomenon is further explained in Chapter 1 of this research.

DECLARTION

I, Lucky Brian Dlamini (Student number: 1733495), am a student registered for a Master of Arts dissertation in the Department of Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism, the use of someone else work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source is wrong.
- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions of referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.



Signature: _ Date: 27 May 2020

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's high-choice media landscape, people's news consumption habits are going through a transformation as a result of the nexus of advanced technologies and the increasingly changing nature of journalistic processes afforded by novel technologies (Schroder 2015, p. 60). Consequently, this nexus has resulted in the plethora of content in the news media and an increase in the number of new media platforms. As Schroder (2015, p. 61) states, "It is therefore important to monitor on a continuous basis precisely what the landscape of news looks like: what technological platforms and formats are receding and emerging, and which are dominant as well as how people are accessing, navigating in and making sense of the landscape of news." According to Otieno in Mdlongwa (2009, p. 16), the digital revolution has disrupted the media industry in ways that have forced journalists and media managers to adapt their processes of news reporting and to rethink business strategies if they are to remain competitive, or even in business. For example, the change in the practice journalism exists amid "data abundance, computational exploration and algorithmic emphasis". These data driven changes are influencing the most essential processes of news production and distribution (Lewis 2015, p. 321).

Similarly, Mabweazara (2015, p. 11) argues that "serious structural changes are underway – content is undergoing radical changes and old operational and business matrices have been disrupted." This is due to novel technologies like the internet, mobile devices and social networking sites that are today understood as new. Chao-chen (2013, p. 184) explains that these contemporary media technologies have become omnipresent in people's lives through "non-journalistic content and establish an intimate presence; news content is then created by a process of constant interpersonal interaction and contributes to the ubiquity of news sources." These provide another site for innovation and continuity in contemporary news work (Gershon & Bell 2013). Today, multiple channels exist through which news outlets distribute their material, allowing for news to effortlessly move between the different media platforms and between users. According to Hemment in Jansson and Lindell (2015, p. 79), "news consumption is now unfettered by wires and cables, freed from previously quite well-restricted [and] space–time constraints."

As Cammaerts et al. (2016, p. 45 in Lindell & Sartoretto 2017, p. 2) argue, research concerning young news audiences has often been neglected in contemporary research. For this reason, this study examines the middle-class youth's media savvy ways in which they access the news and their peculiar reasons in consuming or not consuming news. The study investigates in a critical method these new means of news consumption and argues whether three media companies in South Africa, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings which recently changed its name to reflect its change of ownership (formerly known as Tiso Blackstar Group), are innovating to attract young news audiences, referred to as Generation Z. Lindell and Sartoretto (2017, p. 3) argue that

> news consumption is stratified across different citizenries [and that] researchers have highlighted that levels of engagement with the news vary along opportunities (media systemic level) and individuals' motivation (e.g. whether they are interested in politics or not) and ability (such as cognitive abilities and level of education).

Based on Lindell and Sartoretto's argument, this research found it important to focus on the contemporary middle-class youth, who were particularly respondents from the Generation Z cohort being students from Rhodes University, studying towards a Journalism and Media Studies degree and were between 18 and 22 years of age. The choice of this cohort of respondents was based on the assumption that with their higher cognitive abilities and level of education, they would have higher levels of engagement with the news, and thus provide richer data for this research.

Young people outside of the Global North are increasingly experiencing the 'newness' of new media[2] and as such, media institutions are faced with having to respond to the proliferation of mobile devices and unique social networking sites. As a result, using Western theoretical approaches together with African theorists in this research may help to frame an approach to understand how new digital technologies impact African newsrooms. For example, the knowledge that many American news companies have implemented a 360-degree approach in their content decisions can be evaluated in contrast to the local South African newsroom environment (Doyle 2010, p. 432 in Chyi and Chadha 2012, p. 431). However, Mabweazara (2014, p. 5) emphasises that in trying to explain the influence of digital technologies on newsrooms in Africa, "we need to look at African journalism in context – its culture,

[2] The term 'new media' in this research refers to the diverse platforms that include the Internet, mobile phone devices, online blogs, social media like Facebook and Twitter as well as other online platforms.

institutions, the broader communication environment – and examine how these collectively provide insights that can enable us to develop what we might loosely brand as an *African digital journalism epistemology*."

Duff (2008) in Mabweazara (2015, p. 4) argues that the spread and influence of new digital technologies on society relate to the so-called 'information society era', a global phenomenon which is "widely articulated in the economically developed countries of the North." According to Peters (2012, p. 699), "journalism is now produced to adjust for the faster pace of the information age." New digital technologies are altering the processes that people use to communicate, news cultures and most importantly, generational cohorts and their everyday practices globally. As part of emerging digital cultures, the media industry is seeing the emergence of a new generation cohort, Generation Z. Turner (2015, p. 103), classifies a generation as "a set of historical events and related phenomena that creates a distinct generational gap."

The term Generation Z has often been used as a marketing term by marketers in the media industry. Schroder (2015, p. 61) explains this term by arguing that metaphorically we regard the audiences of news (in this instance Generation Z) as "shopping in the 'supermarket of news' – taking news media from the shelves and putting them into their daily, weekly or monthly 'shopping carts' according to what they find indispensable or enjoyable, what they have time for, what they can afford, etc." For example, as users of the internet, Generation Z go about their day browsing, buying, sharing and searching for content online. Accordingly, young people are consumers or customers of news products in the media sphere and consequently it is only fitting to use this marketing term to refer to this generation as purchasers or buyers of news media. In this research the term 'Generation Z' will be adopted to refer to young people[3] in South Africa at university as it makes it easy to group this class of people using a single term. The focus of a Generation Z cohort in university is because a previous study conducted by Mattes (2012, p. 148 in Malila et al. (2013 p. 417) found there to be "a connection between the level of education and the level of news consumption by young people." Furthermore, in terms of this study's qualitative methodological approach, this study found it important that, "the sample of interviewees should be fairly homogenous and share critical similarities related to the research question" (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 317), hence this research

[3] In this research, the term 'young people' is used in reference to persons between the ages of 18 and 22 years, which is the age category of the Generation Z that is being studied in this research.

looks at respondents of the same age and from the same university, studying the same course, although in different study levels. This means that the participants were selected to participate in detailed interviews based on a strategic process referred to as purposive sampling.

As media consumers, young people's consumption[4] behaviour and spending patterns are shaping the businesses of media institutions. In light of this, the African Gen Z Report of 2018 highlights the fact that the emergence of Generation Z as a new type of consumers is driving media and entertainment spaces to adjust their news strategies quickly. Adding to this, Weslund (2008, p. 447) notes that "several studies indicate that early adopters of Internet services are teenagers and young adults, often with a high education level". These rapid shifts have seen the South African media industry changing its approach to position itself in a way that will enable it to compete in these new digital times. It also provides the rationale to focus this research on young people at university.

Mabweazara's (2015) literature is important to this study of Generation Z as it avoids studying Africa's digital era practices by assuming the old approach of defining journalism in Africa as always in deficit in the digital era. This research therefore explores media theory by contextualising prevailing analytical and normative discussions on digital-first theories. It will emphasise how digital technologies have been adopted by newsrooms that were formerly print based and examine how these newsrooms practice and formulate news content in their online news making processes. These three South African media houses (Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings) are analysed in terms of how they are shaped by digital-first phenomena and their relation to Generation Z consumers. These media houses were specifically chosen as they are front-runners in the South African transition from traditional platforms of news production to digital-first platforms.[5]

1.2 DEFINING GENERATION Z

The first point of departure when studying generations is to define the generations by identifying the age or cohort limits. In carrying out this research, the term Generation Z is used to broadly refer to young people in university aged between 18 and 22 years old. This decision is founded based on Smith's (2017, p. 2) statement that university students are included in

[4] The term 'consumption' in this research is used in its literal form as a verb, to describe the activity between "reading, watching, viewing, listening, checking, snacking, monitoring, scanning, searching, clicking, linking, sharing, liking, recommending, commenting and voting" (Meijer and Kormelink 2015, p. 666).
[5] The choice of the three media houses is discussed in detail in the methodology section.

today's digital natives. Turner (2015, p. 103) adds that Generation Z will soon become young adults and the majority are 20 or younger, meaning that they can be described as the first generation of young people to never know life without Internet, social media[6] and smart phones. This makes them more technologically and social media savvy than previous generations.

There are different and contrasting attempts at defining Generation Z, with some researchers arguing that those who were born between 1995 and the early 2000s (also referred to as Post-Millennials) belong to this generation. Turner (2015, p. 104) for instance estimates the birth of Generation Z as beginning from the mid-1990s through to the late 2010s. Although there is no definitive start or end date for Generation Z, most, according to Duffett (2017, p. 22), were born from 1997 onward. However, Smith (2017, p. 2) contends that Generation Z is distinguished more by their behaviour than by their age. Generation Z's behaviour is driven by technology and revolves around how they generate, manage and share digital media content on widely used smartphones and social media networks (Dye, 2007 in Smith, 2017).

Generation Z is identified by various names, including the iGeneration, Digital Natives, Net Generation, Facebook Generation, Mobile Prodigies, Post-Millennials and Generation C (with C standing for Content). Smith (2017, p. 2) says that just as preceding generations experienced an identification process, like the term Millennials which became commonly known and used, time will be the indicating factor as to which name becomes commonly acknowledged for referring to this youngest and new generation." This research refers to this generation interchangeably as Generation Z and as Digital Natives. The name Digital Native was first used in a study by Prensky (2001a) in which he explains that "digital is the native language of this generation". They have acquired these 'digital-first' names due to their world being permeated by Information, Communication and Technology (ICT).

Prensky (2001 in Turner 2015) further describes this modern youth as Digital Natives as they have never lived a life prior to Internet technologies. They are not only technologically savvy because they have grown up with digital mobile devices, but they also have a visual sophistication than of any other generation (Smith 2017). They have developed this visual erudition or preference of "graphics before text" (Palfrey & Gasser 2008) because of the

[6] Social media: "A collective term for different digital platforms allowing people to communicate with each other, through for example text, picture or sound. The difference between social media and other media is that the content is often produced by the user's themselves" (Bergström & Belfrage 2018, p. 588).

perpetual visual stimulus of smartphones through which they view the world. Similarly, Generation Z is so familiar with new technologies that they have warranted for being called Digital Natives (Prensky 2001) or the 'net generation' (Tapscott 1998). Furthermore, Generation Z can be described as 'technology brokers' because they recruit their parents into the digital environment (Singh 2014, p. 63).

Generation Z are growing up in a media environment whereby print news is no longer central than online news; and television and radio news are influential but declining in importance; because Internet news is gaining greater centrality. Weslund (2008, p. 445) supports the statement that online news media has had major impacts on conventional media by arguing that "the use of television and paid morning newspapers has declined, while the use of Internet news and free dailies has increased." This is evidenced by the fact that Generation Z grow up in a modern media environment, meaning they are most likely to prefer to receive news alerts and perform most of their daily activities on the Internet.

According to Mizuko et al. (2008), Generation Z growing up at a time where "digital media are part of the taken-for-granted social and cultural fabric of learning, play and social communication." This is because, as Prensky (2001 in Turner 2015) highlights, "no other generation has lived in an era in which technology is so readily accessible at such a young age." Being born into such a digital environment has moulded the behaviour and abilities of Generation Z to function online and has made them comfortable with rapidly changing technology. Mizuko et al. (2008) add that recently "digital media and networks have become embedded in our everyday lives and are part of broad-based changes to how we engage in knowledge production, communication, and creative expression."

Generation Z is adapting to interact and communicate in a world that is always connected because developments in technology and the rise of multimedia networks and devices such as smartphones (Turner 2015). Turner further explains that Generation Z youth largely grow up in urban areas which expose them to an abundance of technological opportunities when compared to earlier generations. Emerging digital cultures such as those practiced and experienced by Generation Z have placed news organisations in an unprecedented state of uncertainty as they face the tension to embrace technology and innovation. This has forced established professionals to alter and restructure their business processes to remain ahead of the shifts taking place. This is made more necessary by the fact that older generations have also switched to digital news consumption (Turner 2015).

Despite the scarcity of studies that investigate the experiences of Digital Natives, four key elements have emerged that capture the context of Generation Z's media consumption:

- Consumers have a huge diet for media content, and this is driving information consumption.
- Technology advancement has given consumers vast choices of information to choose from and they choose how to consume information.
- Media outlets are faced with having to keep up with information demands while trying to disseminate credible information to large audiences.
- The internet has removed barriers to entry and has allowed everyone to be a content publisher (Otieno in Mdlongwa 2009, p. 20).

These four elements are important as they provide an awareness of the environment that Generation Z is growing up in. They describe the characteristics of the media landscape context in which young people currently exist. Westlund (2008, p. 448) argues that news media services should be "useful, functional and easy to use", adding that, "there must be a balance between complexity and usefulness, as well as great variation in the amount of available content and functions."

The *Truman Show* delusion[7], as applied by Deuze (2011, p. 140), provides a perfect perspective that can be applied in examining Generation Z and explains that their lived experiences cannot be studied as distinct from, or outside of, media. Deuze asserts a metaphoric explanation that Generation Z are existing inside their very own *Truman Show,* as they live in "a world characterized by pervasive and ubiquitous media." He continues to explain that Generation Z is "constantly and concurrently deeply immersed in" this media as well as being the stars of it and are allowing it to dominate and shape every aspect of their lives. Importantly in this world, Generation Z navigates and explores "an ocean of media" (Lamb 2005) on their own.

Continuing with the *Truman Show* metaphor, Deuze (2011, p. 140) comments: "The rather ominous *Truman Show* metaphor is perhaps only appropriate insofar it addresses people's complex, interconnected yet often solipsistic engagement with reality through media." The argument here is that media cannot be considered as a separate entity to Generation Z to such an extent that Generation Z lives "*in* media, rather than *with* media" (ibid). In explaining this reality, Deuze proposes that "there are extensive social and cultural repercussions occurring

[7] Refers to film that Peter Weir directed in1998.

primarily due to the way media are becoming invisible, as media are so pervasive and ubiquitous that people in general do not even register the presence of media in their lives" (p. 143). Furthermore, media has enabled Generation Z to create a networked, individualist and personalised information space for themselves. This constitutes their everyday reality by influencing their lives from work, to play, to learning and networking by dissolving all restrictions between them and the media.

Considering the current digital opportunity, media provides an always-available global connectivity (Papacharissi 2015) for Generation Z whose needs are satisfied by using products and services that come from the most diverse sources. According to Hermida (2010, p. 301 in Papacharissi 2015, p. 29), the feature that networked platforms are always connected affords users "an awareness system [with] diverse means to collect, communicate, share and display news and information, serving diverse purposes… on different levels of engagement." Papacharissi (2015, p. 29) further argues that the novel networked spaces presented by online platforms are "produced, hybrid and ambient." They are facilitated by networks like Twitter, which enable the production of user-generated social discourses on what is newsworthy. Twitter also becomes an important alternative for young audiences in the main news system (Bruns and Highfield 2012).

1.2.1 Background

The 2018 African Generation Z Report is important as it looks in detail at how Generation Z may influence businesses and encourage innovation in Africa the upcoming years. The report identifies Generation Z as Africa's digital future because of its enthusiasm and appetite for technology (p. 2). Mizuko et al. (2008) further emphasise that "we must also recognize [Generation Z] as potential innovators and drivers of new media change." Their new ideas and approaches are altering media workspaces by changing traditional ways of delivering news, as noted by the African Generation Z report. "Gen Zs source their trivia and news from the likes of Buzzfeed and 9gag, study using SparkNotes, self-teach using YouTube tutorials, line up their own choice of streamed entertainment including vlogs on YouTube, [and] run social media accounts…. This Generation is immersed in a digital world," (African Generation Z Report 2018, p. 3). However, Mizuko et al. (2008) provide a different perspective, noting that "while some see 'digital kids' as our best hope for the future, others worry that new media are part of a Generational rift and a dangerous turn away from existing standards for knowledge, literacy and civic engagement."

Amidst all this, it goes without saying that Africa's Generation Z is an unequal cohort, and different from Generation Z in the more developed world. Generation Z in Africa face challenges such as those brought about by the digital divide and a range of other unique priorities, some of which are discussed in other chapters of this research. Goggin & McLelland (2017, p. 515) similarly observe that use of new technology "is integrated unevenly into newsrooms, and there are major variations across the region in regard to problems of access." Mabweazara (2014, p. 2) also observes that there is an unequal spread in the usage of technology resources amongst the populations in the technologically advanced North and those in the underdeveloped South.

The *Internet Access in South Africa* 2017 report by the World Wide Worx explains that "South Africa has one of Africa's highest Internet penetration levels, [which] passed the 40 percent mark in 2017." The report did note though, that the disparity in income was a significant factor to the digital divide reality: "South Africans on high income levels had an Internet penetration rate of over 82 percent, while Internet penetration fell below 30 percent among the lowest income earners" (African Generation Z Report 2018, p. 4). This divide causes many of Africa's youth to identify more closely with Millennials than with Generation Z. However, once they have low-cost high-speed Internet access, they can bridge the divide and identify with Generation Z. This relates to Turner's argument that the Internet has become an intrinsic identifier of contemporary global society (2015, p. 105).

According to Turner (2015), the developments in technology have transformed the ways in which people access information in terms of receiving it in high speed and efficient ways and these advances play a key roles in ways in which Generation Z youth experience news. Generation Z have a natural affinity for technology and are poised to drive massive digital innovation in content consumption. However, content providers have not figured out the best ways to cater to them. This is possibly the case because Generation Z youth consume and interact with media content more than any other activity (Kaiser Family Foundation 2010 Report in Turner 2015, p. 106). "The race is on to gather and understand data on this emerging tech-savvy consumer group, who hold the future of the content space in the palm of their hand" (African Gen Z Report 2018, p. 14).

A re-emphasis of the importance of this research is the notion that Generation Z is growing to become the new economic heavyweight, whose involvement in the media market is already changing everything. This is because they are growing up in homes with various digital

technologies that make mobile and connectivity more than mere commodities. Consequently, this creates challenges for businesses as Generation Z can become especially difficult to please. These young people expect media content to be delivered to them immediately at their fingertips. “They are very demanding and require a ‘full content solution’, and they will not use services that cannot give them everything they are looking for” (African Gen Z Report 2018, p. 14).

1.3 BRIEF CONTEXT OF THE THREE MEDIA COMPANIES

This research examined two national publications (i.e. *Daily Sun* & *City Press* and *IOL* & *The Young Independents*) from two media companies (i.e. Media24 and Independent News and Media) and only one news publication (i.e. *Sowetan*) from the third media company (Arena Holdings). The reason for having only one news publication (i.e. *Sowetan*) from Arena Holdings was because the news editor of *TimesLive*, which is one of the national publications of Arena Holdings, did not respond to the invite to participate in this research. Nonetheless, the news editors from these publications were interviewed to discover how their news content strategies are adapting to the digital first transition.

Table 1: Shows the three media companies and the news publications from which news editors were interviewed.

Media Company	**News Publication**
Media24	Daily Sun City Press
Independent News and Media (IOL)	IOL The Young Independents
Arena Holdings (formerly known as Times Media Group)	Sowetan

The three media companies have been chosen because they are well-funded media outlets that have excellent newsroom infrastructures, making them appropriate in this research's investigation of whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences. According to *PWC's Entertainment and media outlook: 2015 - 2019* (p. 139) these three media companies continue to be part of the 'Big Four' in South Africa's newspaper market and are also acclaimed as front-runners in the move from traditional media publishing to digital media publishing in the South African media sphere.

According to Dugmore (2018, p. 16), Media24, Arena Holdings, Independent News, as well as Caxton are regarded as the 'Big Four' newspaper groups in the private sector dominating in the supply of news in both print and online platforms in South Africa. "The Big Four are midsized companies valued at between R2 billion to R6 billion and are currently not generating sizable profits" (Dugmore 2018, p. 43*)*. Nonetheless, they continue to demonstrate considerable influence through media ownership in the newspaper market. For example, Media24 owns more than 25 percent of daily newspapers when measured by market share. This influence is also occurring because of mergers and other forms of alliances that are taking place. In South Africa, the most significant media concentration has always been in print, which is, according to Dugmore (2018), the least consumed of all news media in South Africa and "for most of the world, broadcast news and now the Internet is what most people use to access news", hence the impetus into this study. These three media companies vary in the products they supply and media strategies, as will be shown in this research.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

This research analyses whether or not South African media companies are engaging with young Generation Z audiences in inventive ways. In doing so, the research aims to provide a critical reflection of digital media experiences of the Generation Z cohort within the multiple complexities of digital developments. One of the main aims is to find out if South African media companies are innovating[8] to attract the Generation Z cohort. This is done by using qualitative methods to examine two national publications (i.e. *Daily Sun* & *City Press* and *IOL* & *The Young Independents*) from two media companies (i.e. Media24 and Independent News

[8] Innovation in this instance refers: to an innovation in media practices at least as much as in media technologies. Media innovation can also involve changes in many processes of the media landscape, including developments of new media channels, new models of conducting the media businesses and in new ways to produce media texts.

and Media) and only one news publication (i.e. *Sowetan*) from the third media company (Arena Holdings). The qualitative methods used were namely in-depth interviews consisting of standardised questions that were applied to single interviews with news editors from these publications to discover how their news content strategies are adapting to the digital first transition. The ensuing interview data is then argued by examining journalism literature and focusing on journalism in Africa during a time of digital transformations, as the profession has experienced disruptions from the influence of new digital technologies in the ways that news is gathered, produced and distributed processes.

The use of texts by Atton and Mabweazara (2011) provide support to this research by providing a closer look at how journalists in Africa are finding unique methods to practice their crafts in the midst of shifts in technology, shifts in newsroom practices and in the broader framework of news production. With rapid adjustments visible in newsrooms, Mabweazara provides an examination of the fast-changing ecology of news, particularly in terms of its shift towards an industrialised and technological basis. He also examines the response of news production to changes in society's structure (Cottle 2000 in Atton & Mabweazara 2011, p. 667).

Mabweazara (2014) further details trends and emerging practices constituted by case studies from an African perspective of how newsrooms and journalists are repositioning themselves so as to address the changing realities of news production impacted by new digital technologies. As highlighted above, this aims to offer "fresh non-Western empirical insights into how traditional journalism is adapting to the unsettling impact of new digital technologies in their various forms" (Mabweazara 2014, p. 6). It is also necessary to remember that the African context is different and diverse from the global North context. It is not merely its 'African-ness' in terms of culture but is also about the structural under-development that creates highly unequal societies with gender, class and racial divides impacting on access to new technologies. Only 50 percent of South Africans had access to the internet in any form in 2018. This reiterates this research's aim to focus on African journalism, and to thoroughly explore the various ways through which newsrooms in South Africa can implement and exploit the potential of new digital technologies to their work in relation to Generation Z. This aim includes a look at challenges that emerge with the repositioning and adoption of novel technologies.

Jansson and Lindell (2015, p. 80) argue that convergence in technology changes the way in which consumers navigate on various media platforms while integrating their news consumption with other day-to-day activities. This research, therefore, also looks at

convergence theories which establish diverse types of associations called the 'network economy'. The significance of social networks, as sources of news are the motivating forces of the network economy. As a result, this study aims to contribute by suggesting that research about social media is important as social networks have become central to people's news experiences.

Palfrey and Gasser (2013) as Internet and technology specialists propose a sociological way of studying Generation Z. They argue that Generation Z are on their way to becoming young adults and "soon our world will be reshaped in their image – our economy, our politics, [and] our culture will be forever transformed." Generation Z is fast influencing media organisations and we cannot ignore this. As has been noted "digitalisation is expected to bring an additional $300 billion to Africa by 2026" (African Gen Z Report 2018). Further research into Gen Z by GfK in its report '*GenZZA – capturing tomorrow's opportunity*', observed that, "up to 41 percent of South Africa's population is aged 21 or younger." Importantly, although they do not yet have substantial purchasing power, they do influence consumer actions and purchasing decisions of older generations, usually their parents – in the technology space (African Gen Z Report 2018, p. 4).

It is becoming more important than ever for media organisations to understand how Generation Z consumes content as they are a growing generation of media users. This research intends to examine the extent to which there is a need for South African media to reposition newsrooms, news gathering, distribution and circulation of media content on web 2.0 in order to provide for the growing Generation Z cohort. This aim can be seen as an approach to readying news media companies in preparation for a new type of audience. As an extension of this, the research aims to examine the platforms that are essential for Generation Z news consumption.

1.5 RATIONALE

Digital and social media have become powerful sources of information and impact on the way communities create and sustain social relationships. It therefore becomes essential for digital media companies to attract and retain Generation Z through their social media activities. This research will have an impact on Generation Z in terms of understanding how best to cater for their information needs, as they are inundated with news, information, entertainment and marketing messages – essentially suffering from information overload.

Despite the attention that social media, digitisation, generational cohorts and new media theories have garnered from media and journalism scholars, there appears to be a scarcity of studies that investigate the issue of Generation Z news media consumption (on digital media) and the consequences thereof for news organisations within the South African context. Prior research has been limited to case studies which explore these variables in developed countries. Thus, there remains a gap in knowledge building on Generation Z and its media consumption in the African context as an evolving and developing media market. The attempt to fill this hole is brought about by the fact that Generation Z is the future audience of, and source for, media organisations. In understanding Generation Z and its media consumption, this research asks a series of questions relating to young people's news preferences. This qualitative methodological approach is used to study a small sample of participants evaluated based on their ability to provide important and rich information, rather than to test the theories on large samples. Hence, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 Generation Z individuals to gauge their news consumption experiences.

While we may not explicitly be aware of Generation Z's news consumption practices, we are however aware of the environment in which they live in. This includes a "highly sophisticated media and computer environment", making Generation Z an Internet savvy generation than their predecessors, Generation Y (Singh 2014, p. 59). The importance of this research concerning Generation Z is the fact that young people in South Africa are becoming significant citizens as they negotiate the transition from youth to adulthood. As they do so, their media activities, participation, and opinions indicate an evolving media landscape. They have been born into a world that Mattes (2012, p. 139 in Malila et al. 2013) describes as "a totally different world than that of their parents", who belong to earlier generations. This is as a result of the fact that Generation Z is exposed to media that has transitioned into digital first technologies.

Singh further claims that organisations are generally still unbothered by Generation Z and the way in which they are significantly influencing society. Investigating the networked Generation Z's news media consumption would contribute to our understanding of how mainstream news media organisations respond to changing technology, consumer choices and generational changes. Peters (2012, p. 698) contends that such an investigation is essential for providing knowledge to news outlets that want to:

- Master innovative strategies that are best at engaging a young generation of news consumers;

- Establish new ways to offer news that is engaging and convenient for an audience that appreciates immediacy and is increasingly using mobile devices;
- Implement contemporary business strategies that can adapt to a media landscape that is changing.

Meanwhile, Malila et al. (2013, p. 427) contend that "journalists and media owners need to develop ways of listening to young voices more systematically and reflecting those voices in media content in pertinent and useful ways." This is supported by Daniels (2014, p. 309) conclusion that although journalistic spaces are branching out, they still have a long way to go in fully transforming into "expansive, inclusive and wide-open spaces."

1.6 SUMMARY OF FORTHCOMING CHAPTERS

The remainder of this study is structured according to the seven chapters that follow:

CHAPTER 2: What is news?

Chapter 2 provides an argument about the definition of 'news' so as to understand what is meant by 'news consumption' in terms of this research. The chapter also discusses how news, not only its definition, but the function of news and journalism in a digital world is experiencing change, argument, and discussion. This discussion revolves particularly around Mark Deuze's (2004) theory of multimedia journalism to demonstrate how news has changed in its presentation in terms of how it is packaged.

Furthermore, this chapter conceptualises what is means by 'innovation' in the context of this research. The chapter adopts Pavlik's (2013, p. 183) definition that innovation is, "the process of taking new approaches to media practices and forms while maintaining a commitment to quality and high ethical standards. Innovation is driven largely by technological advances and economic challenges." The arguments made break down this definition to weigh it against the three news organisations, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings. This is done in terms of how these organisations employ innovative strategies in their news production practices to meet young consumers' needs and whether they meet the four principles which according to Pavlik, characterise whether news organisations are actually innovative in their news media. Lastly, Chapter 2 briefly introduces the idea of how young people "snack on the news" which becomes apparent in the data analysis chapters. A practice which involves

getting a basic overview of the day's events in snippets, without seeking of in-depth knowledge by reading each article entirely.

CHAPTER 3: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the works relating to the digital media revolution, the intricacies relating to news media consumption for consumers and news media organisation practices. In leading to answer the research question of this research which asks whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences, this chapter unpacks concepts of technological domestication (Mabweazara 2015), mobile media (Mwaura 2017*)*, normative dilemmas and the digital divide (Van Dijk 2005, Berger 2005) amongst others, as concepts that can help us understand the context of this study. The chapter particularly adopts literature of Berger (2005), Deuze (2004), Wasserman (2011), Malila (2013), Mabweazara (2015) and others who study emerging digital cultures and practices in South Africa and the broader African continent, as this is a South African based study.

In contextualising existing analytical and normative frameworks of digital-first theories and digital technologies, this chapter also uses case studies of the local context like the *State of the Newsroom South Africa Disruptions and Transitions* (Daniels, 2013), *State of the Newsroom South Africa Disruptions Accelerated* (Daniels, 2014), and *State of the Newsroom South Africa* 2015-2016 *South Africa Inside/Out* (Finlay 2016) to investigate the adoption of digital technologies in the context of this study.

CHAPTER 4: Theoretical Framework

The concepts of digitisation as explicated by Mark Deuze (2004), the network theory introduced by Alfred Hermida (2013), the convergence notion which is largely due to the work of Guy Berger (2004) and Lin Chao-Chen (2013) as well as the media repertoire notion by Elaine Yuan (2011) are applied to the analysis of the strategies adopted by the three South African media organisations, (Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings) to determine whether their news media content is attracting young audiences.

These four theories are discussed in the African context in terms of how news organisations in Africa are impacted by digitisation and what this means for news consumption in light of the spread of mobile devices and the use of social media in Africa. In explaining how the Internet and mobile phones play a central role in journalist's daily news making routines and practices as well as consumers news consumption experiences, this chapter brings forth a complementary

argument relating to the 'digital divide'. The arguments made explain the fragmented influence of new technologies in Africa, distinguished by a wide gap between the wealthy and the underprivileged. While all four of these theories (i.e. digitisation, network theory, convergence and media repertoire) are equally important to this research, this chapter takes forth the network theory to be the most significant. This is because it encompasses digital media, the Internet and media globalisation, as consumers in Africa take dominance in global social networks, mainly for increasing engagement in collective action.

CHAPTER 5: Research Methodology

This research adopts multiple qualitative research approaches to gain a detailed knowledge of Generation Z's news consumption and whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences. The research methods that were adopted were mainly in-depth interviews consisting of standardised questions that were applied to single interviews. Each interview session placed each respondent in the same interview experience. Any differences were assumed to be due to variations among participants rather than to differences in the interview process itself. In addition, purposive sampling was applied to studying the three South African news organisations, as well as the 20 Generation Z respondents.

This research combines the study of news productions and the study of audiences to research news journalism and young audiences. On the one hand, the production study focuses on the conditions of production and the processes behind media content or media institutions in action. On the other hand, the audience study encompasses a wide range of theoretical perspectives in studying why and how audiences are engaging with media. This study attempts to balance these two approaches to establish links between audiences and the media content, media organisations and technologies that they use to engage. Lastly, the researcher applies interpretive methods such as Discourse Analysis, which is crucial to analysing the themes that come out of the interviews.

Introducing the three media companies

Purposive sampling of the three media companies' respondents only covered digital news editors and excluded top management and general news reporters who form a much larger staff contingent of the three news organisations. This was a strategic sample because the researcher was interested in informants who have the best knowledge concerning the research topic.

Hence, this research selected digital news editors as the research participants for this study as they are assumed to have the best knowledge in answering the research topic, whether their news channels are making a provision for Generation Z news media consumption.

The news editors were all asked five questions and single interviews were conducted with each participant.

The news editors were asked the following questions:

1. What strategies are the news editors from your media organisation involved in to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media?
2. Does Generation Z influence you as a news organisation? If so, how? And if not, how are they not influencing the organisation?
3. Could there be a gap between Generation Z's news consumption and your news offerings, given that there is a decline in traditional/legacy media consumption?
4. What are your ideas to turn mobiles into audiences: Do you try to do this?
5. Is Generation Z shaping the future of news consumption?

Introducing the 20 Generation Z respondents

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 Generation Z individuals to gauge their news consumption experiences. Interviews took place in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape Province, with respondents from the Generation Z cohort being students from Rhodes University. All the respondents were studying towards a Journalism and Media Studies degree and were between 18 and 22 years of age. The purposive selection of these respondents was fairly based on arguments by scholars such as DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 317) who explain that, "the sample of interviewees should be fairly homogenous and share critical similarities related to the research question", hence this research looked at respondents of the same age and from the same university, studying the same course, though in different study levels. This was important to do because, for example, studying Generation Z news consumption in general is likely to generate varied data as compared to applying restrictions to the sample group, for example, studying Generation Z aged between 18 and 22 years, enrolled for a journalism and media studies course and within the same institution.

The in-depth interview process was structured to create a personal and intimate space in which direct verbal questions were presented to elicit detailed narratives, as highlighted in the interview schedule. The following six questions were asked:

1. How do you access news? What platforms do you use to access news and why do you use those platforms?
2. Do you view Instagram as a platform for accessing or sourcing news? And what do you think of Twitter and the mobile phone tool as channels of accessing news?
3. What content do you consume from the media? If news, what type of news content?
4. Do you regard social and online media as a relevant source of news?
5. Do you feel connected to mainstream print (i.e. newspapers) and online media?
6. What would you like to see more on online media platforms including social media that you think would be relevant to your Generation (i.e. Generation Z)?

CHAPTER 6: The cooperation between old strategies and new strategies in news production

Chapter 6 provides a synthesis of interview results from three South African news organisations, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings in terms of their provisions of multimedia news and digital techniques in relation to Generation Z. Each research question is analysed and outlines the key themes that emerged across the respondents in relation to the theories outlined in the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 7: Generation Z - "Online is the way to go!"

Chapter 7 provides an analysis and discussion of the interview data from 20 Generation Z respondents. The chapter further shows that Generation Z are "inherently cross-media" as they compose their media diets out of a supply from different media platforms.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusions - experimenting different models to attract young audiences

This chapter answers the main research question: Are South African media companies innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences? The chapter does so by analysing the arguments and discussions that have been made in previous chapters to draw some final reflections and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS NEWS?

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to analyse news media consumption by Generation Z, a definition to understand what is meant by 'news consumption' must be provided. This research attempts to answer this question by firstly using the open-ended explanation provided by Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch (2009, p. 171), who argue that "definitions of news are not fixed." This means that news values can change over time as technology can change how news is produced and received. For example, news has changed in terms of how it is produced and received, and this can be seen in Mark Deuze's (2004) article "*What is Multimedia Journalism*" on the theory of multimedia journalism. Deuze posits that news in terms of multimedia journalism has changed in two ways. First, news on a website has changed in its presentation in terms of how it is packaged, so that it now presents news in written form, still and motion images, explicit animation and incorporating elements of hypertextuality and interactivity. Secondly, news is integrated and presented in diverse platforms such as websites, radio, TV, newspapers and magazines. Shifts also occur between different sectors of the news media which today have an increasingly fragmented news market (Deuze 2004, p. 140).

The definition of news in literature has been described in the broadest sense. For some scholars like Downie and Kaiser (2007), news may be content that informs and allows citizens to contribute to society and democratic processes. While for others like Kovach & Rosenstiel, (2007) in Malik et al. (2013, p. 4), news is defined as information regarding events beyond citizen's direct experience. Russial et al. (2015, p. 300) posit that news is "anything that changes the *status quo* and gets reported as the news." Literature, like that of Russial et al. (ibid), offers various definitions of news which have both common and different features. This fragmentation in definitions clearly demonstrates that the not only the definition, but the function of news and journalism in a digital world is experiencing change, argument and discussion.[9]

[9] Therefore, in order not to constrict the framework and scope of this research to a single category of news consumption, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED 2015) definition as presented by Russial *et al* (2015, p. 300), is that news is: "The report or account of recent (especially important or interesting) events or occurrences, brought or coming to one as new information."

2.2 A NEW KIND OF NEWS

Malik et al. (2013, p. 3) suggest that new forms of media have blurred the boundaries of what constitutes news. With the digital revolution's omnipresence, an abundance of blogs, aggregators, citizen-journalism and eyewitness testimony have sprung up, which deliver news directly via social media. This new kind of 'news' falls outside of the codified model of the last century which consisted of a small number of professional journalism outlets that enjoyed a monopoly as gatekeepers and curators of news (Deuze 2004). Since the end of the last century, long-established professional outlets have been changing, with the newspaper industry in particular in crisis (Picard, 2006 in Malik et al. 2013, p. 3). The absence of expert gatekeepers has motivated consumers to find news by using online news platforms (Fletcher & Park 2017, p. 1284). This shift highlights that "the increased popularity of interactive online environments [which have] also enabled a new set of news consumption practices given that they allow people to more easily (and more publicly) disseminate and rate news" (Fletcher & Park, 2017, p.1282). According to Coleman et al. (2011 in Sveningsson 2015, p. 5), the idea of news being ubiquitous and accessible through various forms is "tightly related to media convergence – a term that describes the integration of media platforms and content."

The difficulty, therefore, in defining news arises because of the wide range of contributors to the news production process. Various actors provide eyewitness accounts, upload media and comment on news sites and news pages on social media – changing the whole dimension and concept of news (Morrison 2017 in Fletcher & Park 2017, p. 1282). Consequently, there are several different perspectives on defining the concept of news with no single way to conceptualise what news is. This is especially true given that definitions often overlap, making them difficult to untangle. Defining news in this research is important as it provides an understanding of what is meant when referring to 'Generation Z news media consumption'. A news definition will, therefore, provide direction towards comprehending the habits of how young people consume news.

Such observations are relevant to my study as they indicate an evolving media landscape constituted by newsroom transitions, disruptions and changes in the way journalists work. These points also highlight the 2013 State of the Newsroom South Africa's report (Daniels 2013, p. 35) argument that "the days of audiences and readers being passive recipients of news from one or two mediums are over." Technological advances have resulted in the death of old paradigms of professional journalists as digital offerings take priority above conventional news mediums like print newspapers (Daniels 2013; Jenkins 2006; Deuze 2001). This speaks to the

need to reposition newsrooms so as to make provision for new roles which relate to the main question of this research that challenges whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences (Generation Z).

2.2.1 Mobile Media and Social Media Use in News Consumption

Goggin (2013, p. 83) posits that the "youth has figured heavily in mobile media and communication research" as researchers show interest to investigate the phenomena of mobile communication. Youth can be understood as early and distinctive users of mobile internet as they use mobile phones (iPads and tablet devices) at an increasingly young age (Goggin 2013). Similarly, Sheller (2015, p. 19) points out that "young audiences are increasingly consuming news on smartphones or tablets, which promotes short-form summary presentations with easily clickable links to longer stories." This makes young people online users who consume news on social networking sites (SNSs), Facebook-recommended pages and Twitter. Likewise, Fletcher & Park (2017, p. 1282) highlight that "the younger people are particularly likely to mix news consumption with social networking, problem solving, social action and entertainment." Their news consumption practices are intertwined with their general online activity. By 'liking' the social media page of a news organisation, SNS users receive news updates from that news organisation. This is a new system of "news subscription" (Al-Rawi 2017, p. 872). The news, as experienced through multimedia platforms, is thus characterised by three key features: portability, personalisation and participation.

The consumption of news on mobile media has transformed the "spatialities and temporalities of news media through processes such as proliferation, participation, personalization, cross-platform flow, geolocation and mapping" (Sheller 2015, p. 12). It is, therefore, important for this research to include mobile media to demonstrate how news is produced through mobile mediums, disseminated and consumed digitally through channels such as social media which are widely accessed on mobile platforms. Westlund (2013, p. 6) states that "the mobile has become deeply embedded into contemporary social life"; while, Ling (2012 in Westlund 2013, p. 7) observes that "mobiles have become a taken-for-granted part of society." The emergence of mobile media and social media as dominant platforms that make the dissemination of information and news content possible, allow for the easy personalisation of mobile social networks. News thus becomes constant, easily gathered and redistributed, fostering "ambient journalism" (Hermida 2010); a concept defined further below.

Redden and Witschge (2010, p, 181 in Al-Rawi 2017, p. 874) explain that people engage with news by reading and sharing it in more ways than before and for this reason, the news experience has developed into a social experience. Hermida (2010) calls this phenomenon "ambient journalism, [which refers to] social information networks that provide an asynchronous, lightweight and always-on communication system …enabling citizens to maintain a mental model of news and events around them" (Hermida 2010, p. 301). In addition, he clarifies that SNS platforms have become an integral part of how online readers are consuming, sharing, liking, and disseminating news, as well as interacting with each other on various issues in timely, in-depth and engaging ways (Al-Rawi 2017, p. 885). These platforms also present new ways for news organisations to expand to a wider audience.

For example, Twitter, as an 'awareness system', establishes an environment of constantly fragmented updates. Hermida (2010) and Bruns (2010) characterise this disjointed environment that contains information sources from professionals and amateurs as 'ambient journalism'. Hermida (2012, p. 2 in Vis 2013) further observes that, as a form of ambient journalism, "Twitter provides a mix of news, information and comments, usually connected to current reality but without an established order."

Such arguments are applicable to this research as they show that online offerings are taking precedence over print products (Wahl-Jorgensen 2016 and Chyi & Lee 2013). Such debates are also relevant considering that Generation Z is mobile- and social media-savvy. These arguments, therefore, link my research to the key question of whether or not South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences?

2.3 CONCEPTUALISING INNOVATION IN NEWS MEDIA

Innovation in news media in the context of this research is defined as "the process of taking new approaches to media practices and forms while maintaining a commitment to quality and high ethical standards. Innovation is driven largely by technological advances and economic challenges" (Pavlik 2013, p. 183). This definition of innovation in news media refers to professional news producers and news organisations that create news media content. According to Pavlik (2013, p. 183), innovative news media content is characterised by four dimensions:

- Generating, delivering and offering news content of high quality,
- Ensuring that audiences are engaged in interactive news discourses,

- Using novel methods report news that is enhanced by the digital networked age, and
- Employing new ways to manage organisational strategies that are suited for a digitally connected and mobile environment.

Innovation in terms of the three news organisations, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings, is guided by these four principles in terms of how these organisations employ strategies in their news production practices. Technological change and an open environment with new entrants and "technology intermediaries including Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple, now control the future of news" (Rosenstiel 2012). This means that traditional enterprises that adapt slowly or lack innovation face the possibility of being replaced by technology intermediaries like Google, Facebook, Apple and Yahoo, which are dominant companies within the global market arena. If news organisations like the three investigated in this research fail to adapt, then they may risk maintaining their advantage within the market arena to more innovative digital organisations. Thus, news organisations are investing resources on researching and experimenting on using technology innovatively and creating efficient work environments. Hence the impetus into investigating whether the three South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

This research looks at innovation in terms of how the three news organisations are meeting young consumers' needs either through creating new news content experiences or through increasing efficiencies in news production and distribution. Particularly significant to this research is how the networked social media emerged as an integral component of innovation which enables news organisations to integrate and effectively generate new forms of news content, new ways of engaging new audiences and reinventing methods of work to monetise their business practices. In this study, the enquiry about innovation is established through asking the three news organisations a series of questions about the strategies employed by their news editors to reposition their organisation within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media. This qualitative methodology uses in-depth interviews to gauge whether the news organisations are meeting the innovation requirements that meet the expectations of young news consumers.

In addition, the increasing adoption of mobile technologies by citizens is enabling innovation opportunities for using mobile technologies to access and deliver news through the Internet. The dispersion of mobile and networked technologies is enabling the creation of new forms of

news content, making the innovation enquiry particularly significant in this research. Pavlik (2013, p. 185) also posits that "citizens are increasingly utilising their mobile devices to access and participate in a news dialog via social media." The increasing use of social media through mobile devices offers an opportunity for revenue growth for news organisations, as illustrated in Chapter 6, which reveals the strategies used by the three news organisations.

According to Pavlik (2013, p. 186), news media organisations have a unique opportunity to compose an innovative strategy based on three elements:

- By maintaining the standards of quality news;
- Taking advantage of mobile technologies that are increasingly being adopted by citizens, especially young people and those who are urban-based; and
- Facilitating the convergence between social and mobile media that is increasingly used by citizens in their news consumption experiences and encouraging them to participate in the flow of news by producing user-generated content.

In implementing these three approaches, news media organisations could establish businesses models that can sustain them in the twenty-first century but also prepare them for the move to an era that is progressively known as "big data" (Graham 2012). News organisations can capitalise on innovation by employing the novelty of technologies into their strategies to manage resources, as well as human capital. Pavlik (2013, p. 188) emphasises that developing an innovative strategy that is focused on the digitally networked and mobile technologies may enable news outlets to establish a business or financial model that is sustainable and that produces quality news content in a globally networked and mobile environment. However, research by Rogers (2003) in Pavlik (2013, p. 184) that looked into the diffusion of innovations proposes that "early adopters of technology receive less of a benefit than later adopters do." Consequently, many news organisations are reluctant to be the first to innovate; rather, they prefer allow others to test the digital waters first.

2.4 GENERATION Z'S NEWS CONSUMPTION

Research around young users of the internet has found that they are have a low interest in politics and other stories of "social significance" (Harcup & O'Neill 2017, p. 1474). Studies have shown that demographic tends to prefer soft news with no apparent widespread social

significance (e.g. entertainment coverage) over hard news stories.[10] Although there has been a tendency to lump social media as a news outlet into the same category as entertainment (Sveningsson (2015, p. 2), this is not necessarily an accurate assumption. As Marchi (2012) argues, despite the fact that news on social networking sites is thought to be more enjoyable than news on conventional platforms, it can be argued that news on social media does not equate to entertainment.

In a study about online news and the types of articles that readers desire, Schaudt and Carpenter (2009 in Harcup & O'Neill 2017, p. 1474) found that readers viewed soft news 63 percent of the time, with the most popular news value being proximity followed by conflict (76 percent and 31 percent, respectively). While soft stories tend to be favoured more, Twitter also drives attention to hard news, making the publics and Generation Z's news preferences a complicated study. This reinforces Harcup & O'Neill's (2001, p. 277) argument of the necessity for contemporary journalists to create content that entertains as well as informs their audiences.

An alternative perspective is offered by Meijer and Kormelink (2015, p. 666), who suggest that users classify news genres differently to professionals. They note that, in contrast to journalists, consumers regard "talk shows, satire, consumer programs and current affairs shows as news" (Meijer 2006 in Meijer & Kormelink 2015). Similarly, Bergström and Belfrage (2018, p. 584) claim that daily current affairs news is becoming more integrated with everyday life through the use of various activities, websites and genres.

Some researchers have taken the discussion further, arguing that users of social media consume various information on media than non-users (Hermida et al. in Sveningsson 2015, p. 6). Meijer (2007 in Sveningsson 2015, p. 6) describes young peoples' news consumption habits as snacking. As she explains it, "young people like to get a 'bite' of a variety of programs" by snacking on information across a wide range of subjects. They do this by speed-reading through headlines and leads, without necessarily reading the full articles, in mobile news apps and on Twitter. Using similar metaphors, Marchi (2012 in Sveningsson 2015, p. 6) denotes the way that young people gather news as an "*a la carte* model", affirming that "youth tend to know a little bit about a lot of subjects, researching topics of special interest in more detail" (p. 248).

[10] Following the Reuters Institute's (2016) definitions, soft news involves topics that range from entertainment, celebrity news and lifestyle coverage. Hard news, in contrast, generally consists of topics of contemporary significance, such as politics, international affairs and business stories.

An attempt will be made in this research to observe the "snacking" and the "*a la carte* model" in analysing respondents' experiences in consuming news.

Meijer and Kormelink (2015, p. 669) also raise the notion of "checking"[11] as a habitual activity among Generation Z. They explain that checking has gained intensity as a news practice particularly because mobile news apps have made the practice easier and faster. Today, mobile technologies like smartphones, have enabled speed and ease of access when using apps to check news online 24/7. This practice of checking is a major habit of Generation Z as they constantly have their smartphones on them and consequently find it easy to check the news throughout the day.

Molyneux (2018, p. 636) explores another difference in the way in which Generation Z consumes news: incidental use. According to Molyneux, Generation Z news users begin checking the news routinely without putting much attention and without having an intention to seek to do so. However, these unplanned news checks increase traffic to news platforms that go beyond simply reading a headline. Molyneux explains: "Apps that offer breaking news alerts and notifications also drive unplanned, incidental and likely brief check-ins with news" (2018, p. 636). This proposes that consuming news on mobile devices is different from consuming news on other platforms.

2.5 SNACKING ON THE NEWS

The term snacking as it relates to news consumption is not entirely new. As Meijer and Kormelink (2015, p. 670) explain, "the label snacking was first used 10 years ago for describing a lean-back form of news consumption that is geared toward getting a basic overview of the day's events." Molyneux added to this concept by suggesting that news consumers pay less attention to news in its entirety and instead snack or graze on select pieces of information (2018, p. 634). Snacking, then, does not involve the pursuit of in-depth knowledge on news events, but it is rather about consuming snippets of information "in a relaxed, easy-going fashion to gain a sense of what is going on" (Costera Meijer 2006 in Meijer & Kormelink 2015). The

[11] The idea of 'checking' according to Meijer and Kormelink (2015, p. 669) "is about finding out—as efficiently as possible—whether something 'new' and 'interesting' has happened." Checking is characterised by speed and immediacy and the desire of not having to schedule the news for a specific time of the day. It is motivated by a constant urge to be aware of latest developments in news. The practice of checking links to the need to be fully informed in an easy and effortless way. News apps for example make checking to be even quicker and more effortless and digital devices like smartphones and tablets facilitate 24/7 checking.

practice of snacking is comparable to paging through a magazine to get a sense of the general news content and random facts rather than reading each article entirely.

Journalism industry observers and scholars have shown a sense of concern regarding the snacking practices that appear to be taking over media consumption activities (Miller 2007 in Molyneux 2018). Age is a notable factor in considering news consumption trends, as younger generations like Generation Z are more likely to be snackers. Sauvageau (2012, pp. 32–33 in Molyneux 2018, p. 635) suggests that:

> young adults nibble away at the news, whenever and wherever they feel like it. They prefer frequent news snacks to regular full meals. They take the news, shape it, comment on it, and exchange it with their 'friends' on Facebook or via Twitter.

This provides testimony that mobile platforms encourage the practice of snacking on news or grazing as they enable "shorter, dispersed consumption patterns" (Molyneux 2017 in Nelson & Lei 2018, p. 620).

Several qualitative research studies into the practice of news snacking have found that young news consumers value immediacy over quality, preferring to quickly check news headlines in order to stay informed (Costera Meijer 2007 in Molyneux 2018). These findings are backed by further studies which show that the younger generation admits to consuming news on online and mobile platforms in small segments. Costera Meijer explains that this practice of checking the news "does not lead to solid knowledge, but to 'impressions'". This means that news consumers who snack on news, do so in order to present themselves as keeping up with the news or at least having a passing awareness of the happenings in world events but fail to meaningfully engage to deepen their knowledge.

2.5.1 Problems with Snacking

Although consumers in previous research have identified snacking as convenient for them, researchers have identified several problems with the practice. For instance, Molyneux (2018, p. 636) finds that snackers of news are not well-informed about current affairs and are likely to be less engaged in public life. Another problem identified by Chyi and Yang (2009) is economic in nature. They suggest that a society which tends towards snacking (i.e. that value convenience over quality) reduces the incentives for news producers to create high-quality content and may lower the value of news more generally. A third problem relates to the

complications that most news organisations face when delivering news in various media formats and on multiple media platforms. These issues arise because content needs to be suitable for the different consumption patterns across several platforms, as well as for a wider audience variety.

This last problem has resulted in news organisations resorting to producing a single version of news content that is then published and distributed on multiple media platforms, a replication practice called shovelware, as defined by Messnr, Linke and Eford, (2012). The use of shovelware as a news distribution practice has been criticised by Nelson and Lei (2018, p. 620) as it encourages news publishers to favour shorter stories with greater audience appeal over detailed investigative reporting (which is incompatible with snacking).

The Internet and mobile technology have significant potential to perpetuate the trend of news snacking because these technologies enable and encourage shorter, more fragmented consumption patterns. In fact, mobile and Internet technologies have the power to create an environment in which mobile news replaces alternative forms of news consumption. Thus, in the mobile era it becomes important to explore how mobile devices influence news consumption. Yuan (2011 in Molyneux 2018, p. 637) finds that "different news users choose different mixes of media platforms depending on which news gratifications they are seeking." Mobile news necessarily forms part of this mix of media platforms, with Van Damme et al. (2015) noting that "mobile may fill different niches and roles for different users." Molyneux (2018) argues that increased interest in news could result in more news-producing platforms. In light of this observation, this research finds it important to examine the role that mobile devices play in the news media consumption of young people. This will be discussed in the literature review.

The theories discussed in this section are relevant to this study as they highlight the diversity of platforms that are available for news distribution. These theories present the challenges faced by news organisations in creating news for the Generation Z audience. This chapter has shown that today's news must be interesting and enlivening, while better utilising mobile technology as a news platform. Using the theories outlined in this chapter as a foundation, this research seeks to understand how the three media companies under discussion are using digital-first strategies to make provision for Generation Z as news consumers. The theories outlined here address the question of innovation through digital-first strategies, which necessitates the total

re-engineering of resources and staff to make provision for Generation Z news media consumption.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Within the digitised media landscape, technology and audiences play a unique role in deciding what information is news worthy as user-generated content takes precedence in news production because of the rise of digital and online media in which user can contribute news content to (Domingo et al. 2008). Aside from examining three media organisations, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings, this research will also look at various publications, namely the *Daily Sun*, *City Press*, IOL, *The Young Independents* and *Sowetan,* which are owned by these organisations. With SNS use becoming essential for Generation Zs' news consumption experiences, it is important to thoroughly study their consumption habits as well as the three South African news organizations' social media use. The importance of this research and its focus on news is its connection to civil society as, according to Fletcher and Park (2017, p. 1281), "news media offer a lens through which people view society and the world." These theories will be applied to the analysis of the strategies adopted by South African media companies for Generation Z news media consumption to determine whether their news media content is attracting young audiences.

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to review the works relating to the digital media revolution, the intricacies relating to news media consumption for consumers and news media organisation practices. It is also then to select the literature and theories that would be most suitable for my particular research which asks whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences. The literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the digital media landscape and its offerings. It further unpacks concepts of technological domestication (Mabweazara 2015), mobile media (Mwaura 2017*)*, normative dilemmas and the digital divide (Van Dijk 2005, Berger 2005) amongst others, as concepts that can help us understand the context of this study. The literature adopted is that of Berger (2005), Deuze (2004), Wasserman (2011), Malila (2013), Mabweazara (2015) and others who study emerging digital cultures and practices in South Africa. According to Otieno in Mdlongwa (2009, p. 16), the digital revolution has disrupted the media industry in ways that have forced journalists and media managers to adapt their processes for news reporting and to rethink their business strategies to remain competitive.

A large body of literature has become available that speaks to the implications of changing technology with regards to gathering, filtering and disseminating news. The literature also examines the implications of these changes for journalism organisations, media business models, distribution platforms and audiences (Lewis 2015, p322). This research conducts its theoretical explorations by contextualising existing analytical and normative frameworks of digital-first theories and digital technologies. These theories are situated in case studies of the local context in the *State of the Newsroom South Africa Disruptions and Transitions* (Daniels, 2013), *State of the Newsroom South Africa Disruptions Accelerated* (Daniels, 2014), and *State of the Newsroom South Africa* 2015-2016 *South Africa Inside/Out* (Finlay 2016), which investigate the adoption of digital technologies in the context of traditional print newsrooms. This research uses these reports to understand how online news making processes are applied at three South African news media organisations (Media24, Independent News & Media, and Arena Holdings) are shaped by these digital-first phenomena and their relation to the Generation Z cohort.

News consumption today has drastically changed from pre-satellite news where audiences waited on a scheduled time in the evening for the day's news on television or waited for the morning papers. Today, news consumers receive updates about the happenings from around the world from 24-hour news television stations and from online news feeds. As traditional media like television, newspapers and radio channels battle to exist, they face intense competition from interactive online media (Alejandro 2015, p. 5). Meijer and Kormelink (2015, p. 664) share this idea, identifying three drastic shifts in news consumption:

- The move from consuming news from immobile places at allocated times, to consuming news on the go, at any time chosen by the user who is enabled by mobile devices;
- The move from generalised to personalised news, personalised for each user's particular interests and needs;
- The move from passive to active participation in news making by consumers.

This work by Meijer and Kormelink is useful for this research as it studies a new type of news consumer with a huge diet for media content. It is these new types of consumers that are driving information consumption and the evolution of news from being identified as a category of information to being presented as a social experience. News is presented as a social experience because Internet news is characterised by open communication as audiences can add to the content published by the producer by commenting on that specific post. Other characteristics of Internet news include the decentralised authority of the expert, which has opened up the opportunity to share and reuse news, and the idea of many-to-many[12] transmissions. This will prove to be valuable in this research because it describes the characteristics of the environment in which Generation Z is growing up, whereby the Internet is gaining greater centrality in young people's news consumption experiences and traditional media is declining in importance.

According to Hermida et al. (2012); and Himelboim and McCreery (2012 in Kalsnes and Larsson 2017, p. 2), disseminating news has been enhanced by online features that allow consumer to 'share' news items through social media, making news distribution an essential part of online news supply and consumption. For example, Facebook allows for the dissemination of news through the 'share' button and Twitter has the 'retweet' button. (Singer et al. 2011 in Kalsnes & Larsson 2017). Kalsnes and Larsson (2017) describe the sharing of news on social media as "an expression of the evolving relationship between news media

[12] The many-to-many paradigm refers to mass communication in the digital age, characterised by digital technologies and the internet – which means that multiple users can now contribute and receive information interlinked across different platforms like social and broadcast media.

organizations and their audiences." This work is important to understand in this research because Generation Z are immersed in social media and with interacting with media content through social platforms, which challenges news outlets to be innovative in the news content strategies they deploy to attract technology-savvy young audiences.

The practice of sharing news online can be understood as allowing audiences to access news content through posts and recommendations on social media platforms (Kümpel et al. 2015; 2 in Kalsnes & Larsson 2017). This demonstrates a type of participatory media practice, one that links to the notion of media audiences moving from being passive to active audience members. New online sharing practices involve audiences as content contributors who have come to be labelled "produsers" (Bruns 2010), "prosumers" (Toffler, 1990) or participants of a "networked audience" (Marwick & Boyd 2011 in Kalsnes & Larsson 2017). Social media and news websites are examples of platforms that facilitate audience participation in journalistic practice as audiences get to comment and share their views on news items.

These sentiments by theorists such as Bruns (2010) will be useful in examining how South African media companies are strategizing for Generation Z news media consumption as the 2013 *State of the Newsroom Report* highlighted that news organisations in South Africa moved towards new media strategies throughout the years of 2012 and 2013, with the reinvention of newsrooms beginning in 2010. These reports examined the ways in which newsrooms have grappled with digital-first strategies and how they began incorporating social media networks like Twitter in their daily news production work. The reports noted that there has been a move to offering digital content and highlighting the prominence of social media in offering online news options and ensuring that these take precedence over traditional news mediums (State of the Newsroom South Africa 2013, p. 35). The concurrent increase in the use of Facebook and Twitter social media networks, has seen these networks being used not only to break news, but also to engage with audiences. This highlights the fact that "there has been a proliferation of news mediums and of choice, which has led to the death of the old paradigm of professional journalists sending out news stories for readers, listeners or viewers to just absorb via print, radio or television" (State of the Newsroom South Africa 2013, p. 36).

3.2 TECHNOLOGICAL DOMESTICATION

Technological domestication, a concept used by Mabweazara (2015, p. 1) in his work on *Mainstreaming African digital cultures, practices and emerging forms of citizen engagement*,

explains how technologies such as mobile phones are appropriated by users and integrated into their everyday lives. The concept sheds some light on the broadly contested conundrum of the 'digital divide' presented by Van Dijk (2005).[13] Mabweazara, Mudhai and Whittaker (2014) provide that adopting and appropriating new technologies in the framework of conventional journalism has significantly altered nearly all stages of gathering, writing and publicising news. Deuze (2010 in Mabweazara 2015, p. 2) explains that this has resulted in "differentiated production and innovation processes including the complex interaction and interrogation between work, life and play." These theories are valuable to explore with Generation Z news consumption in South Africa because they can shed light on the way Generation Z consume news and whether media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract this sector of audiences.

For example, there are unprecedented interactions between news consumers and journalists through social media platforms. These interactions have eliminated long-standing barriers between journalists as producers of news content on the one hand and sources as receivers or consumers of news content on the other hand. Thus, introducing the notion that citizen journalism blurs the line between the two in dispersed digital spaces. With the rise of the digital revolution, media institutions have increasingly devoted additional time and resources to online deliberative mediums (Mare 2014). This sentiment is supported by Atton and Mabweazara (2011, p. 669), who propose that "the normalization of the mobile phone in both professional and 'everyday' life has led to a blurring not only of its uses but of the very structuring of the working day and thus of working relations between journalists and their sources." Exploring the rise of the digital revolution and mobile phones is important to this study because of the intrinsic connection that Generation Z have with mobile phones, to the extent that Smith (2017) calls them 'Mobile Prodigies', amongst other names. In addition, the digital revolution and mobile phones are important in this research in terms of how news outlets have adopted 'mobile-first' strategies as one of the ways to attract young audiences.

3.3 MOBILE PHONES

This research will incorporate an analysis of mobile phones as common news consumption devices. According to Smith (2017, p. 2) "the advance of Digital Natives and the advance of

[13] A separate section titled 'Understanding Digital Divides' has been dedicated in this research to explaining this conundrum.

mobile devices go hand-in-hand." Smith further explains that the use of smartphones also makes them sources of social connection, entertainment and information amongst their users. Mobile phones provide proof that Digital Natives are constantly and ubiquitously connected to the Internet. According to Chaffey (2016 in Smith 2017, p. 3), "51 percent of Internet time is spent on mobile devices and according to Global Web Index of 2016, 87 percent of Internet users own a smartphone." Smartphones are revolutionising the concept of mobile online access and seem to surpass the time spent on desktop computers.

In its first phase, the mobile phone made its commercial breakthrough in the 1990s where it was employed as a personal voice-communication tool. Its second phase occurred at the beginning of the new millennium and saw its technological architecture begin to change, encompassing convergence and multimedia functionalities. Westlund (2008, p 444) explains that "the mobile phone is no longer only a telephone; it has become a personal mobile device that integrates both communication and multimedia functionality." The multimedia functionality of mobile phones means that they can also process different content whether audio recorded, video broadcast, graphic illustrations, text format or animated mediums, and they are all interactive formats. Similarly, Wolf and Schnauber (2015, p. 761) also describe mobile phones as having advanced from being interpersonal tools to communicate to being "multi-optional mobile devices". Journalistic news content for mobile devices first became available at the start of the 1990s by Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) (Westlund 2013 in Wolf and Schnauber 2015).

The term "mobile device" is applied to this research to emphasise that the device has developed from simply being a phone and has advanced into a device that integrates multimedia formats. Wolf and Schnauber (2015) state that the mobile device offers unique qualities such as portability and an always-on connectivity. They explain that the feature of being portable enables users to be mobile by carrying their devices as they go about their lives. The always-on connectivity gives users access to latest news items at all times of the day, depending on network coverage. Sundet (2007 in Westlund 2008) shares a similar perspective, identifying the mobile device as a multimedia tool made of four key features, notably portability, always-on connectivity, its personal nature and small size. Molyneux (2018, p. 636), however, contends that "smartphones are distinguishable from other cellular phones by their larger screens, often measuring four to six inches on the diagonal." Although these two theorists present contending arguments, they nonetheless complement each other as they suggest similar characteristics or functionalities of the mobile device, particularly its definition as a multimedia

tool (Sundet 2007) and its capacity to apply advanced systems using software similar to a computer operating system (Molyneux 2018).

Mwaura (2017, p. 152) explains that "mobile phones are the most important digital platform in contemporary Africa." Mabweazara (2015, p. 2) concurs, arguing that "the unprecedented diffusion and pervasiveness of the mobile phone across social classes in Africa remains one of the most significant exemplars of the impact of digital technologies on the continent." Wasserman (2011) clarifies that this is the case because mobile phones in Africa are more accessible in relation to other communication technologies like personal computers and fixed-line telephones, which have not reached many parts of Africa. The mobile phones to which these theorists refer are the Internet-enabled ones which exemplify the digital revolution.

According to Wolf and Schnauber (2015, p. 761), mobile internet penetration is rapidly increasing worldwide. The *Mapping Digital Media: South Africa* (2012, p. 7) country report found that "there has been a high rate of mobile phone penetration, partial internet penetration (one third of South Africans have some form of at least limited internet access – usually provided by private mobile companies) and the growth of social networks such as Facebook (accessed by phone)." Therefore, with the ever-increasing number of mobile phones and with growing consumer understanding of how to use them, the question that arises is: *How are South African media companies innovating their news media content to attract young mobile users into audiences?*

According Atton and Mabweazara (2011), mobile phones have become critical in shaping everyday life, and important tools in enabling Generation Z to engage in and access social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Essoungou (2010 in Wasserman 2011) highlights that "apart from what may be considered more 'serious' uses of mobiles, Africans use mobiles in everyday life to take photographs, make films, search the Internet and increasingly for social networking." It is these varieties in functionalities that make mobile devices an "extremely versatile technology" (Ekine 2010).

Indeed, Generation Z in South Africa cannot be researched as separate from broader technological advances such as the mobile phone. These are "cultural technologies that play an indispensable role in the everyday lives of consumers and should be investigated in terms of the cultures of consumption that they create [as well as] how they fit in with larger cultural settings" (Goggin 2006, pp. 2-3). Therefore, one of the first questions that needs to be investigated when looking at the Generation Z cohort is to what degree are the theories about

mobile phones, convergence, digital media and other digital technologies mainly developed in the Global North play in the existence of this generational cohort in South Africa. Consequently, it is fundamental to investigate the function that mobile devices and the abovementioned technologies play in, and contribute to, the practices of Generation Z.

3.4 THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL COMPUTING

The new media consumer (largely made up of Generation Z) not a passive user of mass communication process. This new generation of consumers finds appreciates information that allows them an opportunity to engage with the content in making their views known (Otieno in Mdlongwa 2009, p. 21). In relation to this argument, Dye (2007 in Smith 2017, p. 3) states that a major characteristic of this generation is their urge to be active creators of content and mastering computer applications. Dye adds: "With Internet access and their own cloud storage, they can draw material from a myriad of sources and use a plethora of tools and outlets to produce their own unique content." So, the big question in Otieno's words is: "*What does the new consumer need/want?"* This relates to the rise of the "prosumer" and leads to further discussions on the potential of user-generated-content (UGC) on social media. This is further confirmed by Mwaura (2017, p. 153) who argues that "power in contemporary society lies in the interactions of networks created online."

The flexibility and personalisation of social media has seen the rise of UGC. Steenveld and Strelitz (2010 in Wasserman 2011) emphasise that citizen journalists contribute alternative forms of content through their mastered use of mobile phones. Such practices have been understood as bridging the divides between the mainstream media (journalists) and ordinary citizens. This process empowers the voices of citizens, enabling them to "rationally transmit their views and become represented in mainstream channels" (Wasserman 2011, p. 153).

These online networks are enabled by a web-based software known as "Web 2.0", which is the foundation for what is known as "social media" – a significant form of media to emerge in the last decade. According to Duarte (in Mdlongwa 2009, p. 26), Web 2.0 is "the functionality built into websites that allows people to more easily put their own information on them, to share it with others and collaborate with them." It is thus this interaction on Web 2.0 sites that is referred to as social media. Duffett (2017, p. 19) also notes that "social networking became much quicker with the arrival of the Internet and the globalization that accompanied it and this gave rise to innovative information communication technology (ICT) channels, which were

dubbed social media and/or Web 2.0." Duffett further observes that interactive digital technology such as social media have influenced about all aspects of young consumers everyday experiences. In relation to this, Turner (2015, p. 107) highlights that "Generation Z has formed such a digital bond to the Internet that they identify feeling emotionally attached to it and that they would be upset about [ever] having to give up an Internet connection."

3.4.1 Participation in News Content

South Africa has witnessed a proliferation of digital tools (social media networks) in recent years and these tools have been adopted by the Generation Z cohort. For instance, social media has resulted in novel communication practices and enabled a wider public participation in news processes. These participation practices occur on communication platforms such as Twitter and enable participatory forms of civic engagement by different generational cohorts. This development generates a diversity of voices in the discourses and points of view and incorporates that of the emerging Generation Z audience in the public sphere.

The PWC *South African Entertainment and Media Outlook: 2010–2014* report shares that "only 2 percent of South African internet users are 19 or younger even though this age group accounts for 40 percent of the population." Literature around the use of Twitter by journalists, for "breaking stories, life-sharing, opining and commenting", explains that "Twitter contributes to pluralism and more open engagement with the public spheres" (Daniels 2014, p.301). However, Malila et al. (2013, p. 423) explain that "the relationship between the media (particularly news and mainstream media) and young people in South Africa seems to be largely characterised by one-way traffic from the media to the youth." A survey conducted by Malila et al. (2013, p. 424) revealed that "young people consumed news media but did not use it as a means of engaging within the public sphere."

The type of public sphere projected by Habermas (1989) in his influential book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, according to Curran (1991, p. 29) "does not consider how the media relate to wider social cleavages in society." Instead, Curran (1991, p. 31) offers a substitute of the public sphere in which "the media articulate a complex web of vertical, horizontal and diagonal channels of communication between individuals, groups and power structures." Curran's alternative version is important to this study as it interrogates the

viewpoint of media users (Generation Z) as an initial argument in determining the public role of the media.

Similarly, some theorists have argued that social media allows for participation by the public and for the opening up of formerly exclusive spaces (Daniels 2014, p. 301). Wasserman (2011) acknowledges that critics have warned that mobile telephony as a new technology is not the "panacea for the problems besetting the African public sphere." Malila et al. (2013, p. 426) in their research provide that "young people need to see their reality reflected in all its diversity, in order for them to perceive the public space as one in which their participation is respected and taken seriously." How news media houses maintain a balance of generating a diversity of voices and catering to the diverse generations has sparked the interest for this thesis.

3.5 NORMATIVE DILEMMAS

According to Mabweazara (2015, p. 3), unsettling normative dilemmas that impede the appropriation of effective deployment of new technologies are the lack of digital skills faced by most African citizens; concerns regarding privacy infringements and copyright infringements. Other constraints and impediments relate to the poor infrastructure, low number of human capital and the high cost of accessing digital technology. Despite these limitations, Wasserman (2011, p.149) proposes that "there are strong indications that mobile phones have changed social practices on the continent." Southwood (2008 in Wasserman 2011, p. 149) characterises the reshaping of Africa's social geography as a result of mobile phone connectivity as "less walk and more talk". Berger (2004, p. 67) further emphasises that "convergence as regards cell phone platforms has been slightly more successful than the Web, if only because the business model was clearer." To support this argument Berger gives the example of IOL, which presented a service in partnership with Vodacom of delivering news through cell phones by way of SMS, which marked the start to a convenient mode of receiving news.

Mabweazara (2014, p. 8) observes that journalism in South Africa has a number of commonalities to that in Western media instead of the having shared commonalities with the wider African continent regarding the deployment of social media. Mabweazara further notes that the role that journalist's play on Twitter is not restricted to chasing tips for stories and broadcasting news, however, their role is extended to making comments on stories, and inviting news consumers to actively engage in current discussions (Ibid). This invites an investigation

into how newsrooms engage with news consumers, particularly with Generation Z, in these discussions. Therefore, the works of Mabweazara and Berger are most useful to this study as these works investigate the evolving African newsrooms. These works have helped in the analysis of South African media companies' strategies for Generation Z news media consumption and in answering the main research question which asks whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

3.5.1 Understanding Digital Divides

The unfolding digital revolution has invoked what Van Dijk (2005) and Berger (2005) term the digital divide, a crude observation that has been developed to explain the fragmented influence of new technologies in Africa. The idea tends to position experiences of digital technology Africa as the "normative other" when compared to the First World (Mabweazara 2015).

In order to understand the deployment of new digital technologies and their appropriations in Africa within the new digital era, requires certain contextual influences not to be overlooked. These contextual influences include "social, cultural, political and economic factors which lie outside journalism itself and indeed outside of any absolute consideration of the quality of journalism's products", such as the digital divide issue (Conboy 2013, p. 149 in Mabweazara 2016). Nyamnjoh (2005 in Malila et al. 2013) argues that the digital divide results from "unequal access to wealth and power [which] has implications for access to the media and that the extent and nature of these inequalities differ from society to society."

The digital divide notion is thus an important discussion point in this study considering the inequalities between the rich and the poor in terms of inadequate access to the various forms of digital technologies. These inequalities demonstrate that South Africa is in a social dilemma that is distinguished by a wide gap between the wealthy and the underprivileged. Wasserman (2011, p. 149) also argues that for many Africans, both mobile handsets and their running costs are too high cost to maintain and hence many Africans do not get to experience the full potential of the capabilities offered by mobile technologies. In addition, language complexities also play a contributory role to the consequent implications preventing Africans to be active agents in digital media platforms. For example, English dominates as a language of engaging on the Internet meaning that local language speakers are denied the full access to the Internet and news (Mabweazara 2014, p. 7). This research, therefore, acknowledges that surveying students

from Rhodes University would mean examining students that own mobile smartphones and have access to the Internet and consequently are not necessarily affected by digital divide experiences.

Scholars have observed that the print media industry continues to receive much of its profit from print publications rather than from receiving large profits from digital offerings. On the one hand, low profits may be resulting in the restriction to the Internet because of the high costs of data or the low ownership of internet enabled mobile phones, providing proof of the prevalence of the digital divide. On the other hand, low profits could be the result of a lack of payment mechanisms and a culture of offering 'free' online content. Even so, profits in the print media industry have fallen significantly in the past few years.

Wasserman (2011, p. 151) argues that "although Africa (with the exclusion of major urban centers) might not yet be as media-saturated as the Global North, one can increasingly say that Africans do not live with media but *in* media (italics mine)." For example, mobile devices are an essential part of people's lives, whether online/offline. The *Mapping Digital Media: South Africa* (2012) country report provides further support for this in a study released in 2011 which estimates that "39 percent of urban South Africans and 27 percent of rural users over the age of 16 [are] browsing the internet on phones, meaning that six million South Africans [have] internet access via mobile phone."

Mabweazara (2014, p. 2) provides the understanding that "when seen in comparison with the First World, there are indeed shortcomings and a dire need for catch-up in [Africa]." This backwardness he speaks of relates to "setbacks associated with the realities of 'access' to digital technologies", and "connects to the complexities and contradictions connected to the 'localised' diffusion and permeation of digital technologies in African newsrooms." Mabweazara (ibid) further explains that "despite these challenges and prevailing assumptions, there is no denying the fact that African newsrooms (as elsewhere) are experiencing the disruptive – somewhat cataclysmic – impact of new digital technologies on the way news is generated, disseminated and consumed by their audiences."

According to Berger (2005, p. 1) African journalists have made attempts to use digital technologies. Correspondingly, Nyamnjoh (2005, p. 4) argues that journalist in Africa are motivated to play their part in the technological revolution by creatively merging their unique practices with outside influences in order to formulate realities that "are not reducible to either but enriched by both". In similar sentiments, Mabweazara (2014, p. 3) suggests that journalists

in Africa need to be viewed as digital participants who have precast Internet tools to suit their special needs, by applying digital mediums effectively in a number of contexts.

Furthermore, Mabweazara (2014) states that while assessing the influence of new digital technologies is useful, what appears to be lacking in the analysis of the media are "detailed qualitative explorations of how newsrooms (and their journalists) are adjusting to the new digital context of practice, as well as an understanding of the structure of the ensuing transformations from an African perspective." This is due to the fact that several studies generalise the experiences of a small a number of countries and regions as being universally relevant (Wasserman 2010, p. 10). This is particularly problematic as there are unique experiences from Africa's diverse situations that demand examination as they reflect Africa's reality in the digital era. The *State of the Newsroom (SoN) SA, 2013* report concluded that "there was pressure for newsrooms to catch up with their audiences through experimentation with different platforms, as media consumer patterns [are] changing." This occurs as a result of the Internet becoming more portable and more readily available, meaning that audiences have a choice on how to consume information. Media is, therefore, being pressed to keep pace in order to maintain their relevance (Otieno in Mdlongwa 2009, p. 19).

Accordingly, Mabweazara (2014, p. 4) advises that "we should acknowledge the fact that technology by itself is not a relevant explanatory variable of emerging practices." Instead, we must acknowledge fast-changing technological aspects. Of equal importance is the exploration of the tangled interactions between previously established journalistic forms and contemporary technological possibilities.

3.5.2 'Second level digital divide' or 'User gap'

With the evolution of the Internet, studies regarding the digital divide have shifted from focusing on the variances between connected and disconnected Internet users. Instead, the focus has shifted to the divergent aspects of digital processes, which includes the skills and different uses of the Web. This stream of research is known as "the 'second level digital divide' (Hargittai, 2002) or the 'usage gap'" (van Dijk, 2005 in Correa 2016, p. 1096).

Even though Generation Z has had a great familiarity of new technologies, it is inevitable that the gaps in technology use between the different generations and even within the same generation is enduring. For example, as Correa (2016, p. 1103) notes, "young people are not a

uniform group in terms of Internet skills and use." Meanwhile, Helsper (2012 in Correa 2016) identifies that digital inequalities mirror structural inequalities, as evidenced by the notion the more educated a person is, implies greater opportunities for them to engage on the Internet as they are assumed to have more cognitive capacities. The second level digital divide was important to acknowledge in this research particularly in the choice of respondents as the researcher took on the assumption that interviewing 20 students, studying towards the same degree and from the same university had greater opportunities to engage on the Internet and particularly with news. Thus, this selection of respondents was assumed to be the best in providing rich data for this study because of their skills in using the Web and their great familiarity of new technologies.

3.6 CONCLUSION

From this chapter, the works of Deuze (2004), Berger (2005) and Mabweazara (2014) have been highlighted to show how they will be used in the forthcoming chapters as they can help this research analyse whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

First, the work of Deuze (2004) is important to this research because it examines contemporary newsrooms, media organisations and their emerging practices such as multimedia journalism and convergence as some of the strategies adopted in contemporary news production. Deuze provides the conceptualisation of journalism in terms of how the profession has been challenged and has changed in the context of current cultural (in terms of audience change) and technological developments. His works will help this research to gauge the extent to which South African media companies have adopted strategies to meet Generation Z news media consumption diets. Second, the works of Berger (2005) highlight the need for news organisations to provide creative strategies to rethink relations with audiences and competitors in response to new technology and the changing ecology of media worldwide. Third, the theories presented by Mabweazara (2014) about new media and journalistic practice in Africa will be used because they provide an analysis of the changing ecology of news, both within the user's information repertoire and changes in newsrooms from an African perspective. Mabweazara's work focusses on emerging trends in Africa like the consumption of news in the mobile age and the way news organisations have transitioned to mobile publishing. Overall, this work contextualises the changing role of news organisations and the growing new audience

to news consumption, which emphasises the need for this research to analyse whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

CHAPTER 4
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section discusses four theories which inform this study. The concepts of digitisation as explicated by Mark Deuze (2004), the network theory introduced by Alfred Hermida (2013), the convergence notion which is largely due to the work of Guy Berger (2004) and Lin Chao-Chen (2013), as well as media repertoire, a notion coined by Joey Reagan (1996); which was later extended by Elaine Yuan (2011) to include the study of news consumption. These four theories are used in this section to explain the media production practices of three South African news organisations, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings vis-à-vis Generation Z. Firstly, this section discusses the notion of digitisation in the African context in terms of how news organisations in Africa are impacted by digitisation and what this means for news consumption. This section will also discuss how journalism is in a stage of disruption, deploying the four theories as well as an examination of the proliferation of new media which has enabled an increase in the global news flow.

4.2 DIGITISATION IN AFRICA AND SOUTH AFRICA

Digitisation in South Africa is not a new phenomenon, as according to Tanja Bosch (2010) journalists in South Africa have been practising 'digital journalism'[14] for some time. For instance, newspapers in South Africa like the *Mail & Guardian* and the *Financial Mail* migrated to online platforms to practice digital journalism in the mid-1990s. According to Ben Scott (2005), digital journalism in the South African context is often a supplement to print and broadcast news media, instead of being a complement to traditional media.

South Africa has markedly different and well-funded media outlets with excellent newsroom infrastructures compared with the rest of the continent. Nonetheless, Mabweazara, Mudhai and Whittaker (2014) highlight that news organisations in Africa, are experiencing disruptive impacts as a result of digitisation, in similar ways to their counterparts in other countries.

[14] Digital journalism is about using digital technologies in researching, producing and distributing news content to a computer-literate audience such as Generation Z.

"Serious structural changes are underway – content is undergoing radical changes and old operational and business matrices have been disrupted." Furthermore, Mabweazara (2014, p. 2) notes that journalism in Africa as elsewhere in the global "Information Society" is being disrupted by the influence of new digital technologies in the processes of producing, distributing and consuming of news. This also means that the information needs of citizens in Africa are changing because of the influence by digital technologies, as such newsrooms and journalists are under pressure to adapt in various ways. Audiences are also establishing an online presence on digital spaces to follow the news. Consequently, most newspapers are using digitisation to replicate original content from their primary distribution channels which are normally print newspapers. Traditional print media use their online versions to offer supplementary content and interactive links to relevant sites, and they use online platforms as interactive opportunities for readers to engage with the news content through comments and links to blogs and opinion sites.

4.2.1 The spread of mobile devices and use of social media in Africa

Bosch (2010, p. 267) suggests that although there is an unequal access to technology across Africa, especially between the rural and urban communities, and even with the low numbers of people connected, people in South Africa are increasingly accessing the Internet by using mobile devices. Collectively, Moyo (2009) and Wasserman (2011) confirm that the pervasiveness of mobile phones throughout Africa can be noted as the most common examples of the influence of digital technologies in terms of developments in digital media on the continent. Mutsvairo et al. (2014, p. 4) also posit that "cell phone adoption has exploded all over the continent, so much so that today most Africans have access to a mobile device" and access the Internet and news via their mobile phones. Etzo and Collender (2010, p. 65) describe the increasing uptake of the mobile phone technology in Africa as a 'remarkable' phenomenon and a 'revolution'. Like the Internet, mobile phones play a central role in journalist's daily news making routines and practices.

The Pew Research Center (2018) for example, found an increasing ownership of smartphones in developing countries, especially within Sub-Saharan Africa. This research found the ownership of smartphones to be higher in South Africa, where about nine-in-ten adults own a mobile device. Basic phones such as feature phones were found to be the most common type of devices amongst Sub-Saharan Africans, except for South Africa where 51 percent of the population was found to own smartphones that connected to the internet and could access news

apps, and consequently, smartphone in South Africa were found to be the most common device in the country. The report further found that smartphone ownership had increased significantly from 2013 to 2017 in Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya.

The '*We Are Social and Hootsuite*' annual Global Digital Yearbook for 2019 found that "in January 2019, South Africa had an overall internet penetration rate of 54 percent, representing just over 31 million people are online in the country" (BusinessTech, 2019). The report further found growth in the country's activity in social networks, being at a rate of 40 percent of the population. Facebook was found to be the biggest platform for South Africa, with of 53 percent of users. Followed by LinkedIn with 18 percent users, Instagram with 9 percent of followers, Twitter with 4 percent and Snapchat 3 percent of subscribers.

While there is an increasing importance of cell phones in context of the South Africa, "it is the Internet in particular that has led to new types of participation and democratic possibilities" (Poster 1997 in Bosch 2010, p. 271). According to Kamau (2017, p. 129), Internet access is growing gradually in Africa with mobile internet adoption at about "24 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa" (Mobile Internet Connectivity 2019: Sub-Saharan Africa Factsheet). Additionally, social media use in Africa is on the rise, "with over 23 million people (40 percent of the total population) are actively engaging on social media (BusinessTech, 2019) and regularly using smartphones to access the Internet and social media (Statista, 2019)."

Regarding the youth in Africa, Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017, p. 73) explain that young people are mostly active on social networking sites and are receiving much of their news and other information online. The Pew Research Center (2018) report found that smartphones in Sub-Saharan Africa were also more likely to be owned by people ages 18 to 29 than people ages 50 and older. Internet use was also found to be more common among young people and those who are more educated than older generations and less-educated adults. Interestingly, despite the inadequate access to smartphones, reliable internet connectivity and high data costs in most African countries, "mobile data continues to be the most used means through which African millennials access the Internet." In addition, "60 percent" of youth in Africa use Facebook, Twitter and recently WhatsApp social networks as their primary sources of information (Wangari 2017, in the African Youth, GeoPoll Survey Reports).

Local uses of social media is not only widespread between citizens, but journalists are also embracing social media. For example, in South Africa, "not only the mainstream commercial media and small-scale local media are using digital media to practice journalism: smaller, non-

profit organisations and community media are also increasingly tapping into digital technologies, particularly online social media" (Bosch 2010, p. 270). Kamau (2017, p. 142) argues that social media is particularly important in Africa for it shapes and drives public opinion, guides online conversations, amplifies political messages and spreads propaganda messages. For example, Mutsvairo and Ragnedda (2017) mention that social media platforms in Malawi are considered platforms for political transformation. Similarly, Bosch (2017, p. 224) confirms that "social media has begun to play a central role in political activism in the global South, providing opportunities for a networked citizen-centred perspective."

4.2.2 Challenges facing African news organisations

News organisations in Africa are in an unprecedented state of a change in terms of news production and functions of journalism, thus, they face many challenges. Some of these challenges include the pressures of having to embrace technology and innovation, as well as having to deal with established professional ideals and functions of journalism that are threatened by new technology. As Paterson (2014, p. 259–260) observes, "most journalists operate in plural and complex contexts where conditions of news production are sometimes strikingly similar to what might be seen in any global news hub and, equally, sometimes fairly distant in terms of its goals and methods." Observing from a southern African perspective, Berger (2005, 10) similarly notes that "new technology use is integrated unevenly into newsrooms and there are major variations across the region in regard to problems of access. This, and the lack of proper training, constrains the use of technologies to their fullest."

Accone (2000, p. 69 in Mabweazara 2014, p. 3) submits that despite the challenges in the lack of digital skills, poor infrastructure and the high costs of access to technology encountered by many African citizens who are trying to successfully employ new technologies:

> "African journalists should hardly be viewed as second class Netizens. They have moulded Internet tools to suit their specific needs, devised ingenious technical solutions to overcome the idiosyncrasies of their situations, and continue to apply the medium [effectively in various contexts]."

As Mabweazara (2014, p.3) puts it, "what is particularly lacking are detailed qualitative explorations of how newsrooms (and their journalists) are adjusting to the new digital context of practice, as well as an understanding of the structure of the ensuing transformations from an African perspective" – henceforth, the impetus in this research is to analyse whether South

African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

In summary, Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017, p. 72) explain that notwithstanding the issue of the digital divide, the ownership of mobile smartphones is growing in Africa, giving citizens efficient access to social networking sites. Digitisation in Africa has forced African journalists to forge unique methods to practising journalism in their newsroom contexts in light of developments in technology and changes in the broad framework of news production. Although, news organisations still need to do much work in embracing digitisation in African newsrooms, Nyamnjoh (2005, p. 4) argues that Africans are willing to play their part in the technological revolution of the modern world. The exploration of digitisation in Africa, and particularly South Africa, is important to this research as it provides the valuable background and local context in which African media operate. Such context can help this research to deploy the four theories of digitisation, network theory, convergence and media repertoire to investigate whether the three South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

4.3 DIGITISATION THEORY

This research first discusses the impact of digitisation and digital media in social change and media consumption patterns. Digitisation, just like the 'digital first'[15] incorporation of social media, means "putting the digital product ahead of the traditional while ensuring social media are intrinsic to newsroom practices" (Daniels, 2016, p. 16). In addition, Chao-Chen (2013, p. 183) explains that technology is integral in redefining media content and role of journalism in the new digital age. Not much research has been conducted regarding the impact of digitisation, the Internet, mobile communication technologies and social media in terms of understanding the consumption habits of news by Generation Z in South Africa. What we do know in general, however, is that online news is distributed through news applications (apps), links, and particularly through search engines and recommendations (Berger in Mdlongwa 2009). Nevertheless, *The Mapping Digital Media: South Africa* (2012) country report finds that digitisation "is unlikely to facilitate major change in media and news, although it can be

[15] Digital first is a theory which means that news organisations shift in their organisational culture of favouring traditional channels to prioritising digital ones. A digital first decision in journalism means that the produced content is posted online, whereas in traditional journalism, the content is published on paper.

expected over time to expand choice and enable new entrants" of producers and consumers. In terms of new entrants, digitisation has opened the doors for an increasing number of content providers (like Yahoo and Google) or even user generated content through blogs or social media sites. All these providers are competing for advertiser attention and audience loyalty (Picard 2008 in Wolf & Schnauber 2015, p. 763). The report furthermore posits that digitisation has influenced media in three main ways:

- By giving media an online presence on digital platforms,
- By presenting opportunities to broadcast in digital formats, and
- By offering opportunities of engagement with mobile-phone users.

The importance of discussing digitisation in this research arises because the study of Generation Z is situated with and connected to the globalised technological context of rapid digitisation and globalisation. Heinrich (2012 p. 62) states that the trends of digitalisation and globalisation must necessarily be seen as interconnected mechanisms which have given rise to the gradually growing global flow of information. However, my research narrows this globalised technological context to the local South African one and to include social media, which has taken centre stage in the three newsroom environments under investigation and in the way audiences interact with news content. Deuze (2011, p.139) explains this interaction by stating that "we are indeed in a new communication realm and ultimately in a new medium, whose backbone is made of computer networks, whose language is digital and whose senders are globally distributed and globally interactive."

4.3.1 Fourth Wave

Much of the literature by scholars of journalism like Berger (2005 & 2012), Mdlongwa (2009), Mabweazara (2011, 2014 & 2015) and Deuze (2004 & 2011), among others, has focused on understanding digitisation in changing journalistic practices, processes and newsroom models. Recent literature such as that of Steensen & Ahva (2015) provide for the need to shift discussions about the signs of the so-called crisis of journalism and instead encourage a shift towards the more fundamental issues called "the fourth wave of research on digital journalism". Bosch (2010, p. 265) explains that digital journalism is, "the use of digital technologies to research, produce and deliver (or make accessible) news and information to an increasingly computer-literate audience," such as the Generation Z audience.

Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2009b in Steensen & Ahva 2015, p. 4) identify the fourth wave of journalism as "the global-comparative phase." This phase is marked by the pervasive nature

of information systems that have become global and digital. Steensen & Ahva (2015), posit that the global shifts link as "the digital age, in which established structures and practices of journalism lose their hold." This means that many borders are dissolved, including those between professionals and amateurs, mass media and interactive media, and borders that divide producers and consumers. Audiences that used to be passive consumers of media (Livingstone 2005) are now playing interactive roles in media, facilitated by Internet technologies. As a result, audiences are now actively involved in the "observation, selection, filtering, distribution and interpretation of events" (Hermida 2012, p. 816). These changes have brought about the need to rethink the function of journalism as well as to reassess theories of journalism.

However, as part of this research, it is also important to re-evaluate the position to which journalism and the media was theorised since the beginning of the 21st century. Even if Steensen and Ahva (2015, p. 4) note, "We must not jump to the conclusion that previously established theories are no longer valid in our digital and globalised age." This research uses literature that has focused on understanding new media technologies in media studies and journalism. This literature therefore suggests that there are systems that are always connected in creating new forms of interactions on news so as to allow users to maintain and engage in news media and events around them. A South African example of this is MyNews24 which is "News24's user-generated content platform, where the best photos, videos and articles submitted by South Africans around the world get to published" (MyNews24, 2019). African theorists such as Mabweazara (2015, p. 8) also explores the expansion of audiences' participation in news, for example, Mabweazara explores how Twitter enables participatory forms of engagement in Africa in terms of participation in democratic processes. Correspondingly, Wasserman (2011) notes that civil society institutions and news organisations in Africa are increasingly dedicating more time and resources to virtual discussion forums. Mabweazara (2014a) also argues that "the emerging widespread and innovative popular interactions are not only resulting in new forms of citizenship but are also *reinvigorating African journalism* (somewhat 'reforming' it by taking it back to reality) and reconnecting it with a disillusioned readership."

The fourth wave posited by Steensen and Ahva (2015) precedes "the normative, empirical and constructivist waves" (Domingo 2008). For instance, it investigates "the news ecosystem (Anderson 2010), the news landscape (Peters & Broersma 2013), ambient journalism (Hermida 2010) and 'networked' journalism (Heinrich 2011; Russell 2013) – which have all emerged mainly from practices related to social media" (Steensen & Ahva 2015, p. 1). According to

Schroeder (2018, p. 335), the theory of digital media or digitisation should consider how new media, for example multimedia journalism, has shaped the profession, which also makes the multimedia journalism discourse relevant to this research.

4.3.2 Multimedia Journalism

The media has been transitioning into a new media environment impacted by digital media and transforming into multimedia newsrooms. Wise (2000) claims that "digital media, new media, Internet, interactivity, virtuality and cyberspace are all used interchangeably with multimedia." The discourse of multimedia news-work, convergence and media cross-ownership are important in this research as they are increasingly becoming part of contemporary newsrooms and media organisations.

Multimedia journalism is defined by Deuze (2004) as "the presentation of a news story package on a website using two or more media formats, such as (but not limited to) spoken and written words, music, moving and still images, graphic animations, including interactive and hypertextual elements." News story packages are integrated and presented in various media forms, such as websites, mobile apps, radio and television broadcasts, print newspapers and magazines. Klinenberg (2005, p. 56) posits that for newsroom managers, "directing a multimedia company requires ensuring that a sufficient level of content meets the needs of each medium." This is how converged news media companies operate. Through co-operation and collaboration, multimedia newsrooms are fully integrated and facilitate the convergence of staff within divergent newsrooms to collaborate in gathering information and planning news packages that can be supplied across all media (Deuze 2004, p. 141). Companies do this by forming "cross-media[16] cooperation or synergy between formerly separated staffers, newsrooms and departments" (Deuze 2004, p. 142). This relates to the need to understand how South African media companies are integrating multimedia newsrooms into their daily operations, a subject which is of interest to this research.

Deuze's contextualisation provides a perspective on how this integration process potentially shapes and influences Generation Z. This is because the adoption of a multimedia process uniquely results from the influence of the Internet, which is the backbone of Generation Z. It is, therefore, important for news organisations to promote, re-purpose or exchange news as a cross-media practice as trends in people's news habits vary. The Stanford Poynter Project

[16] According to Erdal (2007, p.52), "crossmedia communication refers to a process whereby more than one media platform is engaged at the same time in communicating related content."

(2000 in Deuze 2004, p. 146-147) asserts that although people read more of their topics of interest online, they do however consult print media if they find interesting topics. Furthermore, according to Nielson and Morkes (1997), previous studies suggest that creating content for online platforms demands a special understanding of the shifting habits and expectations of users as they read online. The explanation provided by Deuze (2004) is important as Generation Z perceive their world as characterised by high speed processes in of news productions. Generation Z multitask and are actively involved in the simultaneous creation and consumption of communication through various media. This has seen the proliferate adoption of contemporary media networks such as Twitter by a new generation of audiences– which brings forth the network theory as one of the most relevant for answering the main research question of this research.

4.4 NETWORK THEORY

In the continuous growth of digital media, the Internet and media globalisation, Generation Z are also taking part in global social networks which shape their perceptions and inform their decisions. Accordingly, Turner (2015, p. 109) explains that technology has become the "go-between for individuals' interactions [and] society has grown accustomed to being increasingly networked as individuals rather than socially embedded in group." According to the *2018 African Gen Z Report*, "social media interaction has become an integral part of content consumption for the digital native generation" and Twitter is an appropriate example of a high-speed networked platform important in satisfying this young user group's demands of getting media content instantly. Prensky (2001a in Smith 2017) explains that digital natives operate better when connected to social networks and today those social networks are online. As such, they have mastered functioning online as they live online (Friedrich et al. 2010 in Smith 2017).

Network theory explains that Twitter is a type of platform that facilitates social networking. Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211 in Hermida 2013, p. 297) define Twitter as

> "[a] web-based service that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system."

This definition exemplifies Castells' (2007, p. 248) "notion of mass self-communication." The emphasis of mass self-communication is that a networked social media technology like Twitter

enables users to produce self-generated content and share that content through many-to-many communication.

Castells explains that “mass self-communication is a new communication realm within a new medium of computer networks and ultimately a digital landscape whose senders are globally distributed and interactive” (2007, p. 139). This means that the network involves not only the person sending the message but also other users, thereby creating a networked audience. As a result, convergence creates “additional possibilities and incentives to repackage or to repurpose media content into as many different formats as is technically and commercially feasible” (Vukanovic 2009, p. 82).

News organisations are using services like Twitter as an opportunity to promote and supply their content (Hermida et al. 2012, p. 815). In doing this, they can place their communication in as many media channels and services as vehicles that those messages to any geographic locations and that can be accessed by a multitude of consumers (Doyle 2002, p. 22 in Vukanovic 2009, p. 82). Studies such as the one by Java et al. (2007, p. 2 in Hermida 2010, p. 3) that investigated why users of online media have the urge for high speed in communicating messages, found that people, including Generation Z use instant platforms like Twitter, for four reasons: “daily chatter, conversation, sharing information and reporting news”. Consequently, Twitter has become a dominant strategy for content providers.

Twitter facilitates the collaboration in creating and curating news, making it a platform that fosters networked flows of communication. Hermida (2013, p. 295) asserts that “Twitter has developed as a digital network for real-time news, affecting news production and online consumption.” Hermida (2013), therefore, argues that Twitter is a networked communication platform that involves a hybrid, or rather converged approach of old and new formats of news production. Network theory will be valuable in this research because it suggests that new paradigms of journalism are emerging, such as multimedia journalism and network economy, i.e. “an economy in which the relationships among its members is a product of the information they exchange” (Evans & Wurster, 1997 in Vukanovic 2009, p. 84). The value of the network economy in this research will be to show that information online can easily move at high speed and without any spatial constraints. Furthermore, that formerly separated staff, newsrooms and departments are experiencing cross-media cooperation or synergy.

This study contributes to research that proposes that social media has become dominant when studying news experiences of people. Cela (2015, p. 195) theorises that social media is a new

form of a public sphere. This makes users of social media to be mediated publics who gather publicly through mediated technology on social networking sites. These new networked forms of the public sphere have become places where audiences can share, deliberate and contribute to news. Hermida et al. (2012, p. 816) further argue that "social networking sites represent an evolution of the public sphere, where the dynamics of publication and distribution of news are being reshaped by networked publics." Therefore, investigating how the networked Generation Z are repurposing the news and reframing news flows, if indeed they are, can contribute to the knowledge creation regarding the changing relationships amongst journalists and audiences – and in answering the main topic of this research: whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

4.4.1 Twitter in the newsroom

Posetti (2009) highlights that "there has been a rapid uptake of Twitter by media professionals, with many news outlets considering Twitter an essential addition to a reporter's toolkit." The speed and immediacy of Twitter has seen many newsrooms eagerly adopting it as a tool to spread breaking news in seconds. Farhi (2009) adds that Twitter has also become a means of searching for story ideas, finding sources and linking facts. Similarly, the *State of the Newsroom, South Africa: Disruptions Accelerated* report (Daniels 2014, p. 1) asserts that "Twitter [has] morphed from being tangential to a fundamental part of newsroom practices; it [has] become an essential newsroom tool". Indeed, one of the important points noted in the research is that "journalists spend, on average, at least 15 to 20 minutes out of every hour on twitter and much more if they are live-tweeting events" (Daniels 2014, p. 61).

Singer et al. (2011 in Hermida et al. 2012, p. 817) correspondingly argue that news organisations disseminate news content on their websites by adding social networking functionality that encourage users to 'like', 'tweet', comment or share a story. This practice is frequently used by journalists when they tweet the leading story by a click to a link that leads directly to their news organisation's website. Most mainstream news media appoint digital journalists who create a presence for their news institutions in the Twittersphere. Their work involves the practices of "speed, fast decision-making, hastiness and working in accelerated real-time" (Deuze 2005). Twitter has, therefore, renewed the idea of the "right here, right now" credo of journalism and applied it to new journalism processes on the Internet, thereby enabling journalists to work in what Berkowitz (2011 p. 22) calls a "non-stop 24/7-digital environment."

The speed employed by Twitter has an essential value and problematic consequence to news work. For instance, Twitter has affected professional journalists by enabling eyewitnesses who often provide the first-hand accounts of photos and visual clips of an events to acquire the status of citizen journalists as they perform similar tasks to those of established journalists. This has seen the rise in user-generated content and practices of citizen journalism. Hermida calls this type of citizen or participatory journalism micro-blogging, wherein citizens make their own reports without option to consult institutional journalists (Thurman and Hermida 2009). Similarly, Deuze (2005, p. 452) described this citizen journalism as a shift from "individualistic, 'top-down' mono-media journalism to team-based, 'participatory' multimedia journalism." Increasingly, the trend in news reports of events come from people reporting live at events and package the news a 280-character message.

While using Twitter as an example of how social media is employed to crowdsource the news, this research argues that the Internet challenges the journalism practices and the media to constantly reposition and redefine itself to ensure its relevance within the era of Generation Z. This presents a shift away from the "classical paradigm of journalism as a framework to provide reports and analyses of events through narratives [thus] producing an accurate and objective rendering of reality" (Dahlgren 1996).

Drawing on the methodology of qualitative research interviews about social media, this research seeks to explore the use of Twitter as a new media form of providing complex ways of reporting news to the always-on Generation Z. As a connection-oriented communication (Kuwabara et al. 2002), Twitter enables citizens, including Generation Z, to maintain "a mental model of news and events around them" (Hermida 2010, p. 5). In this context, Markopoulos et al. (2009) in Franklin (2013, p. 217) considers Twitter "a computer-mediated communication system, intended to help people construct and maintain awareness of each other's activities, context or status, even when the participants are not co-located". The always-on system creates the desired atmosphere of news consumption and functionality through personalisation. Hermida et al. (2012, p. 815) explain that "networked media technologies are extending the ability of users to create and receive personalized news streams." For example, Twitter can provide shared links that are gathered from articles read in a shared network, thus, providing a diverse combination of news items, information and an awareness about the articles read by others in your network (Hermida 2010, p. 8).

Industry observers Smith (2017), who studies mobile advertising to digital natives, and Palfrey and Gasser (2008), who study aspects of digital natives, have described Generation Z as having a short attention span. As such, Twitter, as an alert system that always updates messages instantly and in short fragments, does not overburden an individual with (lengthy) information as it only makes the user aware of an event in the form of a 280-character message. However, the criticism against Twitter may be that it can overburden or inundate an individual with the number (amount) of messages received, rather than the length of the message. The *2018 African Generation Z Report* (2018, p. 4) reiterates that Generation Z have a low concentration span when compared to earlier generations as they are inundated with information and communication channels 24/7.

Generation Z's use of technology advances the idea suggested by Hermida (2010, p. 7) that the future will be dominated by technologies and these technologies will develop to a phase where they become entrenched to the point that they will be undetectable as a part of people's lives. The challenge for news institutions is, therefore, that technology has been entrenched since the birth of Generation Z and is forever embedded in their everyday life. The difficulty lies in how to attract the attention of a generation used to interconnected digital systems.

4.5 CONVERGENCE THEORY

The rise of the notion of media convergence came into studies about media in the 1990s, largely by the work of Nicholas Negroponte and driven by the developments in technology. Berger (2004, p. 48) elucidates: "The term 'convergence' has typically come to refer in the first instance to the phenomenon of technological homogenisation via digital data, in which development opens up unforeseen possibilities for diverse enterprises to expand and/or collaborate." For example, the convergence of content allows for the same content to be simultaneously supplied either as written text, as audio, in visual form or posted on the Internet. From a media-centred standpoint, Berger (ibid) explains that at the start of the mid-90s, convergence in terms of technology provided print and broadcast outlets an opportunity to expand their businesses to the online media domain. Similarly, in a much-simplified way, Chao-Chen (2013, p. 185) offers the definition of convergence to mean the meeting of two or more things. However, the definition of convergence in terms of news media remains complex and argued as to what exactly is coming together (Kolodzy 2006 in Chao-Chen 2013). Convergence enables integration of previously separate mass media and is facilitated by

digitalisation and electronics. Electronic technologies bring all methods of communications (conversations, news, and text) into a single system as explained by de Pool (1983 in Chao-Chen 2013). The notion of media convergence is often argued from a technical perspective in terms of how audiences receive their information.

Chao-Chen (2013, p. 183) argues that old media and new media have become more similar than dissimilar, adding that they have become hazy as "they have undergone convergence through an unprecedented process of webification, thereby creating an unprecedented form of journalism." Furthermore, adding to Chao-Chen's argument, Papacharissi (2015, p. 29) posits that that the distinctive role between those who produce content and those who consume it has faded, thereby underlining the production and consumption of news has become hybrid. This means that traditional ecologies of journalism as regulators and moderators of public discourse are evolving, and as a result, the practices of creating and consuming news can be described as "produsage" by Papacharissi (2015). Bruns (2008 in Papacharissi 2015, p. 29) explains that "'prodused' feeds of storytelling emerge out of user-led collaborative content creation, driven by citizens and journalists using networked media in ways that challenge the traditional dichotomies of production and consumption." This practice occurs as people participate in the news by sharing, forwarding and commenting on it as well as citizens making or producing news and setting news agendas. Smith and Rainie (2010 in Hermida et al. 2012, p. 817) found that Twitter was a was the most used platform in sharing news through retweeting and the distribution of news links on Twitter highlights the role of social recommendation (An et al. 2011). The resulting pattern is a challenge to existing hierarchies within the production, distribution and consumption of news.

Convergence theory is important to consider in this research because it argues that convergence is altering traditional social relations, legacy media and society by creating a so-called networked society through the convergence of social networks, content creation and the sharing of information (Picard 2011, p. 15). This theory will also assist in understanding how news organisations are responding to changes in news production and distribution practices in terms of how they are now able to extend their news offerings to other media channels.

4.5.1 Newsroom Convergence

Contemporary newsrooms and media organisations are increasingly adopting the discourse convergence, cross ownership of media and increasingly producing multimedia news work. Chao-Chen (2013, p. 187) explains that "convergence has also occurred in media ownership,

as convergence does not happen to individuals but to organizations. This includes the convergence of ownership and business strategies." Newsroom convergence reflects the merging of media and acquisitions between media groups as a means of responding to the ongoing digitisation of media forms – as will be seen in the case study of the three media companies chosen in South Africa Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings.

According to Singer (2004, p. 839), convergence that occurs within the newsroom has a narrow implication when linked to the change taking place in the way "journalists handle the products and practices of their working lives." This is especially true of the established collaboration amongst journalists working for print publications, television broadcasters and online outlets in relating a story to as many audiences that can be reached using several delivery systems. In addition, Deuze (2005, p. 457) asserts that "this potential of multi-perspective news narratives adds more complexity to journalistic storytelling." Convergence takes different forms in different news organisations as will be shown in the case study of the three converged South African mainstream newsrooms which form the basis of this research. Consequently, convergence has become inevitable and a good survival approach for media companies in response to changes in the journalism field which since the start of the 21st century. Klinenberg (2005, p. 54) says that "in the new media newsroom, journalists have to become *flexible laborers,* reskilled to meet demands from several media at once." Chao-Chen (2013) adds that organisations that focus on achieving convergence are most likely to restructure themselves.

The three media companies chosen for this research have, over the years, merged with smaller daily newspapers as a form of convergence. McCombs (1972, p. 56 in Berger 2004, p. 51), in a study on the economic constraints of mass media suggests that "the observed disappearance through merger and suspension of dozens of daily newspapers was economically inevitable." Marthoz (1999, p. 75) also notes that news organisations that have merged, experienced take-overs and those that formed alliances have become very powerful media groups. However, some scholars such as Chao-Chen (2013, p. 188) note that these types of partnerships are not necessarily equivalent to convergence. This is because convergence in journalism is mainly assumed to be about the movement of content between multiple media platforms. So, instead, some scholars use the term synergy to describe the phenomenon of merging. Furthermore, they argue that "most of the cooperation between newspapers and TV stations is not convergence but merely the product of print and electronic media targeting different demographic groups" (Chao-Chen 2013).

Berger (2004, p. 64) provides a brief understanding of what occurred with two (Media24 and Independent News & Media) of the three investigated media companies. He explains that Naspers merged the content of various publications into what is today known as Media24 and hired many separate staff to customise content. "Independent Newspapers gathered together stories from its publications around the country, added a heavy dose of news agency content and produced the content-rich news-site IOL.co.za" (ibid).

The three media companies in this study have been purposefully chosen for the reasons that Mabweazara (2014, p.6) suggests "South Africa stands apart from the rest of English-speaking Africa as its media infrastructure is predominantly well-funded, with excellent newsroom infrastructure and so markedly different from the rest of Africa's corresponding structure". Therefore, the three media companies provide testimony to what Mabweazara (2014) claims and will be studied in order to widen and improve the understanding of where media houses in South Africa are positioned in the revolutionising media age.

Technological convergence is not the only important phenomena in media development, hence the focus on other digital-first media theories. However, Berger (2001) suggests that technological convergence has the power to facilitate other forms of convergence. The theories of digitisation, network theory and convergence reveal a need to rethink media theory in terms of how media transform and perceive generational change. These media theories, as Schroeder (2018, p.323) observes, have been responsible for some of the most wide-ranging changes in society.

4.5.2 Convergence in news content

Convergence is not only a technological process, as another of its key components is content. New digital media technologies assist in producing news content that is more attractive than traditional news. Chao-Chen (2013, p. 192) reveals that "new media are the major news sources for the traditional media." This suggests that within the era of digital news, traditional media make use of emergent digital media technologies as a way of increasing their news sources and diversifying their news. For example, Facebook has been used as a source of news, wherein news stories are occasionally published in the newspaper based onto the comments[17] of

[17] This strategy is further revealed in the data analysis chapter 6 whereby Media24's *Daily Sun* newspaper explained its implementation of using audience comments in reproducing its news content, as a response to research question one, which asked: *What strategies are the news editors from your media organisation involved*

Facebook users (Chao-Chen 2013, p. 192). This is an example of how new media content is being used as the subject of reports in traditional media and this will be shown as a strategy used by Media24's *Daily Sun* newspaper.

Chao-Chen (2013, p. 189) explains an important aspect of the digitalisation process, namely that the news content is merged because various media was used in communicating the news. According to Pavlik (2001 in Chao-Chen 2013), new media is experiencing changes in the way that news is reported in four ways:

- Technologies shift traditional methods of producing news messages;
- The journalism practice is undergoing a remodelling process;
- The news industry and the structure of newsrooms is undergoing a transformation;
- The link amongst news outlets, journalists and members of the public are being re-organised within the new media sphere.

New media has created new challenges for contemporary news producers, who now experiment with different ways of news making and use convergence strategies to re-structured news content. This includes the blurring of audience produced and professional content. In terms of the African context, Mutsvairo and Ragnedda (2017, p. 148) posit that African digital spaces facilitate convergence of communication channels and have allowed content users to take on a combined role as 'produsers' and consumers of information. However, Mabweazara (2014, p. 8) contends that "much work still needs to be done in embracing convergence practices in African newsrooms."

4.6 MEDIA REPERTOIRE

Reagan (1996) invented the term "information repertoire" to refer to "the set of media sources that a person consistently selects for information." Wolf and Schnauber (2015, p. 761) similarly define information repertoire "as the combination of multiple media sources a person uses regularly for news and service content". Yuan later (2011) extended the notion of repertoire to include news consumption studies by proposing a repertoire-oriented approach to studying news consumption.

The theory of media repertoire is valuable in this research as it explores the multiple use of media platforms by news consumers. Yuan (2011) states that the news consumption behaviour

in to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media?

of audiences has meant that people tend to depend on multiple news media to consume news. According to Yuan (2011, p. 999), "empirical evidence for news consumption across multiple media sources seems to reify the concept of media convergence, which emphasizes the trend that diminishing technological boundaries of media enable content to travel across various media platforms." This means that news audiences now have an opportunity of selecting news that interests them within an abundance of mass media. As such, "researchers anticipate a growing degree of audience fragmentation and even polarization" (Yuan 2011, p. 999).

The approach by Yuan suggests that individual news users arrange their personal news repertoires to meet their news needs through the integration of several media platforms. This is important because contemporary media environments have offered an opportunity for rapid developments in digital and mobile media technologies. These allow news users to take advantage of media which provide information on current events by presenting more diverse mediums and more options to content genres. Users have higher flexibility and dominance over selecting which content they want; and media convergence personifies these new media settings (Henry Jenkins 2004 in Yuan 2011).

The ongoing technological development and organisational convergence in news media have been acknowledged as more than just technological changes. Jenkins (2004 in Yuan 2011, p. 1000) posits that "we should understand media convergence not only as 'a top-down corporate-driven' but also as 'a bottom-up consumer driven' process." This involves a process in which media users draw on various media technologies in order to gain a greater control over the ownership of media. Accordingly, this theoretical proposition suggests that audiences have a choice when consuming different media forms and the types of content that gratify their particular information needs. Today's audiences consume news media from an abundance of media options, and they can opt to use multiple media channels that are convergent in terms of presenting similar or overlapping information that serve the same functions. Researchers Webster (2005) and Sunstein (2007) in Yuan (2011, p. 1001) expect audience fragmentation to grow as news audiences exercise choice of selectivity in their news consumption habits thanks to the abundance of media content available across a number of sources, hence, the importance of exploring the media repertoire theory.

In conclusion, the repertoire-oriented method emphasises that news users have an omnivorous news diet and engage with media messages actively. It considers media users as independent users who select media based on to their particular requirements, as will be further illustrated

in the analysis of Generation Z consumption habits. News consumers also select their media messages influenced by perceptions into the credibility of news.[18] According to Yuan (2011, p. 1003) "users attribute different levels of credibility to media sources" and Kiousis (2001) emphasises that "credibility plays an important heuristic role in content selection in an information-rich environment." The analysis of the role that credibility plays in the news practices of Generation Z comes from the responses to the fourth research question which asked Generation Z whether they regard social and online media as a relevant source of news.

4.7 A STATE OF UPHEAVAL

The journalism profession is experiencing disturbances because of the proliferation of new media which has increased the supply of news (Herbert 2009 in Chao Chen 2013, p. 183). This is a result of more people participating in creating content, thereby contributing to mass media. Although the technological developments seem to benefit journalism when news is gathered, distributed and exhibited. Tsui (2009 in Chao-Chen 2013, p. 184) argues that "there is also a sense that technology is responsible, partially or wholly, for a decline [in] journalistic standards." This means that not everything about convergence is desirable. Klinenberg (2005, p. 59) remarks that the increased pace of work has disregarded certain steps in the news production process, "mainly by reducing the time available to report, research, write, and reflect on stories." Picard (2011, p. 13) also argues that digitisation and convergence are increasing the over-supply of content and "reducing some of the monopolistic control over distribution systems." This means that previously dominant news providers can no longer benefit from being single distributors of messages and must adjust to a power shift that gives users control over content.

Literature by Singer (2004) suggests that convergence processes are generally considered to pose challenges to news organisations and so threaten a traditional news culture, particularly the professional journalist who used to determine what audiences saw, heard and read about the world. Other challenges identified include grasping news gathering and packaging news messages in all media formats - known as multi-skilling - and the new producer-consumer

[18] Generation Z's perceptions of news credibility is revealed in the data analysis chapter 7 whereby the responses to research question four, which asked: *Do you regard social and online media as a relevant source of news?* revealed that credibility is notably important in Gen Z news consumption practices.

relationship. For example, one challenge that reporters go through in the new news environment is that, "the more they work with different media, the more they realize that content does not move easily from one medium to the next, and therefore they must develop techniques for translating work across platforms" (Klinenberg 2005, p. 55).

Furthermore, Deuze (2004) posits that the managers and editors of new media companies are faced by the challenge of maintaining a hybrid system of balancing expectations of newly converged newsroom processes with existing cultures, routines and practices, and having them work side by side. Convergence also affects both newsroom culture and content, with cultural resistance being the biggest hurdle facing traditional journalists. What is apparent from this text is that "a 'one way' approach of doing things can never work in today's converging media world" (Deuze 2014, p. 149). This is because convergence requires digital journalists to adopt multimedia by making use of various media and offering more information across multiple platforms to satisfy the changing preferences of audiences.

4.8 CONCLUSION

While all four of these theories (i.e. digitisation, network theory, convergence and media repertoire) are equally important to this research, the network theory appears to be the most significant as it encompasses digital media, the Internet and media globalisation, as consumers in Africa take dominance in global social networks used mainly for facilitating protest participation and increasing engagement in collective action. Network theory holds further relevance as it encourages cross-media cooperation or synergy between previously separate newsroom staff. This theory also captures the platforms for networked flows of information which facilitate the dissemination of news content including Twitter, which has been adopted by news organisations in Africa as a way of providing news to consumers. For example, Twitter has afforded South African youth a chance participate in political dialogs that they would not otherwise have engaged with in other media (Bosch 2017, p. 225). Consequently, the network theory offers an approach to answering the main question of this research which investigates whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is aimed at gaining detailed knowledge of Generation Z's news consumption and whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences. As such, it adopted multiple qualitative research approaches in order to meet the study's objectives. This chapter explains what qualitative research entails, as well as why this approach was chosen. Once this is established, I discuss the research methods that were adopted, namely in-depth interviews consisting of standardised questions that were applied to single interviews. In addition, purposive sampling was applied to studying the three South African news organisations, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings, as well as the 20 Generation Z respondents. I then provide brief descriptions of the respondents (i.e. the news editors from the three news organisations and 20 Generation Z) who were involved in the study, showing how the interviews were conducted and how ethical factors were considered during the research process. This section also outlines some of the general principles of Discourse Analysis, which is crucial to analysing the themes that come out of the interviews.

5.2 PRODUCTION AND AUDIENCE STUDIES

This research combines the study of news productions and the study of audiences to research news journalism and young audiences, the 20 Generation Z respondents. On the one hand, "production studies are a tradition within media studies, part of the broader field of research on journalism in general, that focus on the conditions of production and the processes behind media content or media institutions in action" (Erdal 2009, p. 2). On the other hand, an audience study encompasses a wide range of theoretical perspectives in studying why and how audiences are engaging with media. Audience studies research also focuses on the links between audiences and the media content, media organisations and technologies that they use to engage.

Combining production and audience studies can help to better predict audience content preferences within the media landscape which has advanced to include new technologies that

have given rise to new patterns of media production and audience behaviour. This is in terms of news consumption and the numerous platforms on which audiences can consume news. The changes brought about by the new media landscape have been so remarkable that some scholars like Bouvier and Machin (2018, p. 181) have questioned the continued use of the term 'audience' as news consumers are no longer just receivers of news content, but are also now creators of news content and, thus, have shifted to use the term 'users'.

5.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative methodology is employed, as a "theoretical and philosophical system that structures the way research is conducted" (Guba 1990 in Slevitch 2011, p. 75). What differentiates the qualitative methodology from the quantitative approach is based on the philosophies of ontology and epistemology (Slevitch 2011, p. 75). The qualitative methodology from ontological and epistemological perspectives is based on the research philosophy to interpret differences between people (Deshpande, 1983; Sale et al. 2002 in Slevitch 2011, p. 76). Idealism relates to an ontological view which asserts that reality depends on a person's interpretation of others' experiences based on the social and psychological perceptions that the individual holds. In contrast to quantitative epistemological perspective, respondent's answers in the qualitative perspective can only be described in terms of how we perceive or interpret them, rather than being described as they really are. For this reason, epistemology in qualitative research is defined as subjectivist because "facts cannot be separated from values, absolute objectivity is viewed as unattainable and truth as a matter of socially and historically conditioned agreement" (Slevitch 2011, p. 77).

This means that the qualitative methodology is based on the following epistemological grounds: "an inquirer can only offer his or her interpretation (based on values, interests and purposes) of the interpretations of others (based on their values, interests and purpose)" (Slevitch 2011, p. 77). Thus, the inquirer can understand the research issue through describing the experiences of the research participants. In accordance with this, Slevitch (2011, p. 78) further argues that, "qualitative methodology does not pursue objectivity and generalizability because both conditions are viewed as unachievable from ontological and epistemological perspectives."

The qualitative methodology enables the researcher to search for concepts and themes that provide the best explanation of "what is going on" in an inquiry. The researcher does this by applying interpretive methods such as those applied in "hermeneutics, ethnography, phenomenology and case studies" (Hellström 2008 in Slevitch 2011, p. 78). The patterns and themes of analysis emerge from the qualitative data collected from respondents and the inquirer interprets the results according to selected theoretical frameworks, and ontological and epistemological positions.

5.3.1 Interviewing as a Method for Qualitative Research

Interviews are the most common method of collecting qualitative data. Knox and Burkard (2009, p. 566) explain that "at the root of interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience." Therefore, the research questions to be asked through a range of approaches, whether unstructured or structured with pre-set and standardised questions must be well thought.

The approach undertaken in researching Generation Z involves the use of standardised interviews which serve to place each respondent in the same interview experience. "Any differences are assumed to be due to variations among participants rather than to differences in the interview process itself" (Singleton & Straits 2002 in Knox and Burkard 2009, p. 567). Consequently, standardised interviews have an advantage of resulting in greater uniformity across respondents. While the disadvantage in terms of responses may be that external unique and rich experiences of the participants that are not interrogated in the interview questions remain uncovered because of the highly structured protocol of pre-set questions that normally require a conclusive answer.

The first set of respondents interviewed were news editors of the publications from the three media organisations, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings. Steinar (1996) explains that the qualitative research interview is about trying to describe and make sense of what the interviewees say. Similarly, McNamara (1999) says that interviewing is a useful method to understand the story behind a participant's experiences. This qualitative methodology helped to provide a snapshot of the situation regarding Generation Z and asked in what way's media organisations are responding with changing or revolutionising media platforms. Knox and Burkard (2009, p. 571) explain that "interviews have become such an important tool to qualitative researchers that many qualitative methods rely heavily or solely on them as the primary mechanism for data collection."

5.4 PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING – THREE MEDIA COMPANIES

The selection of respondents in terms of the three news organisations (Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings) only covered digital news editors and excluded top management and general news reporters who form a much larger staff contingent of the three news organisations. This approach can be characterised as a purposeful or strategic sample. Elo et al. (2014, p. 4) suggest that content analysis studies commonly use purposive sampling methods. Adding that "purposive sampling is suitable for qualitative studies where the researcher is interested in informants who have the best knowledge concerning the research topic." Hence, this research selected digital news editors as the research participants for this study as they are assumed to have the best knowledge in answering the research topic, whether their news channels are making a provision for Generation Z news media consumption.

In using purposeful sampling, the researcher had to decide who was to be sampled and decide on the form of sampling that should be taken as well as deciding on the number of participants to be sampled. According to Creswell (2013), the researcher using purposive sampling should provide full details in terms of the description of the sampling method otherwise this method may be a disadvantage as it becomes challenging to measure or weigh the trustworthiness of the sample.

5.5 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The news editors were all asked five questions and single interviews were conducted with each participant. Single interviews were considered as the most prevalent approach and preferred because access to participants (i.e. news editors) was difficult and it was possible to effectively examine the topic in a single interaction.

The news editors were asked the following questions:

6. What strategies are the news editors from your media organisation involved in to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media?
7. Does Generation Z influence you as a news organisation? If so, how? And if not, how are they not influencing the organisation?
8. Could there be a gap between Generation Z's news consumption and your news offerings, given that there is a decline in traditional/legacy media consumption?

9. What are your ideas to turn mobiles into audiences: Do you try to do this?
10. Is Generation Z shaping the future of news consumption?

These research questions point toward the theoretical constructs that frame this research such as the notions of digitisation, mobile media and mobile phones, web 2.0 and social computing. As Maxwell (2005, 68 in Agee 2009, p. 437) explains, "research questions need to account for one's 'tentative theories about phenomena'." Other researchers like Yin (1994) suggest that the research questions must be informed by a theoretical framework because "theory helps to define the selection and parameters of cases." According to Agee (2009, p. 438), qualitative questions can point to theory, "either explicitly or implicitly" as a way of directing and providing a framework for ideas that can assist the inquiry to understand the research topic conclusively. Flick (2006 in Agee 2009, p. 439) argues that "qualitative studies can reveal how people experience and think about events and social relations, so a qualitative question needs to be developed to take advantage of the unique capabilities of qualitative research."

I carried out five qualitative interviews with digital news editors of the earlier mentioned publications from each of the three media companies. The participants were given the option of being interviewed either by phone, email or in-person interview. The interview with *Daily Sun*'s acting editor took place in-person at the central newsroom at News24. The interview lasted for an average length of 30 minutes and was recorded using a mobile phone voice recorder and then typed out for analysis. The purpose of the interview was to get answers to the structured or standardised list of questions which were also used to ask other informants.

The other four participants preferred to be interviewed via email as this allowed them to respond to the questions at their convenience. They mentioned that the busyness of their newsrooms did not allow them time for a sit-down interview. There is little research into the advantages of collecting data through these means and there are no significant merits identified in using either of the differing approaches. For example, "two studies that did examine phone versus in-person interviews found a slight advantage for the latter in yielding better quality data" (Knox and Burkard 2009, p. 567).

Despite email interviews having potential bias, they are quite common, especially when dealing with participants such as news editors who work in a fast-paced environment with immediate deadlines and who prefer to have less face-to-face encounters as they can be time consuming for them. This relates to Knox and Burkard's (2009 p. 568) argument that in choosing the best

research method, “researchers may want to consider both financial and time resources as well as participant accessibility, all of which may differ quite dramatically between phone and in-person interviews.”

5.5.1 Advantages to Phone and Email Interviews

Conducting interviews via email enables the researcher to connect to respondents who are in distant geographic locations. This form of data collection also works to the benefit of the researcher who seeks a resourceful and low financial cost method to involve the experiences of distant participants. Hill et al. (1997 and 2005 in Knox and Burkard 2009) highlight several advantages of data collection other than through face-to-face interviews, suggesting that:

- Phone and email interviews are economically efficient and require fewer human resources. For example, they reduce the need to travel and they enable expedient data collection as the researcher has a wider reach to participants.
- Phone and email interviews can minimise certain disadvantages of conducting personal interviews. For example, participants can feel more comfortable with not seeing the researcher taking detailed notes, the absence of facial expressions may reduce bias responses and the phone or email gives the participant private space which can encourage them to be more open in their responses.

Similarly, Shuy (2003) also addresses how interviews that are not in-person can contribute to a better quality of data responses. For example, phone and email interviews ensure great uniformity and standardisation of questions posed to each respondent. However, it goes without saying that non-verbal data interviews may increase the possibility for biases in responses because participants have the chance to twist and adjust their answers accordingly. In contrast, it also offers participants the opportunity to feel less intimidated to disclose their experiences in the most effective ways than they would have in face-to-face encounters.

However, some researchers like Polkinghorne (1994 in Knox and Burkard 2009, p. 568) assert that

> in-person interviews yield authentic and deep descriptions of phenomena via the interviewer’s ability to facilitate trust and openness in the interviewee, which then lessens the interviewee’s need for impression management and enables the examination of her or his private experiences.

Overall, it is difficult to say if there is one all-inclusive method that can best answer the research topic as an ideal approach varies from study to study (Shuy 20003). Knox and Burkard (2009,

p. 568) suggest that "researchers thus should choose the method that best serves the project and will yield the richest data, because both approaches may be effective avenues for data collection."

5.5.2 Disadvantages to Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative method of research has its biases and disadvantages. LeCompte (2000, p. 146) explains that an inquirer is interested in finding out certain things and not others, hence the inquirer selects their choice of data collection and, therefore, "selectivity cannot be eliminated" because researchers can sometimes record data that makes sense to and intrigues them. Hence, it is important to be aware of this subjectivity in data collection and analysis because this contributes to how useful and credible the research results are. Unfortunately, no instruments can be used to measure the results from qualitative research, and this makes this method to be complex and ambiguous compared to quantitative methods whose data can be counted and reproduced in samples of test scores or by processing the data into computer programs for analysis.

Table 2: List of interviewees (Editors)

Name	Job Title	Organisation Name	Interview date
Bafana Nkosi	Acting Editor	Daily Sun	15/01/2019
Alison Visser	Digital Editor	City Press	21/01/2019
Riana Howa	Editor	IOL	14/01/2019
Saajida Francis	Editor	The Young Independents	23/01/2019
Thembela Khamango	Executive Editor	Sowetan	17/01/2019

5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to conducting this research, a draft proposal was approved by the Wits University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC non-medical) where minor revisions had to be made regarding the interview questions and the participants' consent form. Therefore, before the investigation could commence, a range of guidelines had to be adhered to. As the participants were asked to participate in this research via email, the following documents were attached to

each email sent: a formal letter[19] with the research details, researcher, supervisor and HREC (non-medical) contact details were included in this letter. In addition, the interview schedule[20] with the research questions; and a consent form[21] were included. Participants had to fill in the consent form by ticking that they agree and understand the guidelines of what their participation in the research would entail and hand back the signed copy to the researcher prior to conducting the interview process.

5.7 INTRODUCING THE 20 GENERATION Z RESPONDENTS

The size of the sample in qualitative research is assumed to be irrelevant. According to Slevitch (2011, p. 78) "samples are evaluated based on the ability to provide important and rich information, not because they are representative of a larger group." The researcher usually attempts to investigate a small sample of participants', rather than to test theories on large samples. Hence, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 Generation Z individuals in order to gauge their news consumption experiences. Interviews took place in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape Province, with respondents from the Generation Z cohort being students from Rhodes University, without focusing on their socio-economic backgrounds. All the respondents were also studying towards a Journalism and Media Studies degree and were between 18 and 22 years of age, with a fair gender balance. This study is similar to previous research that was conducted by Mattes (2012, p. 148 in Malila et al. (2013 p. 417) who found there to be "a connection between the level of education and the level of news consumption by young people", hence the selection of studying young people at university.

Qualitative and detailed interviews are useful when uncovering shared understandings of a sample group. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 317) explain that, "the sample of interviewees should be fairly homogenous and share critical similarities related to the research question", hence this research looks at respondents of the same age and from the same university, studying the same course, though in different study levels. This means that the participants were selected to participate in detailed interviews based on a strategic process referred to as purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is about maximising the richness of data

[19] See Appendix F
[20] See Appendix G
[21] See Appendix H

to the extent that it comprehensively addresses the research question (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006, p. 317). The motivation for applying a purposive strategy is that "the researcher assumes, based on their *a-priori* theoretical understanding of the topic being studied, that certain categories of individuals may have a unique, different or important perspective on the phenomenon in question and their presence in the sample should be ensured" (Mason 2002 in Robinson 2014, p. 32). For this reason, this research as a production and audience study focusing on news consumption habits, required its research participants to specifically be students studying journalism and media studies, as they are assumed to have a close affiliation, understanding and knowledge of news media.

In accordance, Elo (2014, p. 4) argues that the extent to which research participants are similar and the differences expected need to be considered in qualitative content analysis. For example, studying Generation Z news consumption in general is likely to generate varied data as compared to applying restrictions to the sample group, for example, studying Generation Z aged between 18 and 22 years, enrolled for a journalism and media studies course and within the same institution.

5.7.1 RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Robinson (2014, p. 36) explains that "ways of recruiting participants for interviews are only limited by a researcher's ingenuity in how to disseminate the message of his/her research study to the sample universe." I used advertising as one way of sending out the invite to request participants. In particular, I used online advertising on the official 'Rhodes University SRC'[22] Facebook page and an active informal campus student Facebook page 'University Currently Known as Rhodes (UCKAR)'[23]. Hamilton and Bowers (2006 in Robinson (2014) contend about the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet to invite participants, concluding that the benefits of using the internet means that the research invitation reaches a wide audience.

I also sent an email to the department secretary (Ms Marissa van As) at the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies requesting assistance in disseminating the research invitation through their internal email list of students. Robinson (2014, p. 36) explains that "a researcher may secure permission and request an individual who has access to channels of communication used within the organisation. This person may be termed the recruitment gatekeeper." An additional recruitment strategy that I used was "snowball sampling", also

[22] See Appendix B
[23] See Appendix B

commonly referred to as chain sampling or referral sampling. Snowballing involved asking the recruited respondents to recommend acquaintances and classmates who qualify to participate in this research, which lead to 'referral chains'.

5.7.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

An approval letter[24] to conduct the research on the Rhodes University campus was received from the Rhodes University Registrar, Dr Adele Moodly. Once approval was received, participants were invited to participate using the abovementioned processes and the interview process could begin. I carried out qualitative interviews with 20 respondents in face-to-face interviews to answer six research questions. The interviews were all conducted at the Rhodes University's Main Library seminar/study rooms. The interviews ranged from between 15 minutes to 20 minutes and were all recorded using a mobile phone voice recorder and later transcribed for analysis.

Before the interviews, potential respondents were emailed an invitation letter[25] explaining the purpose of the research and details on what their participation in the study would entail. This was done because "investigators have the responsibility to ensure that prospective participants are fully informed about a research protocol prior to consenting to participate [and] this responsibility is fulfilled by means of an informed consent" (Cortes et al. 2010, p. 172). This meant that before each interview began, the participants were handed a consent form[26] which they were given a chance to read and tick each consent statement. The consent form that participants signed assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity if they requested to remain anonymous, and pseudonymous names would be given. In this research, all the participants consented to their original names being used. To confirm their participation, participants had to sign the consent form which was handed back to the researcher prior to conducting the interview.

On meeting for the interview, the respondents were asked if they understood the details of the research and were given a chance to ask questions concerning the research. A simplified definition of news, as highlighted in chapter two of this research titled 'What is news', was given to each respondent to provide a consensus around the concept of news and for the convenience of the participants. The following definition was presented: "News is something

[24] See Appendix A
[25] See Appendix C
[26] See Appendix E

that has happened or is still happening that is being told by the media, which was previously unknown, about something which is of greater value for the many and affects people's lives in one way or another" (Bergström & Belfrage 2018, p. 588).

5.8 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The in-depth interview process was structured to create a personal and intimate space in which direct verbal questions were presented to elicit detailed narratives, as highlighted in the interview schedule. The detailed interview process was also aimed providing an understanding of the lived realities of Generation Z and the meaning they make of that experience. The following questions were asked:

7. How do you access news? What platforms do you use to access news and why do you use those platforms?
8. Do you view Instagram as a platform for accessing or sourcing news? And what do you think of Twitter and the mobile phone tool as channels of accessing news?
9. What content do you consume from the media? If news, what type of news content?
10. Do you regard social and online media as a relevant source of news?
11. Do you feel connected to mainstream print (i.e. newspapers) and online media?
12. What would you like to see more on online media platforms including social media that you think would be relevant to your Generation (i.e. Generation Z)?

In qualitative research, interviews are expected to be prepared with a set of pre-determined and open-ended questions that are asked during the interview which is typically scheduled in advance detailing the time and location of the interview session. These questions are aimed at uncovering how young people are experiencing news consumption. The questions aim to discover the experiences of individuals who belong to a group (Generation Z), thus, the questions focus on the detailed descriptions of human interactions in the given context. The questions were structured in the form of a method of four type questions; "(1) introductory questions, (2) transition questions, (3) key questions, and (4) closing questions" (Creswell, 2007).

The first question: *How do you access news? What platforms do you use to access news and why do you use those platforms?,* as an introductory question, was set to assist the researcher in beginning the interview in a relaxed and not intimidating way by asking for narrative descriptions The question that followed was aimed at transitioning the interview towards the central questions. The next key questions were aimed at soliciting the most valuable

information. The closing question, which asked the digital natives what they would like to see more on online media platforms, provided the participants an opportunity to clear out any unresolved issues as well as to signal a conclusion. Montoya (2016, p. 824) explains that such questions allow the participants to gradually conclude the interview process. This may result in unforeseen and valued responses, although their main purpose is to offer participants a "reflective, closing experience to the interview" (ibid). Structuring research questions in such a way shapes the interview procedure towards being an inquiry-based dialog.

Table 2: List of interviewees (20 Generation Z)

Name	**Age**	**Academic Year of Study**	**Field of study**	**Interview date**
Bokang Khuto	20	First-year	Journalism and Media Studies (JMS)	27/04/2019
Bulelani Nonyukela	22	Fourth-year	Bachelor of Journalism specialising in Digital Media (B. Journ)	03/05/2019
Catherine White	21	Fourth-year	B. Journ Digital Media	11/05/2019
Jessica Evans	21	Fourth-year	B. Journ Digital Media	24/04/2019
Karabo Dikobe	19	Second-year	JMS	25/04/2019
Kharisma Mashego	22	Graduate	JMS	11/05/2019
Lifikile Sigenu	21	Third-year	JMS	04/05/2019
Michelle Banda	20	Third-year	JMS	27/04/2019
Modiegi Mashamaite	21	Fourth-year	B.Journ Digital Media	01/05/2019
Nonhlanhla Gumede	19	First-year	JMS	27/04/2019
Ntuthuko Mlondo	22	Fourth-year	B.Journ Digital Media	26/04/2019
Sarah James	21	Fourth-year	B.Journ Digital Media	01/05/2019
Simamkele George	21	Third-year	JMS	04/05/2019
Siphumelele Dyakophu	20	Third-year	JMS	23/04/2019
Sive Matinjwa	22	Graduate	JMS	09/05/2019
Siya Nyulu	22	Fourth-year	B.Journ Digital Media	24/04/2019
Thabo Matsaba	22	Third-year	JMS	04/05/2019
Uyanda Ntloko	19	First-year	JMS	01/05/2019
Daniel Fowler	21	Third-year	JMS	12/05/2019

Craig Goldberg	20	Second-year	JMS	25/04/2019

5.9 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis is a form of qualitative research approach following the widely cited work of Michel Foucault (1989) and Norman Fairclough (1995). Foucault (1989) defines a discourse as "a combination of enunciations describing objects, themes and practices with regularity in terms of a historically determined social system." Correspondingly, according to Fairclough (2003 p. 58) discourse analysis can be understood as "[studying] texts in terms of the different discourses, genres and styles they draw upon and articulate together. A key feature is that the link between texts and society/culture is seen as mediated by discourse practices". Nicholls and McPherson (2012, p. 479) explain that several researchers have used Foucault's work (ideas and research approaches) in great depths that their methodological discussions have taken different (sometimes divergent) forms. Macleod (2002, p. 17) concurrently proposes that "there is diversity in approach to discourse analysis in South Africa". For example, Paul Gee (2014, p. 1) in his book, '*How to do Discourse Analysis: a toolkit*' explains that "discourse analysis is the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but also to do things." Gee (ibid) further explains that, there are diverse methods to conducting discourse analysis and some of these methods are frequently used in the discipline of linguistics and thus relate to the study of grammar. Other methods to discourse analysis do not relate to the grammatical details of language, and this is the approach adopted in this research. Therefore, the approach adopted to discourse analysis in this research concentrates on the ideas, issues and themes that are established from the interviews with the news editors and the 20 Generation Z respondents.

Cheek (2004, p. 1148) argues that "discourse analysis will always be, because of its interdisciplinary origins, a multi-perspective approach with different emphases and understandings in use depending on the position adopted by the researcher employing the approach." This means that there are no set rules for discourse analysis and the many forms available depend on the approach chosen by the researcher. Hence, Cheek (ibid. p. 1145) posits that "discourse analysis is an approach rather than a fixed method."

Carbo *et al*. (2016, p. 369) suggest that in making discourse analysis, the researcher must include the following:

- Identify patterns in the data.

    - Firstly, the researcher must find inconsistency in the data and the differences in responses from the narratives;
    - Secondly, the researcher must search for uniformity and identify comparable patterns in the various narratives.
- Discover the ensuing patterns and their function: This involves explaining the narrative responses in terms of their function in the particular context of research.

The discussions that will be made in this research regarding the ensuing themes will offer an explanation to which Foucault's methodological principles will be applied. The discussions will also offer applications of Foucault's work by other authors, to show how these are applied to analyse whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

5.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that using multiple qualitative research approaches would be the best methods to answer the research question of whether South African media companies are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences; as well as to uncover the perspectives of how young people are experiencing news consumption. A multi-method qualitative research enables the study to have a holistic approach that tackles the research question from a diversity of methodological sides. The methods of qualitative research have been chosen because the study into Generation Z is important as it may result in a discovery about user habits of this generation that may be shared with media companies. The experiences and data gathered of the three media companies in relation to Generation Z as they begin to emerge as consumers will be explored in the forthcoming chapters of this research. This is important as "Generation Z is set to become the biggest consumer of content in the market" (African Gen Z Report 2018, p. 15).

CHAPTER 6
THE COOPERATION BETWEEN OLD STRATEGIES AND NEW STRATEGIES IN NEWS PRODUCTION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter provides a synthesis of interview results from three South African news organisations, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings in terms of their provisions of multimedia news and digital techniques in relation to Generation Z. Each research question is analysed and outlines the key themes that emerged across the respondents in relation to the theories outlined in the theoretical framework. The following themes will be explored in this chapter: digitisation theory (Erdal 2007), multimedia news production (Vobic 2011 and Deuze 2003) and the mobile-first approach (Newman *et al* 2018), as ensuing themes from the interviews with news editors.

6.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS

When reporting on the results of content analysis, it is important to do so carefully and in a systematic way (Elo et al. 2014, p. 6). The researcher must make connections between the data and results. A challenge of reporting qualitative results arises from an unsuccessful analysis or failure to describe the process of abstraction which can cause difficulties in the systematic reporting of results. In qualitative content analysis, the abstraction process is the stage during which concepts and themes arising from interviews are created. It is important that the researcher reports about how ensuing results were achieved, so as to allow the reader to progressively follow the analysis until the resulting conclusions (Schreier 2012). Elo et al. (2014, p. 6) concur that "the content and structure of concepts created by content analysis should be presented in a clear and understandable way." Therefore, the results must be presented in a way that outlines concepts that arose in order to connect possible patterns. The structure of results needs to maintain an equal standard and answer the aims of research questions.

Content analysis as a methodology demands the researchers to uphold the trustworthiness and credibility of their data. “Trustworthiness is increased if the results are presented in a way that allows the reader to look for alternative interpretations such as presenting clear descriptions and characteristics of the participants” (Elo et al. 2014, p. 6). Polit & Beck, (2012) and Sandelowski, (1995a) suggest that using quotations is essential in indicating the trustworthiness and authenticity of results. The use of quotations is understood to refer to “objectivity and implies that the data accurately represent the information that the participants provided, and interpretations of those data are not invented by the researcher” (ibid). This means that using quotations reflects the authenticity in the voices of the respondents and not of the biases and perceptions of the inquirer (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Polit & Beck 2012).

The researcher presents representative quotations from transcribed text so as to demonstrate a link between the research data and the results. For example, Elo et al. (2014) recommend that the main concepts must be connected to the data by a quotation as a way to confirm the link between the results and data, as well as the quality of data. Ideally, as the quotations are linked to the main concepts, they should also represent the sample group. However, Downe-Wamboldt (1992), Graneheim and Lundman (2004), and Kyngäs et al. (2011) caution that the risk of overusing quotations may weaken the analysis. For example, overusing quotation in the results section may lead to unclear analysis of the results.

Another difficulty faced is that answers from respondents are often brief, and it becomes difficult to use content analysis effectively, as abstracting and analysing requires detailed data. Nevertheless, as this research uses content analysis to analyse answers to open-ended questions, it provides adequate descriptions through quotations to allow readers to easily evaluate its trustworthiness.

6.3 INTRODUCING THE THREE MEDIA COMPANIES

6.3.1 Case subject 1: Media24

Media24 is popular for being active in many media segments, including book publishing. Media24 is a major print media organisation in South Africa, in terms of news production and readership of its periodicals and in terms of news staff. News24 is owned by Naspers, which, according to Dugmore (2018, p. 50), “is no longer a print company with pay-TV assets: it is a technology and pay-TV company with minor print assets.” Dugmore (2018, p. 35) further

argues that "News24 is attracting more than 7 million different unique browsers a day for about 4 minutes a visit." Although this varies from day to day, it gives a fair estimate of Media24's standing in the media sphere.

Media24's tabloid, *Daily Sun* is the county's biggest-selling daily newspaper in South Africa. It has, however, lost half its readers in the past decade (Dugmore 2018, p. 34). Its sister newspaper, *City Press* describes itself as "a South African news brand that publishes on multiple platforms" (city-press.news24.com). It distributes its main print edition on Sunday and its daily newsletter is used to publish content online and on social media platforms where the media group has an active presence which is Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. "Media24 was the earliest and most substantial investor in digital media and has consolidated its lead in recent years" (Dugmore 2018, p. 50). Media24's 2017 consolidated report, 24.com, reported a "substantial growth in audience and engagement, especially on mobile platforms."

6.3.2 Case subject 2: Independent News and Media

Sekunjalo Media Consortium took ownership of Independent News and Media in 2013. Independent News and Media is a group of English language city-based papers in South Africa's main urban areas. The media group provides free newspapers and magazines, mostly in the Western Cape. Independent Online, popularly known as *IOL News* serves the online version of several South African newspapers and is a major South African multi-platform content company. "IOL presents national and breaking news to the public digitally in the form of a website to millions of readers around the country" (iol.co.za 2019). *IOL News* is highly focused on technology, it has invested in the development of a free news application that is available multiple devices, including iPad devices and Android application devices. *IOL News* also has also taken up the possibilities provided by social media as it has developed a strong presence across all the commonly used social media networks, including Twitter and Facebook.

The Young Independents (TYI) was established in 2015 by the Independent Media Group. According to independentmedia.co.za (2019), TYI is "a platform for young, inspiring South Africans that are challenging and changing the game…". Their audience are all under 36 years of age. The digital platform covers "imminent socio-economic and political issues, present solutions to lifestyle and career dilemmas…" (*ibid*).

6.3.3 Case subject 3: Arena Holdings

Arena Holdings produces English language newspapers; it houses some of the major publications in the country such as the *Sowetan*. The entity has over the years changed its name and its structure regularly to reflect changes in its ownership. After a recent private equity acquisition, it changed its name from Times Media to Arena Holdings. The group exhibits conglomeration (through cross-media) of newspaper assets, to online assets and is now expanding into other media assets such as radio stations in other countries. According to the arena.africa website (2020), "Arena Holdings is one of Africa's largest national English-language news publishers in print…".

These three media companies have diverse and to some extent similar newsroom structures. They are shifting their news practices to keep up with the latest technological developments and this makes them valuable in studying how they are innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences.

6.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The case subjects, Media24, Independent News and Media, and Arena Holdings, which operate different newsroom organisation models, were asked five research questions:

1. What strategies are the digital news editors from [your media company] involved in to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media?
2. Does Generation Z influence [your media company] as a news organisation? If so, how? And if not, how are they not influencing the organisation?
3. Could there be a gap between Generation Z's news consumption and [your media company's] news offerings, given that there is a decline in traditional/legacy media consumption?
4. What are your ideas to turn mobiles into audiences: Do you try to do this?
5. Is Generation Z shaping the future of news consumption?

To obtain the answers to the above five interview questions, the research delivers insights from qualitative interviews undertaken with digital news editors from the news publications owned by these three media organisations.

6.4.1 Strategies: What strategies are the digital news editors from [your media company] involved in to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media?

Media24 (*Daily Sun* and *City Press*):

Daily Sun

Bafana Nkosi was the Acting Editor of *Daily Sun* and *Sunday Sun* publications when data collection for this research took place. An interview with Nkosi revealed that both *Daily Sun* and *Sunday Sun* had a digital team that worked on their digital platforms and as part of their digital media strategy. Nkosi confirmed that both publications were on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Digital-first strategy

"The strategy that we are looking at implementing especially with the new financial year which starts on the 1st of April 2019, is that we'll start with digital first before we go to print. The strategy is to have a story on digital platforms first, then followed by a print edition where we will have the same story but from a different angle," (Nkosi, personal interview, 15 January 2019). Nkosi explained that the trick to this strategy is to come up with a different angle for each news story based on or guided by online audience comments. He explained that audience comments are used to shape the print news edition which is published after an online news version has been posted and audience comments have been reviewed. Nkosi explained that, "this is because not everyone reads comments, and this is a strategy we are trying to implement." This represents a merger of conventions between print newspapers and the new digital possibilities of the Web. The use of audience comments by the *Daily Sun* suggests that old hierarchies are supplemented by new ones that are aimed at modernising and advancing already existing news stories. Essentially, the web at *Daily Sun* is used as a reproductive platform.

Nkosi expressed that their sister publication, *Soccer Laduma* has already adopted the online digital-first strategy of publishing:

> *Every story must be measured – this means that if a story is posted on Soccer Laduma's website and it has a lot of people reading it, we measure the number of views of the clips and if this is big enough then the story will be taken forward for print* (in person interview, 15 January 2019).

Online monitoring is part the digital team's work, which is to monitor news published via social media and the website and assess each on its merits. The idea is to gather and deliberate all the stories and identify the leading story which requires a follow-up in order to cover a different angle for the print version. The basis of this strategy is digitisation of production systems which enables content to be widely available across online media channels.

Print circulation

> *The circulation figures of print are dropping. At one stage we were selling about 500 000 copies a day and now we are selling about 122 000 copies p/day and it seems as if this year [2019], we will still be experiencing a decrease in print circulation. These are figures from November 2018. Year-on-year, we drop by about 20%, explained Nkosi* (Ibid).

The fall of the *Daily Sun's* print circulation is mirroring what is occurring worldwide because of the growth of internet news and media diversification. People prefer the instant, always-on nature of online offerings. Like any media company, the *Daily Sun* must react to decreasing audiences and print circulations within traditional media markets. The main solution chosen by old media companies such as *Daily Sun* has been to deliver content across media platforms. Hence, the digital-first strategy of *Daily Sun* appears to be motivated by the fact that focusing on online publishing allows them to keep track of audience numbers engaging with their news content. This means that they are able to conduct a much thorough market analysis of the media metrics than working with print.

Old strategies

Nkosi admitted that *Daily Sun* was slow to move online. Consequently, he explained that:

> *A lot of people who were Daily Sun readers who had moved to online platforms did not find Daily Sun online and as a result, they instead moved to consume news from The Citizen which was already available online* (in person interview, 15 January 2019).

When the *Daily Sun* did start using their website for publishing, Nkosi found that:

> *It was not exciting – what was happening was that we were not coming up with new stories on the website, unless it [was] something that [had] happened. We [would] upload the story online although most of the time we [would] take all of the stories from print and we load them online and people read them from there* (Ibid).

This old strategy of publishing is an example which relates to the early analysis of online news content that online newspapers copied content from their print editions, offering only "shovelware", as described by Pavlik (1996). This meant that online news involved a lot of cut-and-paste from the print edition – as Ghersetti (2014, p.377) explains: "news stories online were basically duplicating the print versions and online articles were very rarely edited." As a result, news publications like the *Daily Sun* face the pressure to increase the reproduction of news texts across media platforms; and this often leads to the issue of shovelware.

However, the *Daily Sun* has realised its mistake and is working on changing its old strategy to adopt an online strategy which will mean that news items are uploaded to the digital-first platforms and then the print edition. The *Daily Sun*'s strategy signifies a type of newsroom convergence which is both technologically oriented in terms of news work and organisationally oriented from a sociological point of view. The *Daily Sun* is a good illustration of how journalistic hierarchies are affected by convergence. For example, the hierarchy was print before online but now it's online before print. An arguable stance regarding this, is whether convergence has jeopardised the quality of news journalism. As such, news organisations must choose the appropriate medium or converge mediums to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape, as not every story that elicits reaction on one platform is suitable for another.

City Press

Just like the *Daily Sun*, the *City Press* is another Media24 publication that regards itself as a cross-platform publication which publishes across print and social media. The *City Press* perceives its digital audience as mainly a different audience to their print reader. In this instance, their strategy is:

> *To continue prioritising quality over quantity. The audience is at the heart of most of the news we produce. Because we are a tiny team, we need to prioritise our offering, and our coverage is quite reliant on what we think our readers want,* (Alison Visser, Digital Editor, Email Interview: 21 January 2019).

In implementing their online strategy, the *City Press*, much like the *Daily Sun*, analyses its audience metrics. However, unlike the *Daily Sun*, its focus is not on "page views" but rather

on "*engagement, the bounce rate and the time spent on the article and within the City Press stable*," said Visser.

Independent News and Media (*IOL News* and *The Young Independents*):

IOL News

Mobile first approach

> *IOL has taken a mobile first approach, which sees us asking: Firstly, what format suits the story we are telling and the information we are conveying (video, images, graphics, listicle, longform etc.) and secondly what will the user experience be on mobile, said Riana Howa (Editor)* (Email Interview: 14 January 2019).

IOL's online approach shows that journalists are experiencing changes related to technological developments and convergence in terms of the practices of production. Howa described *IOL*'s news distribution as "*multi-platform where mobile is dominant – this includes social media platforms, apps and 3rd party platforms*." This strategy relates to *The Nielsen Total Audience Report* (Q3 2018), which found that "adults [age] 18-34 spend over one-third of their daily media usage on smartphones."

The digital-first approach adopted by IOL is an example of digital media developments which are currently taking place within the media landscape in which the development is often described using the all-encompassing term "convergence" (Erdal 2007, p. 52). The digitisation of news media and the ensuing digital platforms are major contributors to convergence.

The Young Independents

Understanding digital natives

The Young Independents (TYI) understand that digital natives have a unique set of needs and wants when it comes to their online experience and engaging with the content presented. Saajida Francis (Editor of *TYI* & Acting Editor of *Magenta Magazine*), explained that *TYI* has incorporated the following multichannel strategy to ensure that they cater to young people aged "*18-35 years*":

- *The most important factor was ensuring that our website is mobile-friendly (thirty-eight million South Africans (67%) own a mobile phone). The goal is to optimise their mobile experience with swipe-friendly and tap-friendly content.*
- *We use social media to share high-quality content, so they can relate to and connect with our brand.*
- *As a young team of under 35s, we are quite aware that millennials communicate differently. We enjoy thinking of out-of-the-box strategies when doing a marketing campaign by using social media, digital advertising, WhatsApp texting (almost 50% of South Africans use the instant messaging service) and creative online apps to grab their attention.*
- *We allow millennials to add to the African leadership narrative by including them in the annual voting process of our SADC Top 100 leadership competition.*
- *Our multichannel strategy uses digital media, digital advertising and conventional advertising to make millennials* ***think, feel, and do*** (Email Interview: 23 January 2019).

The above multichannel strategies adopted by *TYI* demonstrate that the publication is repositioning itself within the changing media landscape which adapts to young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media. The five strategies implemented by *TYI* are an example of what Erdal (2007, p. 52) describes as "a melting together of information systems, telecommunications and media technologies, on the one hand, and social and cultural convergence, on the other". This speaks to *TYI*'s use of digital media and hiring of young staff, "*under 35s*" who understands and relate to the content needs of digital natives.

Arena Holdings (*Sowetan*):

<u>*Sowetan*</u>

Cross media publishing

Sowetan Executive Editor Thembela Khamango confirmed that the publication uses a digital-first strategy. She explained that:

> *A digital-first strategy means that most of our stories break online and on all our social media platforms first. That is where we cater mostly for the younger generation who are consuming news from online platforms* (Email Interview: 17 January 2019).

The *Sowetan*'s strategy describes the general developments following digitisation. However, I argue that digitisation needs to be studied closely to better understand what this development

entails. In doing so, I explain ***crossmedia*** as a key concept of digitisation. For example, the Executive Editor of the *Sowetan* explained that:

> *Young people can get our content on the SowetanLive website, Sowetan app and social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter)* (Ibid).

The above statement by the *Sowetan*'s Executive Editor Thembela Khamango describes how the *Sowetan*'s production of content is directed to more than one media platform within the same producer or organisation. Such a digital newsroom facilitates crossmedia work and is an example of an "integrated newsroom" (Erdal 2009, p.2). Many platforms are engaged by the *Sowetan* in the communication process of news through an integrated way. In terms of the *Sowetan*'s digital-first approach, the news outlet uses its website as its main platform, integrated with the mobile app for audience convenience, and social media platforms. This is an example of crossmedia news production that involves simultaneously integrating the production of content for more than one media platform within the same organisation. In crossmedia news production, several platforms are involved in different kinds of cooperation. Erdal (2007, p.53) explains that, "the platforms serve different purposes in the news coverage as a whole, implying a move towards the definition of a multiplatform concept."

6.4.2 CONCLUSION

In summary, each of the publications (*Daily Sun*, *City Press*, *IOL News*, *The Young Independents* and *Sowetan*) from the three media companies are trying to find innovative processes in their news media production and dissemination. They are taking new approaches to media practices and forms while trying to maintain old audiences and attract new and young audiences. Essentially, the process within these media organisations is to enhance the integration of new and old media. According to Lawson-Borders (2003, p. 97), "the Internet has become a channel for media companies to reach a younger audience while trying to maintain existing audiences." The strategies adopted by the news organisations are driven mainly by the advances in technology and economic challenges faced by some of the publications like the *Daily Sun,* which experienced falling print circulation numbers.

The strategies adopted by the five news publications discussed above are focused on creation, delivery and presenting quality news content; they are aimed at engaging audiences in interactive ways; and these strategies are focused on providing news that is optimised for the digital, networked age and a mobile environment. According to Pavlik (2013, p. 186),

"developing and employing innovative methods of newsgathering and reporting represents an essential area of news media growth and adaptation in the twenty-first century." As media companies witness these technological developments, they also try to employ new strategies for managing both human and other resources. For example, *The Young Independents* mentioned their strategy of hiring young staff "*under 35s*" who understand and can relate to the content needs of digital natives.

Today's technologically advanced society places great expectations on digital news editors to create strategies that encompass original content, interactivity and a dynamic presence in an electronic environment (Ghersetti 2014, p. 375). Such strategies are necessary to reposition news organisations within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobile phones rather than through traditional media. Clearly, media organisations must endeavour to find the most suited strategies that will support their integration of new media and old media within a converged world. The media companies under investigation (i.e. Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings) are responding by adopting strategies which are based on launching print and online news products concurrently. These media companies also offer online and print news as complementary products that can both be used but still accommodate separate needs within the same audience group.

6.4.3 Influence: **Does Generation Z influence [your media company] as a news organisation? If so, how? And if not, how are they not influencing the organisation?**

Media24 (*Daily Sun* and *City Press*):

Daily Sun

> *Generation Z does influence Daily Sun. We see this in our circulation figures, Generation Z does not read Daily Sun, especially the print version. However, they do go online to **'check'** some of the stories because they see them as fascinating stories and these are township stories, said Bafana Nkosi* (in person interview, 15 January 2019).

The *Daily Sun* appears to have found a niche in terms of accommodating much of its content to township related news. They seem to be leading in this approach as a national tabloid. For example, Nkosi highlighted that,

> *Daily Sun's content is not like any story that you'll find on Sowetan, The Star or any other media, but our content is focused on the happenings within the townships and it's something that our audiences can relate to* (Ibid).

Furthermore, suggesting that:

> *If you want Digital Natives to consume your content then you must give them what they want, even if they don't read it on print, they will read it online* (Ibid).

Nkosi explained that the fact that digital natives live online has influenced the *Daily Sun* to change their strategy, hence the tabloid's restructuring and move to an online strategy, as explained in question one of this research. Nkosi emphasised that the *Daily Sun* is not going to neglect its print and traditional audiences, as such it aims to retain its old readers while simultaneously trying to attract Generation Z audiences:

> *We won't make the mistake of assuming that everyone has moved to online and forget about print readers, which is why we still have at least 120 000 people buying the print paper every day, so we can't just neglect this 120 000. If we do, we would be allowing our competitors to take over this market* (Ibid).

City Press

Concurrently to the *Daily Sun*, *City Press* digital editor Alison Visser agrees that Generation Z does influence its operations as a news outlet:

> *Most of the newsroom falls within the [young] age group, and many of our digital readers, especially those on social media, fall within that age group. These readers will hopefully be future readers, explained Alison Visser* (Email Interview: 21 January 2019).

On a different note, the *City Press* digital editor explained that it is not only influenced by Generation Z as audiences, but it is also influenced by Generation Z within the organisation as a result of those staff members that fall within the digital native age group.

> *By default, [digital natives] largely have the same interests, move in the same circles and they drive the agenda to move in that direction. This includes issues such as #FeesMustFall for example, "black tax", student council elections or other issues that affect young South Africans, said Visser* (Ibid).

Independent News and Media (*IOL News* and *The Young Independents*):

IOL News

The fact that Generation Z consumes content differently to any other generation means that they influence news organisations' thinking in terms of the content they produce, how it is produced and where it is made available. Generation Z is a fast-paced generation that consider themselves to be 'global citizens'. For this reason, Riana Howa detailed that:

> *Generation Z want to know a lot about a trending topic in a short amount of time. They also expect greater personalisation, as there is so much content available these days. They are a robust generation unashamed of voicing their thoughts and opinions on a wide range of issues including news, entertainment or social justice issues. So, we aim to give informed and valuable information that encourages engagement* (Email Interview: 14 January 2019).

The Young Independents

The Young Independents is essentially the youth branch of Independent Media and, therefore, Saajida Francis explained that the content they create is intended to guide the "*African **youth** experience*". Francis noted that, *TYI* takes into consideration that technology heavily influences Generation Z's in-store purchase behaviours; that Generation Z uses mobile apps and features on mobile phones more than any other demographic segments; and that texting and Snapchat are much more heavily used by digital natives than any other generation.

Francis explained that all these behavioural patterns influence the organisation's decisions and the structure of *TYI*'s content. She shared that their objective is for the *TYI* brand to work across multiple devices and that their news content caters to a variety of consumers. To emphasise Francis's point, *The Nielsen Total Audience Report* (Q3 2018, p. 3) found that some simultaneous usage does occur across devices with users interacting with media across TV, TV-connected devices, radio, computers, smartphones and tablets.

Arena Holdings (*Sowetan*):

Sowetan

> *Generation Z does influence Sowetan as a media organisation. Generation Z are part of a bigger market that has changed how news is consumed and we cannot afford to ignore them. We are constantly on the lookout for new content that would interest them and make them log onto our site daily, Thembela Khamango noted* (Email Interview: 17 January 2019).

This perspective demonstrates what Dugmore (2018) explains as the changing reading-time habits of audiences, with readers having much more autonomy and choice and as such, news can now be consumed at any time of the audience's choice. This then influences the *Sowetan* as a news outlet. Generation Z has significantly influenced the changes in news consumption patterns within the network era that is characterised by the central features of the internet, speed, accessibility and simplicity in terms of how news content is created and distributed. As a result, their news repertoires influence news organisations in many ways.

6.4.4 The Missing Gap: **Could there be a gap between Generation Z's news consumption and [your media company's] news offerings, given that there is a decline in traditional/legacy media consumption?**

Media24 (*Daily Sun* and *City Press*):

Daily Sun

Bafana Nkosi stated that:

> *There is that gap, and it will always be there especially in the media because trends keep changing. You have to adapt, or you die* (in person interview, 15 January 2019).

The gap between Generation Z's news consumption and the *Daily Sun*'s news offerings lies in the different generational audiences that the *Daily Sun* tries to cater for. For example, Nkosi explained that:

> *With traditional media, you still have the old generation which still want to read their print, who still get that joy and excitement that they've read the newspaper* (Ibid).

This means that a news publisher like the *Daily Sun* is facing the challenge of having to juggle different generations of audiences, from catering for its traditional print audiences, to catering for its newer online audiences. The *Daily Sun* must continuously equip its journalists with new skills to facilitate interactivity to an empowered network of audiences and invest in appropriate technology.

City Press

Alison Visser agreed saying that:

> *There is always a gap between Generation Z news consumption and City Press news offerings* (Email Interview: 21 January 2019).

Importantly, she said:

> *No news organisation can cater for every possible reader* (Ibid).

Visser explained that the *City Press* harnesses this gap by having a strong, young component of voices on its staff list, and who are encouraged to write about issues that interest them. She explained this by saying:

> *City Press prides itself on its politics and investigations, and the trick is to present these articles in a way that will appeal to the readers of the future. We haven't necessarily nailed this, but we are constantly re-evaluating and experimenting with our content* (Ibid).

Independent News and Media (*IOL News* and *The Young Independents*):

IOL News

Riana Howa expressed that *IOL News* is experiencing a gap between Generation Z news consumption and *IOL News* offerings. Howa detailed that:

> *We need to try and close this gap by looking at content personalisation, multimedia storytelling and having a mobile focus. We are also getting to grips with which stories to cover because the hot topics of the day for the Gen Z online community changes quite rapidly and the big debates don't take place in the usual places* (Email Interview: 14 January 2019).

The Young Independents

> *Relatable online content is king. Gen Z audiences are less inclined to engage with strictly brand oriented content, so we add value by providing online content that includes current event/s coverage and the latest trending stories in a millennial/ Gen-Z friendly format, said Saajida Francis* (Email Interview: 23 January 2019).

According to Francis,

> *The Young Independents always thinks 'digital first', hence the brand's online presence and incorporation of online strategies/ tools* (Ibid).

There are both opportunities and threats for news publishers like *TYI* when it comes to online platforms like social media. One threat, for example, is that legacy media lose their monopolies of controlling old media in favour of new ways of publishing in which news is both produced and distributed beyond their proprietary platforms. Having a presence on social media can be

an opportunity for a publisher like *TYI* to move closer to those inclined to access and discuss their news reporting.

Arena Holdings (*Sowetan*):

Sowetan

Thembela Khamango responded affirmatively that:

> *Yes, there is definitely a gap between Generation Z news consumption and Sowetan news offerings. As much as we have content targeting youngsters it is not enough* (Email Interview: 17 January 2019).

The *Sowetan* appears to harness this gap with a similar approach to the *Daily Sun*'s strategy of not neglecting other generational cohorts. Khamango explained that:

> *We are working on improving our news coverage, the plan is to provide more content targeting the younger generation and still keep some of our current coverage to ensure we retain traditional readers, as we attract new ones* (Ibid).

This means that the *Sowetan* understands that the segmentation of audiences is necessary, as people have diverse interests and utilise media in different ways.

6.4.5 CONCLUSION

There is a resulting consensus between all the news outlets under investigation that there is a gap between Generation Z's news consumption and each media company's news offerings. The reason for this could be the fact that journalism and the media find themselves grappling with tumultuous change, "driven at least in part by technological and economic uncertainty on a global scale" (Pavlik 2013, p. 181). The media industry is constantly changing, with new platforms and digital technology and so, "the future is set to be mobile, not PC-based" (Wolmarans in Mdlongwa 2009, p. 39) and because of changes in the media industry, there always will be a gap to some extent.

6.4.6 Audiences: What are your ideas to turn mobiles into audiences: Do you try to do this?

Media24 (*Daily Sun* and *City Press*):

Daily Sun

Bafana Nkosi acknowledged that the *Daily Sun* does not have a news app for its mobile audiences. He said:

> *Our app has died, which is why some of our competitors like The Citizen have won many of our readers. We tried coming up with one app which we called 'Daily Kick' that linked Daily Sun, Soccer Laduma and Kick Off to provide soccer stories only, but it's not working* (in person interview, 15 January 2019).

Nkosi mentioned that reviving the app is a strategy that they are looking into, so that:

> *If people want to consume Daily Sun, then they must be able to consume it anywhere and they don't have to go to the website, but conveniently click on a mobile app and get all our stories* (Ibid).

City Press

Alison Visser explained that:

> *About 90% of our online audience accesses our platforms on phones, and a much smaller percentage of readers use tablets and desktops, so we do have a "mobile-first" approach to the way we present our news* (Email Interview: 21 January 2019).

She further confirmed that the *City Press* does consider mobile users in content creation:

> *When publishing news content (i.e. videos, images, podcasts, etc.), we do consider mobile users. News consumption is definitely affected by issues such as disposable income and the price of data, and we bear this in mind when we present our news. We don't have as much video content as we would like, and our experiments with podcasts are also very new* (Ibid).

In relation to this, Gordon (2003: 71) stresses that media organisations have to prepare ways in which to regularly produce online multimedia news at reasonable costs, as audiences grow and opt to use mobile devices for multimedia news consumption.

According to Visser, the challenge with ensuring that the City *Press* remains fully considerate of mobile users is the centralising of all its development and IT capabilities by its owner, Media24, which has placed all IT developments under one 24.com team. She highlighted that,

> *This team is supposed to be coming up with innovative ideas of how to turn mobiles into audiences, there was an app at one stage, but communication between this team and the actual City Press digital team is not exactly open and productive* (Ibid).

However, from a *City Press* perspective, Visser said,

> *We try to keep videos as small as possible, so they don't take forever to download and chew data. Subsequently, we find that videos on social media tend to get more views than our videos on YouTube. But our strategy is to give the readers – which is mainly a mobile audience – insightful news that is well-packaged, easy to read and to create constructive engagement* (Ibid).

Independent News and Media (*IOL News* and *The Young Independents*):

IOL News

> *IOL has taken a mobile first approach so our design and development is geared towards the best mobile user experience, said Riana Howa* (Email Interview: 14 January 2019).

A mobile first approach is also about understanding how events are covered in converging newsrooms that require news reporting staff to collect audio and video clips and produce digital photographs while posting live updates to Twitter.

The Young Independents

> *Yes, we do [try to turn mobile users into audiences]. We believe in employing the 'right place, right time, right-screen' tactic, said Saajida Francis* (Email Interview: 23 January 2019).

The Young Independents have the understanding that young people have substantially greater news consumption via smart phones than on desktops or laptop computers.

Arena Holdings (*Sowetan*):

Sowetan

Thembela Khamango shared that in turning mobiles into audiences, the *Sowetan*'s new website is responsive to technology, which means it renders well on a variety of devices and screen sizes.

> *This means whatever videos, images or info graphics we present with the story can be viewed on any device the reader has. They don't have to wait until they get to a PC to engage with the content, said Khamango* (Email Interview: 17 January 2019).

The *Sowetan* also has a mobile site for those who still use feature phones. Khamango explained that:

> *Smartphone users are able to download our app on Google play or the App store and have access to the latest news at the tip of their fingers* (Ibid).

This relates to the rise in the use of messaging apps for news, as identified by the *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Newman et al. 2018).

6.4.7 CONCLUSION

Question four was important to ask as "particularly significant is the emergence of mobile technologies and their increasing adoption by citizens using them to access and distribute wireless news and information via the internet" (Pavlik 2013, p. 185). News consumers are also increasingly accessing and participating in news dialogues on social media via their mobile devices. This means that there is an increasing convergence between mobile device use and social media engagement (Pavlik 2013, p. 186). This merging of mobile, networked technology among Generation Z is enabling news organisations to use a wide spectrum of innovation opportunities as they create ideas to turn mobiles into audiences and create effective content forms for their news. This is because "more and more users consume news and media content from smartphones via news applications or social media" (Wang 2017, p. 1138).

6.4.8 The Future of News Consumption: Is Generation Z shaping the future of news consumption?

All the media respondents interviewed (*Daily Sun*, *City Press*, *IOL News*, *The Young Independents* and *Sowetan*) seem to believe that the future of news is online, considering that Generation Z are digitally savvy.

Media24 (*Daily Sun* and *City Press*):

Daily Sun

Nkosi agreed that Generation Z is shaping the future of news consumption. He said:

> *For example, we once knew that a small screen is going to be a big screen where we'll be watching all the news, stories, sports, etc. on this one device and today it's already happening. Today, the small screen is our friend, because we are doing everything on this screen – this is how future consumption has been influenced – we don't have to go*

> *home to watch the news, but we watch the news everywhere and anywhere we want* (in person interview, 15 January 2019).

Furthermore, adding that:

> *I think soon, we won't even be needing our offices to work. Offices will be a thing of the past because we can work from anywhere* (Ibid).

This idea of creating and managing a virtual newsroom could reduce costs for media companies by lowering or even eliminating the central, physical newsroom. Pavlik (2013, p. 187) emphasises this idea by saying,

> just as online and mobile news delivery can eliminate the need for a printing press, newsprint and newspaper delivery via trucks, the utilization of mobile, networked technologies deployed among the newsgathering, production and editing staff can eliminate the need for a central, physical newsroom.

With the future of news consumption changing, the *Daily Sun* is experiencing changing professional practices as part of organisational convergence. Nkosi explained this by saying:

> *We don't just hire anyone. When we interview you, we ask you on which platforms are you on. We want journalists who will be able to multitask, i.e. take photographs, take videos and update social media all at the same time* (Ibid).

City Press

Alison Visser gave an affirming response that:

> *Definitely, Generation Z is influencing the future of news consumption* (Email Interview: 21 January 2019).

Visser explained her response by stating that:

> *There is a move to creating stories on social media because that's how Generation Z communicate. There is FOMO, which also gets us in a spin because we need to get the news out quickly without compromising on the quality. The immediacy that comes with a generation that's grown up on social media is changing the way news organisations present their journalism – not necessarily in a good way* (Ibid).

In responding to these changes, Visser suggests that:

> *We need to ensure that trust is not broken, and that we stay true to the basics of truth, accuracy and fairness. And yet we need to consistently come up with new ways of presenting news and staying abreast of current trends* (Ibid).

Independent News and Media (*IOL News* and *The Young Independents*):

IOL News

According to Riana Howa, *IOL News* believes that Generation Z is the future generation of news consumers and as such,

> *…their consumption patterns and behaviours will need to be taken into consideration more and more. But I think it's important that we keep in mind that we're not only writing for the future audience but the current one as well. The importance is to package content in a way that speaks to both* (Email Interview: 14 January 2019).

Packaging content that speaks to both present and future audiences is important because audiences in the current media environment do not choose between traditional and new media but have an active combination of news sources and complex patterns of media use.

The Young Independents

Saajida Francis was certain that Generation Z is shaping the future of news consumption, suggesting that:

> *Media houses need to adapt to this change and fast. Think 'snackable' content, visual language, experiential marketing campaigns, Gen Z collaborations, empowering entrepreneurship, getting rid of outdated technology. Gen Z makes their own rules and their own realities, and media houses will have to work with this new generation of consumers to stay relevant* (Email Interview: 23 January 2019).

The idea from Francis is that Generation Z is shaping the future of news consumption in the sense that there is increasing competition for their time and attention.

Arena Holdings (*Sowetan*):

Sowetan

Thembela Khamango confirmed that:

> *Generation Z mostly consume news via digital platforms and social media, this means that newspapers have had to find creative/attractive ways of presenting stories to an online audience. Journalists are no longer just thinking about the print copy but accompanying multimedia elements such as photos, video and audio clips now have to be considered when one pitches a story* (Email Interview: 17 January 2019).

Furthermore, the *Sowetan* editor believes that Generation Z is shaping the future of news consumption because:

> *They love video clips and visual presentations, so newsrooms now have accounts on video platforms such as YouTube to cater for that.* ***Now, now, now*** *is when they want the latest story so that has also put a bit of pressure on newsrooms to work faster and smarter to be the first to get accurate information out to readers. If you don't have the story, readers will move on to another website* (Ibid).

6.4.9 CONCLUSION

All five news outlets agree that the future of news consumption is changing and that, as news organisations, they are pressured to keep up with the latest technological developments for fear of being left behind. The results, as well as Generation Z's news consumption experiences and requirements, suggest that the five above-mentioned news publications have forced journalists to shift their daily tasks toward multimedia production. The newsrooms are increasing their multimedia tasks and creating content specifically for the Web. There is a strong sentiment shared by the news editors interviewed that the new multimedia news production practices offer compelling and different ways to tell stories.

6.5 RESULTANT THEMES

Each interview was analysed with respect to the research questions to identify recurrent themes and patterns across all the interviews. According to the interviews, it is evident that News24, Independent News and Media, and Arena Holdings aim to optimise journalistic resources, speed up online news production, and increase cooperation among their print and online teams. The three media companies have, to some extent, different approaches to newsroom organisation and the types of media content produced, they have diverse workforces and workspaces of different sizes. Despite this, all three companies are contemporary newsrooms that are no longer simply centralised or decentralised, but they are now integrated newsrooms. "Integrated newsrooms have become a global phenomenon in the media industry and commonly regarded as part of the reorganized and restructured decentralised newsroom tradition" (Vobic 2011, p. 949). Vobic further posits that, "[integrated newsrooms] aim to move toward increasing cooperation and collaboration and combining technologies, staff and space among formerly distinct editorial teams of print, television and online."

Such newsrooms are also known as “combined newsrooms” (Pavlik 2000), “multimedia newsrooms” (Deuze 2004), new newsrooms” (Klinenberg 2005) and “convergent newsrooms” (Friend and Singer 2007). These kinds of newsrooms have reduced the hierarchal structure of the past, making them flatter in structure and decreasing the distance between top and bottom. This has enabled faster news production, as seen through Twitter, and it has enabled higher productivity across all platforms. In light of this, Vobic (2011, p. 949) explains that “online news departments have converged with the news production process of media and are an inherent part of the common information engine.”

6.5.1 Digitisation theory to understand the patterns in the above interview data

The above mentioned relates to digitisation theory, which, from the interviews conducted with the three media companies, shows that digitisation has occurred in all news processes of producing, content creation and packaging of news, distribution and uses of news. Erdal (2007, p. 51) explains that “digitisation of production in media organisations has facilitated changes in the organisation and practices of journalism.” Furthermore, the convergence phenomena result in changes in the processes of news making, making the boundaries between media platforms seamless. Consequently, content has become easier to share between the journalists making news for the print publication and those making news for the web. The three media companies discussed above are working to fully integrate the content production of different media platforms to encourage collaboration between news desks.

Digitisation of news content facilitates the easy flow of data files across various platforms such as print, websites and social media, thus, leading to media convergence (Aviles and Carvajal, 2008). As such, Chyi and Chadha (2012, p. 432) describe contemporary audiences, like Generation Z, as cross-platform consumers who consume media through various channels. In other words, Generation Z have access to similar content from various computer devices, whether it’s tablets, cell phones, podcasts, and other mobile devices, as opposed to being restricted to newspapers, television or radio channels. Thurman and Lupton (2008 in Chyi and Chadha 2012) define this process as “the amalgamation of disparate media entities such as print, broadcast and online news organizations and their consequent converged outputs or an internal integration of broadcast or print and online newsrooms within the same organization.” For instance, three types of convergences (technological convergence, media convergence and

organisational convergence) have changed the way in which news is produced in the three media organisations.

6.5.2 Multimedia News Production

The concept of multimedia in news production has emerged as a common denominator from the interviews with all three news companies (Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings) in terms of their journalistic work through their news publications (D*aily Sun, City Press, IOL News, The Young Independents* and *Sowetan*). Two concepts of multimedia have emerged from this: firstly, all three news companies mentioned that they present a news story package on their website in the form of different media formats, such as texts, images, audio, video, graphics and animation. Secondly, they all have an integrated, although not necessarily simultaneous, presentation of a news story package through different media, such as a news app, social media, print newspaper and news websites. Notably, none of the news organisations have abandoned their print newspaper edition as another medium of publishing news stories. As such, there is integrated cross-media production between digital or online medium and traditional print medium.

The multimedia nature of media content is closely tied to convergence. Vobic (2011, p. 947) explains multimedia as "the increasing cooperation, collaboration, and a combination of technologies, staff and spaces between formerly distinct editorial teams of print, television and online media." The cooperation and combination of technologies and staff has been shown to be taking place in all three news organisations investigated. Multimedia coverage of stories has become more common in contemporary journalism. Consequently, leading theorists such as Deuze (2003, p. 212) has identified two paradigms of multimedia on news websites: "the convergent and the divergent paradigm." According to the convergent paradigm, multimedia results when information that is created between different news departments of one or more media organisations is combined and offered in different semiological forms. Oliver (2008, p. 21) stresses that to produce such multimedia content, a content management system (CMS) is required. The divergent paradigm ensures that a news site is developed for multimedia offerings to the end-user through guiding him/her to other online streams of information, from posts on social media, to email updates and mobile delivery methods.

6.5.3 Mobile Phones

The *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Newman et al. 2018) found that, "the fastest growing gateway to news over the last three years has been mobile news alerts." This resonates with young users who often start their day on their mobile screens. Thus, there is a lot of optimism from the three media companies whose strategies are focused on regaining users via mobile websites and apps. Since digital platforms have the potential of substituting old media in the future, the three news companies are transferring their content to mobile media platforms and have targeted the technology of the mobile internet to provide news 24/7, mainly via social media and apps.

Subsequently, the three media companies acknowledged that mobile publishing has become a significant component of journalism. The extension of their content to mobile platforms is also motivated by the fact that there are not many successful digital business models for the fixed internet. Conversely, Wolf and Schnauber (2014, p. 3) state that media organisations now consider mobile devices play a significant role in a user's information repertoire activities. This point of view means that mobile websites and apps create new media formats that modify traditional media. In addition to this, as a news media technology, the mobile internet device carries unique qualities, from portability to always-on connectivity.

Newman et al. (2018), in the *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News* report, concluded that "there continues to be a rise in the use of messaging apps for news as consumers look for more private (and less confrontational) spaces to communicate." For example, the report found that "the use of WhatsApp for news almost tripled since 2014 and [had] overtaken Twitter in importance in many countries." Other networks like Instagram have also been showing a substantial increase in use for news. In response to the first research question which asked about the strategies the three media companies are involved in, the findings revealed that increases in the use of messaging apps have been influenced by organisations shifting their strategies in the race to become less dependent on Facebook.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The qualitative process in the collection of data collection and analysis finally comes to a point where no new categories and themes emerge. This is referred to as "saturation, signalling that data collection is complete" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006, p. 317). The results from the

data analysis and the resultant themes suggest the emergence of two different models of newsroom convergence: "the integrated model and the cross-media model, each with a different production system, newsroom organization, degree of journalists' multi-skilling and business strategy" (Hess and Waller 2016, p. 82), as highlighted from the responses to the research questions.

This chapter has revealed that the three news companies demonstrate a variety of multimedia news strategies and that they each have diverse newsroom systems. For instance, distinct approaches to online multimedia news production have emerged and different formats have been adopted by each of the news publications. Even though they have uniquely organised news work, with a number of differences and similarities in terms of production and news formats, all three media companies look forward to gaining young audiences from online multimedia production. Deuze (2003) stresses that "different newsroom organization models and distinct online multimedia news production organizations are linked with adoption of different multimedia paradigms."

The three media companies follow different approaches within the convergent paradigm, especially concerning news formats and packaging of multimedia news. However, they have similar approaches in terms of the divergent paradigm because they focus on the digital-first approach and guide users to web-based, social media and mobile multimedia content. In the technology driven journalism era, digital-first strategies reflect what Deuze (2013, p. 213) calls the "'dual nature' in the multimedia development and in the relationship between journalism and technology in general." This means that, on the one hand, there are absolute technological innovations adopted in news work and, on the other hand, there is the impact of technology on the process of online journalism and news production (Vobic 2011, p. 960).

Chyi and Chadha (2012, p. 443) suggest that "media companies should exercise some caution or scepticism when adopting a technological deterministic approach towards the future of news." These theorists further suggest that media companies that create product portfolios on multiple platforms may pursue "a relatively small group of consumers who own and access news through multiple devices, i.e. those who are younger, better educated and more interested in news" (ibid). Therefore, media companies must continue to invest in their core products on traditional platforms while adopting a 360-degree philosophy that is geared towards multi-platform production and consumption.

These findings have important implications for the future of news production. They highlight the need for news publishers and researchers to continue investing efforts and resources into studying and understanding news consumption on mobile devices, as platforms people increasingly turn to for news. A challenge that remains is what news publishers should do to make their content more unique in order to appeal to a mass audience, particularly Generation Z. Lastly, it is important for news organisations to understand changing news consumption habits as it provides essential knowledge for them to:

- Find new ways of engaging new generations of news consumers;
- Understand innovative ways of packaging news content in convenient methods that allow increasingly mobile and time-pressured audiences to engage with the content in useful ways;
- Implement online business models that are best suited to the changing media landscape (Peters 2012, p. 698).

CHAPTER 7
GENERATION Z: "ONLINE IS THE WAY TO GO!"

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the interview data from 20 Generation Z respondents. According to Karlsson and Sjovaag (2016, p. 4), "research into audience activity requires a holistic approach in order to capture the magnitude of news consumption in relation to other media practices." This means that research into audience activity requires the need to first understand people's entire media repertoire in order to appreciate the role of news. Secondly, there is an increasing need in terms of mobile media, to know when and where news is consumed. Karlsson and Sjovaag (ibid) suggest that "combining these principles provides a way to understand better the place of news in people's media repertoires." Therefore, conceptualising Generation Z as users of media, rather than as audiences (as proposed by Picone, 2016) enables this audience study to be a holistic approach which looks at the many capacities that media use entails. It further enables the research to create a framework that is capable of capturing young people's news experiences.

The audience research presented here shows that Generation Z are "inherently cross-media" (Schroder 2015, p. 61). Schroder posits that "it is by no means a new thing that audiences compose their media diets out of a supply from different media platforms and nor should we forget that print media like newspapers and magazines have always been pre-eminently mobile" (ibid). However, the digital age has shown the emerging patterns of cross-media to be far more seamless, blurred, hybrid and complex than they used to be.

7.2 INTERVIEWING AS A METHOD FOR QUALITATIVE RESARCH

South African digital natives much like those in other developing countries are establishing new news habits that are radically reshaping news organisation's approaches to journalism and news production. The data collection for this research involved one research instrument, the structured interview schedule. This research examined 20 Generation Z respondents who were asked six questions in single interviews. All respondents were Journalism and Media Studies students from Rhodes University, in different academic years, and aged between18 and 22. The

interviews took place between 24 April and 11 May 2019 in Grahamstown, at the Rhodes University Main Library's study/seminar rooms with the formal permission of the university Registrar. Interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees and later transcribed by the researcher to elicit major themes and categories.

7.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To gather an understanding of Generation Z's news consumption habits, the 20 respondents were asked the following six questions:

1. How do you access news? What platforms do you use to access news and why do you use those platforms?
2. Do you view Instagram as a platform for accessing or sourcing news? And what do you think of Twitter and the mobile phone tool as channels of accessing news?
3. What content do you consume from the media? If news, what type of news content?
4. Do you regard social and online media as a relevant source of news?
5. Do you feel connected to mainstream print (i.e. newspapers) and online media?
6. What would you like to see more on online media platforms including social media that you think would be relevant to your Generation (i.e. Generation Z)?

7.3.1 Accessing News: How do you access news? What platforms do you use to access news and why do you use those platforms?

Historically, an individual accessed news content by selecting a source such as tuning into a particular news programme, buying a particular newspaper or, more recently, browsing a news website. From sharing paper article clippings, to sharing articles by email, Messing and Westwood (2012, p. 2) explain that "an individual's news environment depended on the sources they habitually consumed." The news consumption experience has changed since the early years of the new millennium, which saw the emergence of the Web 2.0. This new design paradigm emphasised the importance of "user-generated reviews, collaborative filtering (i.e., "people like you also like this"), and aggregated popularity ratings to effectively manage vast amounts of data" (O'Reilly, 2007 in Messing & Westwood 2012, p. 2). Web 2.0 was the beginning of socialising the online news reading experience, by enabling news consumers to endorse and share news content on social media services.

Theme one: "I read online"

All the interviewees expressed that they are used to consuming news online, whether via mobile phone or computer-based social networking sites. This practice indicates that there is growing popularity of digital and mobile news media. This means that traditional sources of news and information like newspapers are being replaced by new media. According to Messing and Westwood (2012, p. 3), "television and print media's role in conveying news is declining in favour of online/mobile media and the internet now constitutes the main source of news for a majority of [young people]." For example, Jessica Evans (Fourth-year Bachelor of Journalism (B. Journ) specialisation in Digital Media) explained that:

> *I access news online, and very rarely through newspapers. My parents read the newspaper, so that is the only time I can say that I get to read a print newspaper. Either than this, I read online* (Interview: 24 April 2019).

While Karabo Dikobe (Second-year Bachelor of Journalism and Media Studies (JMS)) said:

> *I only read newspapers and watch the news when I'm at home. So, when I'm at school I use Twitter and the internet a lot* (Interview: 25 April 2019).

The news experiences of Jessica and Karabo correlate to the findings of Qayyum (2010, p. 186), where "newspaper reading appeared to be influenced by parents many of whom purchased one or more newspapers."

Theme two: Media choice to news consumption

In a contemporary media environment, Generation Z take advantage of a whole range of media that can provide them with information on current events (using mobile phones, to social media and print media wherever they can find it). This is a "repertoire-oriented approach" to news consumption (Yuan 2011, p. 999), as Generation Z exercise an increasing degree of selectivity because of new media offerings. For example, Nonhlanhla Gumede (First-year JMS) said:

> *I try to branch out to print media if I can get access to it. For example, I sometimes like to read the local Grocott's Mail newspaper which is free and easily accessible* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Similarly, Modiegi Mashamaite (Fourth-year B. Journ specialisation in Digital Media) said:

> *I go through a newspaper if there is one, but I don't buy a newspaper* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

In accordance with Modiegi Mashamaite's experience, Palfrey and Gasser (2008, p.6) highlight that, "most digital natives don't buy the newspaper – ever. It's not that they don't read the news, it's just that they get it in new ways and in a wide variety of formats."

A different study conducted by Reagan (1996) on media repertoires concluded that "users who are especially interested in a topic access a greater number of sources to obtain information on that topic." Furthermore, the study by Reagan found that different combinations of media are used by respondents to construct an information repertoire for a given interest area (Taneja et al. 2012, p. 4). For instance, the repertoire of sports-related content was explained by Ntuthuko Mlondo (Fourth-year B. Journ specialisation in Digital Media) who shared that he uses a combination of media:

> *I like a lot of pages and follow a lot of athletes. My news feed is filled with links from News24, Sports24, Sports Bible and I have recently been named the Top Fan in some of these sports pages, [which means that] I get a badge because I engage with their posts frequently. So, I've been named [Top Fan] on four different sports pages. Because I'm sports orientated, most of my news also comes from Facebook* (Interview: 26 April 2019).

Theme three: Preference for mobile phones to access news

Highspeed connection to the Internet using a mobile phone is the preferred method to go online for the 20 Generation Z participants of this research. For example, Bokang Khuto (First-year JMS) said:

> *I use my phone to access the news on the internet because it makes it is much easier and my phone is always in my hands* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Most of the respondents described how using their mobile phones made life "much easier". For instance, Michelle Banda (Third-year JMS) similarly expressed:

> *I use my mobile phone to access the news because I carry it everywhere. My laptop is too heavy for me to be walking with it, so my phone is just portable* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Bokang Khuto made a remarkable comment, describing that:

> *Using my phone is like a drive-through* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

This statement fundamentally highlights the convenience that is brought by mobile phones. According to Peters (2012, p. 700), "journalism is now produced to interact with and provide multiple channels of access for audiences (Convenience)." Convenience is an important element to Generation Z when consuming news and when choosing the platforms from which to consume the news. Modiegi Mashamaite expressed that:

> *I use my phone because it's easier and it's convenient. I don't have to wait for my laptop to load, I just click on a link and it takes me to whatever site instantly. I like convenience* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Likewise, Sarah James (Fourth-year B. Journ specialisation in Digital Media) shared that:

> *My phone is the easiest to use as I'm on the go a lot of the time. When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is have a look on my phone to see what's happened while I've been sleeping. So, my phone is the easiest and most accessible than having to carry around a laptop* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Theme four: Using social media to access news

In the context of other sources of news, the respondents reported on the importance of social media as a source of news relative to other sources. It is noteworthy that social media are amongst online news commonly consulted as sources of news other than media like television, news websites and even print newspapers. According to Newman (2011 in Nel & Westlund 2013, p. 181), "Facebook and Twitter have become increasingly important for news accessing, hence the rise of mediated social discovery of the news." For instance, Sive Matinjwa (JMS graduate) said:

> *I follow most news outlets on social media as compared to visiting their actual websites like News24. I prefer using social media for news because I believe it's the fastest way to get access to news and it feels more like everything is at your fingertips. I also prefer using social media [because it gives me] an opportunity to filter the content that is available according to my preference* (Interview: 09 May 2019).

Social media and sharing of news content

Describing her social media news sharing experience, Catherine White (Fourth-year B. Journ specialisation in Digital Media) said:

> *I often source news on Facebook. I'm always on Facebook for various reasons and I think it's become part of my everyday life. It just makes it so much easier when*

> *something pops up news wise or when someone shares something from some article or page and I just access it that way* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

Similarly, Sara James shared that:

> *I access my news on social media. Primarily on Facebook, I like a lot of pages and if those pages share things then I will open those or if friends share things, then I will have a read through that* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Karlsen (2015, p. 302) explains that individuals who are connected in digital networks will be exposed to a wide range of messages they do not actively seek out. This is as a result of the interests and behaviour of the people they are connected to, for example, their friends or family on Facebook. In addition, the ability to click the 'share' link on social media means that users can recommend links and news content, stimulating and facilitating conversations (Nel & Westlund 2013, p. 181). For example, Sarah James expressed that she likes using Facebook because it allows her to share a link to a post:

> *When using Facebook, I click on one link, then related recommended articles pop up and I like these recommendations. This happens also on YouTube whereby I'll be watching one video then I'll see more related videos being suggested and I watch that, she said* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

The prevalent use of social media demonstrates that Generation Z do not want to spend too much effort on news in terms of going to news websites. Instead, they prefer social media for news as this is easy to use and it is not just news that they scroll through, but other content, while also engaging in virtual socialising. Swart et al. (2017, p. 1351) suggest that, "although news websites and apps might be perceived as low-effort news media by journalist professionals, users experience this differently." For instance, Modiegi Mashamaite shared that:

> *I browse the internet, Facebook and Twitter for news. I [like this because] I don't have to go through [an] App to know what's happening. Thus, I [prefer social media] because I don't necessarily have to go and search for the news, the news finds me* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Correspondingly, Siphumelele Dyakophu (Third-year JMS) explained that:

> *I use mostly social media on my mobile phone to access news. I use this because I feel it is easier and you don't have to search for the news, it just comes up on your Facebook newsfeed* (Interview: 23 April 2019).

Theme five: News apps are not popular

Most of the respondents expressed that they don't have a news app and that they prefer to access news through search engines, social media or news aggregators. For example, Bokang Khuto said that she does not have a news app because:

> *I don't have space in my phone and whenever I want to download other Apps, I just delete the news App. However, I have subscribed on the internet to get news automatically through notifications* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Other respondents like Michelle Banda, likewise, expressed that:

> *I deleted my news App because of space issues. However, I do think that a news app is reliable because it provides news every moment* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Newman et al. (2018) in the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* found that "the fastest growing gateway to news over the last three years has been mobile news alerts. These resonate with younger users who frequently start their day with the lock screen. Picking up on this opportunity, publishers have been sending more alerts on a wider range of subjects." However, contrary to the *Digital News Report 2018* findings, the present research found that most Generation Z like Karabo Dikobe expressed that they no longer have news apps because they dislike the constant notifications:

> *I used to have news apps only because my journalism studies required that we have them. I found them annoying because of the many notifications that kept popping up every minute with headlines. I like them, but they can be a little bit in your face with giving you news. However, I think that they are very good in terms of keeping you updated and they kind of bridge the gap between social media and newspapers. They somewhat bring the two together* (Interview: 25 April 2019).

Newman et al. (2018) explain that the reason for these relatively high number of alerts from too many different providers is that "aggregators like Apple News and Upday are now sending alerts automatically in addition to individual news providers. This has increased the number of alerts but also the number of duplicate alerts," causing some confusion about where alerts come from.

Only one Generation Z from the 20 respondents confirmed having something close to a news app:

> *SuperSport is the closest thing to a news App that I have. I have thought of having one before, it's just the case of how annoying phones can be when downloading an App*

> *about not having enough phone space. It then becomes an inconvenience when I must delete other stuff, said Ntuthuko Mlondo* (Interview: 26 April 2019).

Another respondent, Sara James explained that she does not have a news app because,

> *I can still see what's happening in the world on YouTube and other platforms* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Theme six: "It depends" – Convenience, Context, Situation

Most of the respondents interviewed distinguished between the ways they access the news when at university and when at home. This relates to the changing notions of space, speed and convenience. Many explained that they access print media and TV news when at home because it is the media available to them through their parents. Nonhlanhla Gumede said that,

> *When I'm at home, TV is an option but not so much for news but it's more for current affairs* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Taneja et al. (2012, pp. 1-2) argue that "internet users can access content at home, work and increasingly, on the go. Media consumption seems to have become an anywhere, anytime proposition." Ntuthuko Mlondo explained that:

> *It's kind of split between life at university and life at home because I have internet access here at Rhodes. At Rhodes, I access news from Facebook either on my phone or through my laptop. When I am home, I access my news through Facebook on my phone because I don't have Wi-Fi and as it's cheaper using data bundles on a phone [than a laptop or computer]. I also watch a lot of sports news on TV when at I'm home, as compared to streaming it live on the internet when I'm at Rhodes. But the constant platform in both situations is social media, namely Facebook* (Interview: 26 April 2019).

The fact that Ntuthuko Mlondo chooses to use social media more than other platforms, even though he has access to different media proves the proposition by Taneja et al. (2012) that even with an abundant choice of media, "no one person uses all these media. Instead, people cope with the abundance of choice by relying upon relatively small subsets, or 'repertoires' of their preferred media."

The interviewees also distinguish that the device they choose to use in accessing news is dependent on the situation they find themselves in. Nonhlanhla Gumede said:

> *The device I choose to use really depends on where I am, at what time and what I'm doing. If I'm on the go/walking and want to check what's happening, then I use my*

> *phone. But if I'm sitting down, like in a library, then I would most likely use my laptop. So, it's a balance of both. It's very situational – it depends on where I am, at what time and what I'm doing* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Nonhlanhla Gumede's response relates to Swart et al.'s (2017, p. 1343) argument that through digitisation, "news users increasingly choose their own trajectories across the media landscape and follow the news on multiple media platforms." The multiple media platforms have also empowered Generation Z by giving them the choice to navigate the news content they want to use, when, where, and how they want to use or access it. For example, Michelle Banda said:

> *I use social media. But when I wake up, I just switch on the news either on the radio, [or] on my laptop – it really depends on how much time I have* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

7.3.2 Channels of accessing news: Do you view Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter as platforms for accessing or sourcing news? And of the mobile phone tool as a channel of accessing news?

According to Westlund (2013), "legacy news media are aware of contemporary changes in how people access the news" and legacy media anticipate mobile news consumption to surpass that of personal computers; and for new media and social media to surpass legacy news mediums.

An interesting finding by the 20*18 Reuters Institute Digital News Report*, which aimed to understand how news is being consumed in a range of countries (Europe, Americas and Asia Pacific), found that "the use of social media for news has started to fall in a number of key markets after years of continuous growth. Almost all of this is due to a specific decline in the discovery, posting and sharing of news on Facebook." The 2018 report found there to be a rise in the use of messaging apps like WhatsApp, which is now being used for news, "as consumers look for more private (and less confrontational) spaces to communicate" (Newman et al. 2018). Furthermore, the report found that that WhatsApp has overtaken Twitter in importance in many countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia Pacific, and Instagram use for news "has taken off in Latin America and parts of Asia, particularly with younger users."

Theme one: WhatsApp and Instagram as private spaces to consume news

In this research, the respondents who viewed Instagram and WhatsApp as platforms for accessing news shared comments that a lot of communication occurs on these platforms and that social networks and messaging apps for news are not mutually exclusive. Most respondents who come across news on Facebook or Twitter then post this news on WhatsApp to start a discussion or simply to provide information. Nonhlanhla Gumede showed to have the understanding that:

> *If something has happened and someone broadcasts that on WhatsApp, this then can be a form of news for people who are getting that information. Although, WhatsApp is very limited because it is mainly used to text and to talk to people and not mainly as a source of accessing news* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

For Generation Z, following the news is very much a social experience. According to Costera Meijer (2006 in Swart et al. 2017, p. 1351), "young people see news as an important basic service which they hardly use because if it is really important, they will hear about it from others." Considering this, Thabo Matsaba (Third-year JMS) shared that:

> *I sourced the latest trending news about an event that happened in my hometown on WhatsApp. I saw this because someone updated their WhatsApp status with what was happening. So, in this way, I can say that WhatsApp does keep people abreast of their surroundings and the world. Likewise, [footballer] Lionel Messi was trending on WhatsApp statuses for scoring a [magnificent] goal – So, I regarded this as a source of information or news of the current happenings* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

Similarly, Sive Matinjwa said that she encounters news on Instagram and WhatsApp when watching people's statuses. Instagram and WhatsApp statuses function like a Facebook timeline in which friends share news stories. She explained that:

> *One can use Instagram and WhatsApp to source news because if you look at features such as the status or story updates, these have made it possible to share news. For me the first thing I do in the morning is to check WhatsApp and sometimes I come across something newsworthy from someone's status update then from there it could spark interest for me to follow that story on other platforms* (Interview: 09 May 2019).

Catching the news or headlines on these status updates can also mean that one does not have to actively search for news, but it is presented to them through shared approaches and clicking one or two can be sufficient to keep up to date about big news events happening. In a similar study by Swart et al. (2017, p. 1351), WhatsApp was found to be "an increasingly important

means to receive, share and discuss news with friends, colleagues and family in a more private setting."

However, other respondents in this research expressed that they do not use WhatsApp as a platform for accessing news. For example, Kharisma Mashego (JMS graduate) explained that she uses only Instagram or WhatsApp for news depending on the types of news that she is looking for:

> *Instagram and WhatsApp are not my go-to platform for hard news; however, I think these platforms are perfect for entertainment news. I know I can count on my contacts for match fixtures and results, fashion trends, celebrity gossip and weather updates* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

Correspondingly, Siphumelele Dyakophu expressed that she does not consider WhatsApp and Instagram as ways of accessing news as she felt that these two platforms are more for personalised communication.

Theme two: Mixed perceptions regarding news on Instagram

Newman et al. (2018, p. 12/13) in the 2018 *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* found that "publishers are changing their strategies in a bid to become less dependent on Facebook." Accordingly, the report found that more media companies have adopted the 'Instagram story' format, "which now attracts around 300m daily active users per day." Ntuthuko Mlondo expressed his understanding of news publishers that are active on Instagram, explaining that:

> *News organisation on Instagram are just there to keep up with the times and are trying to be relevant because most people are now drawn to Instagram and WhatsApp. So, it makes sense for them to move to these platforms* (Interview: 26 April 2019).

In contrast to the above views, some of the respondents shared that they consider Instagram an outlet for sharing pictures and not accessing or sharing news. Bokang Khuto said,

> *Instagram does not provide much of news, it provides more of fashion and celebrity content, which is the kind of content I enjoy* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Interestingly, Bokang Khuto also expressed a lack of trust in the news provided on social media. She explained that she does not use Instagram, Facebook or Twitter for news because

she regards news on those platforms as "*unreliable news and false news. So, I make sure that I go to a reliable source like News24, which is credible news*" (Interview: 27 April 2019).

In contrast, Ntuthuko Mlondo perceived Instagram as:

> *Mainly just about ego-centric people and photography, whether it's photos of themselves or topics of interest* (Interview: 26 April 2019).

Sarah James shared a rather optimistic perception of Instagram, noting that:

> *Instagram is more to me a photo platform. It's not so much a text-based platform. So, I would say people use Instagram as like a secondary kind of news platform. Although, I think it is probably useful for news organisations to use Instagram considering the changing trends of things and more people leaving Facebook for Instagram* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

While Modiegi Mashamaite expressed that:

> *I am not [convinced] by the news organisations that use Instagram because I feel like Instagram limits you to it being a personal platform and I don't think it has that professionality – I just don't find it applicable for a news outlet* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Some of the respondents mentioned that there are some challenges with using Instagram for news. For instance, Sarah James said:

> *For me, Instagram is not very effective as it does not let you post hyperlinks in your comments and captions. If I'm going to post something, I want to be able to click on a hyperlink, but people will say 'link in the bio' – it's a pain because I have to go to your page and find the link* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Bokang Khuto expressed challenges relating to the cost of data, stating that:

> *I think that it is fine for news organisation to use Instagram, the problem is that it needs a lot of data. So, I personally would not source news on Instagram especially when not connected to Wi-Fi.*

The issue of data is one of the major problems confronting some Generation Z when having access to online media. This relates to the digital divide issue, which Van Dijk (2006) puts as "the unequal distribution of access to information communications technology (ICT) between society's 'haves' and 'have-nots'." The digital divide goes beyond access to computers and smart phones and includes the inability to engage with new technologies and online platforms because of the lack of data or Wi-Fi internet connectivity. The digital divide persists as data

costs are still relatively high in many African countries compared to the rest of the world (Wangari 2017, in African Youth GeoPoll Survey Reports). For students particularly, this could inhibit their online activity when not connected to the university Wi-Fi. The digital divide issue in Africa can also include factors such as "age, education, income and in some cases, gender still differentiate who uses the internet and who does not, who is active on social media and who is inactive" (Poushter et al. 2018, Pew Research Center Survey p. 4).

Theme three: Twitter for faster news

Twitter has also become a major medium for journalists and news outlets to disseminate news. Generation Z consider Twitter as an important platform in their news consumption experience. For example, Sive Matinjwa expressed that:

> *One of the biggest benefits of Twitter is that you no longer have to wait for the scheduled times to get news; e.g. you no longer have to wait for the news hour on radio or television, now you can get access much faster* (Interview: 09 May 2019).

This opinion highlights the idea that Twitter is used for first-hand reporting of events as they occur. In accordance with this, Siphumelele Dyakophu also expressed that:

> *Twitter is a reliable social media network to access news, if you use the right handles* (Interview: 23 April 2019).

Many Generation Z respondents interviewed shared an optimistic preference for using Twitter to access news. Some of the respondents shared that:

> *Twitter is very effective. I can fairly engage with news enough to understand it* (Michelle Banda, Interview: 27 April 2019).
>
> *I use Twitter to access news. I think it's good, it allows me to engage with the news through retweeting, clicking on links easily and it's easy to comment on news* (Simamkele George, Interview: 04 May 2019).

Similarly, Modiegi Mashamaite expressed that:

> *It's very easy to access and use through links. It's easier to engage with news through retweets* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Indeed, new communications platforms like Twitter enable interaction and online participation with news in ways that are easier and faster than traditional platforms. Karabo Dikobe expressed her appreciation of Twitter, stating that:

> *Twitter is quick, I feel that we get the news first on Twitter before any other media and I appreciate that. I like the instant effect. Also, because it's on Twitter, the headline needs to catch you and it needs to give you everything* (Interview: 25 April 2019).

Generation Z appreciate speed and the instantaneity of social media. For example, Thabo Matsaba explained that he preferred Twitter because:

> *It is more instant. I also see it more as an educational platform because if you make uninformed tweets then people point it out and correct you – unlike WhatsApp which is more personal between yourself and your selected friends* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

Smartphone owners use their phones to follow breaking news; and Generation Z like Siya Nyulu (Fourth-year B. Journ Digital Media) find that,

> *Twitter is the perfect platform for news because you can share things as they happen* (Interview: 24 April 2019).

For others, it leads to mixed experiences of "distraction and frustration" (Swart et al. 2017, p. 1344). For instance, Nonhlanhla Gumede stated that,

> *The problem is that when a news organisation puts out [a news item] on Twitter, it either gets lost in the hub or someone takes it and flips it and it can be quite comedic* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

This means that, although news has become easier to follow, it has also become overwhelming as a result of the wide amount of news and online media activity. Similarly, Jessica Evans expressed that:

> *Twitter is very accessible but at the same time, you are very much overwhelmed with other people talking about some celebrity, then someone is tweeting about their cat – so it's very sensory overload in a way* (Interview: 24 April 2019).

Kharisma Mashego also shared mixed experiences about Twitter, stating that:

> *It is a great platform to access trending topics; who and what is making headlines. But, to get the gist of the story; the 'how, when and why', you have to do your own digging because most Twitter news stories are more of opinion pieces. Twitter has what I call 'premature news'. People see something or hear about it and then rush off to create a hashtag before/without collecting all the facts* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

The Twitter network has become so big that some Generation Z like Bokang Khuto expressed that they do not feel comfortable sharing content openly:

> *I don't use Twitter. I'm scared of Twitter because of [platforms] like Black Twitter. I am very opinionated, so I think that I could land in trouble or start conflicts on Twitter* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

As a result, according to the *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News Report*, people who are no longer feeling comfortable sharing content openly are "moving discussions to messaging apps where they can be sure that they are talking to 'real friends'. This is sometimes referred to as context collapse," an idea reflected in Bokang's Twitter experience.

7.3.3 News consumption choices: What content do you consume from the media?

If news, what type of news content?

This question was important to ask because according to Dugmore (2018, p. 3), "the number of people just 'not that into news' seems to be increasing as time spent on social media overall increases each year, with only some of that time given over to news consumption." To highlight this statement by Dugmore, Michelle Banda said:

> *I really read everything and what I read depends on whether the headline catches my attention. Although, I'm mostly on social media for the gossip and trends than news. [However], I do like politics news because they touch base on what we are facing at a point in time* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Many of the respondents expressed that they consume a lot of different news content from the media. For instance, Karabo Dikobe explained that,

> *It always depends on what's happening currently and what affects me* (Interview: 25 April 2019).

Nonhlanhla Gumede shared that she consumes a lot of things:

> *It's a little bit of everything. In terms of news, I am interested in politics because of mainly how it affects society, but I wouldn't say that I am fully invested in it. I'm more interested in people-focused/interest news and current affairs, she said* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Nonhlanhla's opinion demonstrates a preference for popular and light news media that most Generation Z enjoy. However, this does not mean that they are uninterested in hard news topics such as politics, even though they consume subsets of hard news. This means that they enjoy a mix of serious and light news media. Considering this, Kharisma Mashego explained:

> *[I consume] Everything! Hard news, sports, entertainment, lifestyle. Alles! WHY? I know what's happening around affects me one way or another, so I like to stay informed, so I can make better decisions, form well-versed opinions on the subject matter at hand (especially politics), stay relevant and make lifestyle adjustments where I need to* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

As the Generation Z respondents consume a lot of different news, from current affairs shows, to gossip, they combine news genres into one very diverse media repertoire. Thabo Matsaba said,

> *I consume everything as I don't get to choose what's trending* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

Other respondents like Bulelani Nonyukela (Fourth-year B. Journ specialisation in Digital Media) expressed that:

> *Current Affairs shows summarise the most important news for the day – so after listening to current affairs I feel like I've been informed about what is happening in the country* (Interview: 03 May 2019).

Similarly, Bokang Khuto said:

> *Most of the news which grab my attention are current affairs like the cyclone in Mozambique and other horrific news of national and global attention* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Even respondents who explained that they don't consume lots of news shared that they would most likely consume news if it reported on something out of the ordinary. For example, Sarah James said:

> *I don't consume a crazy amount of news. When there is breaking news such as the fire that broke at Notre-Dame and New Zealand, I would then read about that. I only consume news whenever there is a breaking story or current affairs of current happenings* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

7.3.4 <u>Relevant sources of news:</u> Do you regard social and online media as relevant sources of news?

In research about born frees' use of media, Malila (2013) found that, "fewer than four in ten young people (39.1%) reported that mainstream newspapers contained news that was relevant to them." In contrast, in terms of this research, the respondents shared that:

> *Social media platforms have an ability of providing credible news in as much as they all have an ability to produce news that can be regarded as not credible. In terms of relevancy I would say the social and online media have given me an opportunity to gain access to news that are relevant enough for me as compared to print* (Sive Matinjwa, Interview: 09 May 2019).

While another respondent, Modiegi Mashamaite said:

> *I find online media to be relevant. It is important for [journalists] to Tweet what they were writing about [because] people want news now. They don't want to go to the shops and flip through five pages before finding a news story. A striking headline on Twitter can instantly grab someone's attention. I find the Twitter platform as a credible source of information because it limits you to [280] characters and you need to make sure that you tell the whole story in that limited text. [Online media] is also more relevant because everyone is moving towards digital* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Two contrasting arguments were made by respondents Simamkele George and Kharisame Mashego. Simamkele George said:

> *I do regard online media as credible because I trust that the news companies online are credible. I don't even read print because they are not as accessible as news online. Online is more convenient, even if print was free, I wouldn't read it. I don't want to be carrying a paper around* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

While Kharisma Mashego said:

> *Relevancy? Absolutely. Credibility? I don't think so. Print has the legitimacy of journalism that online tends to ignore or dilute. I think that a part of this has to do with that fact that anyone can be a journalist on social and online media. Subjective reporting seeps through the facts, headlines are exaggerated and simple things like grammar/spell errors go unnoticed and ultimately change the context of the story* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

The statement by Kharisma Mashego demonstrates that Generation Z are very much aware of the social and civic importance attributed to quality news. Generation Z attribute different levels of credibility to media sources. For example, Thabo Matsaba said:

> *Online media is credible because there are credible sources. However, you do still find unreliable information and that's why I follow News24 online because I know they have legit stuff* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

Similarly, Sarah James expressed that:

> *Online is very much credible. Although people are more likely to trust what they read in a newspaper than what they read online. What you read online can be a credible source if it's coming from a legitimate or reputable publication then it's credible* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

These opinions by Generation Z respondents highlight that, quality, truth and credibility are more important than ever to Generation Z. Journalists thus need to retain conventional quality standards of online news. In light of this, Jessica Evans shared a similar perspective, that:

> *Social and online media is relevant, especially if there is no paywall. I feel that online media is relevant and better, although there's the digital divide, everyone who has a smart phone can access news. So, I find online to be more equal, accessible and fair. It's also credible, but it depends on the website. At the same time, online media makes news accessible, it is also dangerous and can be misinterpreted and misinformation can spread very quickly* (Interview: 24 April 2019).

Theme one: The credibility assigned to print media

In a different study, Chyi and Lee (2013) found that online newspaper users might actually prefer print rather than digital formats. For instance, in this research Nonhlanhla Gumede said:

> *With print media, you can be sure that it's edited. It seems to be more authentic in the sense that a journalist physically went to cover an event* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Similarly, Michelle Banda said:

> *I find print media more credible because I trust that before [news] go through printing, it has gone through a thorough check, although it does sometimes have minor fake or misleading information* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Even though young people are less likely to read a newspaper, they are more likely to find it credible. For instance, Karabo Dikobe said:

> *I still find print more relevant. It has that thing that it's kind of hard to fake and I like that about it. But because of how tedious it's become, it's easier to use my phone* (Interview: 25 April 2019).

Bokang Khuto also expressed similar sentiments that:

> *I rely on print media because it's a hard copy. I trust that it has been through many editing processes before it can be approved to go out there. With social media, at some point there can be a mistake because it's rushed news.*

Parental influence also plays a significant impact on young people's attitudes to print newspaper reading and is important in forming information seeking behaviour. For example, Sarah James summarised her news consumption experiences by explaining that:

> *Newspapers have always been in my life because of my parents and the work that I've done has always been for print media but because I'm a young person in this digital age, I think I get a lot more of my media online because there is so many cool things that you can do online in terms of multimedia possibilities. It is impossible to make a multimedia story in print; it must be done online. Online allows for visual effects and many more opportunities – although I've grown up with print, I'm more connected to online* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Theme two: Issues of Trust and Fake news on online media

Many of the respondents expressed concern about deciding 'what is real or fake' when thinking about online news. For instance, Michelle Banda said:

> *I don't feel like online is credible because sometimes there is fake news going on* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Catherine White expressed that:

> *Print is dying; print is already dead. With this new generation, you can only go digital. Although I think it's a lot easier for people to create fake news online than to do that on print* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

In a similar concern, Lifikile Sigenu (Third-year JMS) was wary of online news:

> *I don't regard online news as credible because people can post anything – they make memes even from serious news. With print, I trust that it has gone through different checking processes* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

This perception by Lifikile demonstrates that a high degree of trust is linked to the use of traditional news sources. The respondents also showed concern about poor journalism, clickbait and biased/spun journalism. For example, Modiegi Mashamaite stated that:

> *With digital, people can easily misinterpret a story and mislead people with a story. Some news organisations use clickbait in their headlines for people to access their stories, and you find that the headline is not even about the story* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Karabo Dikobe was conflicted about whether to regard social and online media as more relevant and credible as opposed to print media in terms of providing news. She expressed that:

> *The thing with social media is how fast things are and how easy it is to forget what happened yesterday as compared to today. I don't think you should use [online media] as your only source. What I do is that if I see a headline on Twitter, I go on Google and check if it's a real thing that's happening. This is because sometimes things can be falsified, and a lot of it can be clickbait and I'm trying to avoid that* (Interview: 25 April 2019).

By further searching on Google to verify news shows there is a lack of trust in news on social media; more so than if the search was merely directed to obtain further information.

7.3.5 <u>Media connection:</u> Do you feel connected to mainstream print (i.e. newspapers) and online media?

Kharisma Mashego affirmed that she felt more connected to online media than print media, explaining that:

> *I definitely feel connected to online media. I love online media for several reasons, but* ***interaction*** *takes front page. 'Leave your comment', 'Share your thoughts', 'Like'; these call-to-action phrases serve one purpose: to engage with the prospective audience. I absolutely love seeing these phrases at the end of a post and applaud websites that feature them (communication is a two-way street after all). It makes me feel as though my opinion is valued, that I'm part of the discussion, whereas with print I feel like the publication's word is final and 'Write to us' is just a formality that they are adhering to* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

Interactivity, as expressed by Kharisma Mashego, is a defining characteristic of new media. According to Ariel and Avidar (2015, p. 25), the new platforms are not inherently interactive but rather enable interactivity and make online participation easier and faster than traditional platforms. Similarly, Sive Matinjwa stated that she also felt more connected to online media:

> *I believe that online media affords me an opportunity of media* ***interaction*** *i.e. being able to interact with the news producers. Whereas with print media, it is very difficult to interact with the news producers. For example, with online media one can engage with the news producers through commenting and if you are lucky enough, you might get a reply from the news outlet. You also get to engage with people who share their*

> *views on the comments section, while for newspapers this is impossible* (Interview: 09 May 2019).

Interactivity for these two respondents means being able to use a social media network, for instance Twitter, in terms of being able to initiate and sustain communication using the reply, retweet (i.e. republish) and mention functions.

With digital technology becoming interwoven into Generation Z's lives, an interesting link between research questions four and five is that, whilst most Generation Z felt that online media is not credible, they nonetheless still felt more connected to online media than print media. Like Lifikile Sigenu said:

> *I feel more connected to online media even though it's not credible. I like the visuals. I must at least see a picture or headline and be like 'Oh, I know what's going on here' before I go through the story. I'm not connected to print media – imagine me taking a newspaper, Oh No! maybe I'm too lazy!* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

This suggests that younger online audiences use media in various ways and have different interests than elderly audiences, which in general are committed to traditional media and in particular to print newspapers (Ghersetti 2014, p. 379).

Nonhlanhla Gumede said that she engages more with online media than print media:

> *… but I wouldn't also mind picking up a print paper. I feel more connected to the online media because it's faster to get. It's all about convenience and being quick (like if I click on a page, it's going to open up, whereas for the print media I may have to wait a day for that issue to come out)* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

The preference of an online news experience, as explained by Nonhhlanhla Gumede, means that the online user is not bound to a single news outlet and can move to a different site with just a click of the mouse button.

Modiegi Mashamaite shared that she is conflicted between print media and online media, stating that:

> *I feel connected to online media but also print. With print, it's more tangible. [With online media], digital content can be lost very quickly and easily. For example, if you look at a story now, it's going to be harder for you to go back, as things are constantly updated. Whereas with print, you still have that hardcopy and you can still go back to refer to it. [Nevertheless], I could say that I feel more connected to digital because I'm always on my phone* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

In contrast, Catherine White said:

> *Online media does not disappear like how a newspaper is perishable. What's great about online media is that you can access it from any device. [So], [I] definitely [feel more connected to] online media, because it's accessible and easy to use – I can carry it around and access it wherever I go as long as I have internet connection* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

Karabo Dikobe responded that she relates more to online media, explaining that:

> *As much as I prefer print media, I'm more connected to online media because it's a lot more ongoing and current all the time. Print media especially being restricted to text and not multimedia, can get very academic and hard to relate to. Whereas, social media bridges that gap. So instead of writing long wordy headlines, they write something succinct that I can understand* (Interview: 25 April 2019).

Similarly, Michelle Banda gave a firm response that:

> *Online is the way to go! I'm more connected to my phone. I can't really live without my phone because I'm not about to be buying newspapers. But at home my dad buys a newspaper every day, but I rarely read it. I just scroll down on the paper and browse the news from the headlines that are catchy* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

The response by Michelle Banda relates to Meijer's (2007, p. 98) argument that, "if [young people] show concern for news at all, they appear mainly interested in following news headlines which is why some mockingly refer to them as 'spotlight chasers'."

Interestingly, Thabo Matsaba also responded that he felt more connected to online media:

> *… because we live online. If I spend like an hour without being online, I suddenly feel detached from the world because I don't know what's going on. When I log in and find trending news, that one hour that I missed makes me feel like I have not been online for years because I find that I've missed out on so much* (Interview: 04 May 2019).

Bokang Khuto expressed that she shared a strong connection with her phone:

> *I am more connected to online because with print media you must carry it around and us Gen Z, we want to carry a phone and that's what we always have in our hands. I'll only read print when I find it available for free* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Bokang Khuto's comment regarding free print media emphasises Ghersetti's (2014, p.374) argument, that "today's newspaper markets are characterised by the loss of paying readers, mainly among young people who turn to free online news."

Likewise, Siphumelele Dyakophu stated that she felt more connected to:

> *Online media because it is free and easier to access, unlike with print media which you would most likely have to pay for* (Interview: 23 April 2019).

The responses by Bokang Khuto and Siphumelele Dyakophu highlight the argument made by Qayyum et al. (2010, p.179) that traditional newspaper publishers face a decline in the reading of their print publications, a further decline in subscriber base and stiff competition from online environments where "dynamic and free news sites are plentiful."

Jessica Evans shared an interesting experience, that the fact that online media is free counts in her favour:

> *If I'm holding a magazine, I feel that I engage with it much better than when reading a digital magazine. In that way, tangible media is better. I'm more invested if it's in front of me in paper, but I don't often buy print media unless I have a specific purpose. However, I do read more online because it's free most of the time, and easy to get – compared to a magazine which I would have to go to the shop to purchase. So, I read more online even though I feel more connected to tangible media* (Interview: 24 April 2019).

7.3.6 <u>Relevance:</u> What would you like to see more on online media platforms including social media that you think would be relevant to your Generation (i.e. Generation Z)?

Generation Z want news to be presented in a concise and factual manner. For example, Michelle Banda said:

> *Sometimes I feel like news outlets should break down the text – it's too much for my generation. The thing is, we get bored while reading through long texts. So, I want something like illustrations, pictures, videos and make it colourful and something that can be relatable* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

In light of this, Meijer (2007, p. 99) mentions that:

> news items also seldom touch on the lives and experience of young people and that for news to become more relevant to them, it should be linked up more closely with their sense of the world and be presented in a more entertaining style, while positive news items should not be excluded.

The emphasis on the need to deliver positive news items can be seen from the interview response of Sive Matinjwa, who expressed that:

> *As a person who is more interested in current affairs, I would like to see a bit of success stories because most of the time you see all these negative stories. Not to say that this*

> *is bad, but a bit of success stories would have a positive impact in our communities* (Interview: 09 May 2019).

Considering this, Head et al. (2018, p. 36) emphasise that, "news organizations must rethink the balance between focusing on negative disruptions, which will always take place and stories that can educate and spotlight what works well."

Theme one: Video news content

Sarah James shared that she sees a need for more video content:

> *My [journalism] class has been looking a lot at these multimedia stories that have been produced which involves audio, video, photos, text, moving graphics, infographics and they are massive to produce and we've only found very few that have been produced by big organisations. So, I think those kinds of stories that incorporate multimedia would be amazing to see more of, but either than that, journalism is changing, and we need to view journalists in a story-telling light and the value of that* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Similarly, Catherine White said that as a student specialising in television media, she would like to see more visuals and video content in terms of news on social media platforms. She also emphasised that such videos would need to be short, comparing them to citizen journalism. She explained that:

> *We upload a lot of photographs than videos on online platforms. Consequently, with photos it becomes easy to photoshop but with video it would be a lot more difficult to make something look like something it's not. The average user can't necessarily manipulate a video the way that they can manipulate a photo. This way of communicating is the future. For example, me being dyslexia, I prefer speech, visuals, I don't necessarily want to go on social media and read something* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

Further findings like the response from Catherine White highlight that Generation Z prefer news that is presented as visuals and motion or video rather than news that is presented as text.

Theme two: News should be free

Michelle Banda shared that she is not in support of news websites that require you to subscribe or sign in before you can access the full news article:

> *... I understand where they are coming from, because the moment we subscribe, they are getting money. News should be free and accessible for everyone because we want to know what's going on in our country, she said* (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Theme three: The need for credible news and filtering measures

> *I would like to see more informative, credible news that is more relevant and educational* (Simamkele George, Interview: 04 May 2019).

Most Generation Z respondents like Simamkele George expressed issues relating to credibility and the need for online news platforms to maintain truth. Thabo Matsaba also explained that he would like to see better ways of reporting and filtering fake news because that distorts the authentic sources.

> *… Fake news misleads society and communities sometimes act out of misinformation only to find out that the news was not true. I would like to see the content being checked more before going online to make sure that it is credible* (Thabo Matsaba, Interview: 04 May 2019).

The issue of credibility relates to the fact that the speed at which news is published has increased, which has meant that journalists have shortened the time to process and verify information. According to Ghersetti (2014, p.377), "a number of studies have focused on the issue of accuracy, partly referring to factual error and partly to stories published while incomplete." Ghersetti (*ibid*) further confirms that the number of errors is higher in online than print news.[27] Similarly, Jessica Evans explained that:

> *Websites should have the responsibility to only post stories that are credible and not sensationalist* (Interview: 24 April 2019).

In highlighting the issue of accessibility, Jessica further mentioned that:

> *Everything is relevant, it's just a matter of accessing it. For example, what is in a newspaper is probably relevant to everyone because it covers all topics, but it is not accessible to everyone because it is not online* (Interview: 24 April 2019).

[27] See Appendix I as an example of a factual error in an online post published by eNCAnews on 1 June 2019.

With a different perspective, Ntuthuko Mlondo expressed that:

> *I follow sports columns and people that comment on posts comment with emotion and it would be great if news organisations could filter that. This really frustrates me as a reader. People don't give constructive criticism when commenting. I want to see people engaging in a constructive manner and not necessarily attacking the writer. I would also like measures to make sure that this does not happen* (Interview: 26 April 2019).

For similar reasons that Ntuthuko Mlondo mentions, the 2018 *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* found that consumers are slowly relying less on Facebook for news and are finding alternative networks like WhatsApp and Instagram, which are seen to offer "more convenience, greater privacy and less opportunity to be misunderstood" (p. 53). Which alternatively means, less toxic debates and exposure to unreliable news.

Theme four: The need for fast and reliable connectivity

In a world where real-time chats have made rapid communication the new norm for Generation Z, speed characterises the flow of information among vast networks. As a result, Tapscott (2009, p. 35) posits that "the Net Gen has a need for speed", as content takes place faster than ever. Interestingly, one respondent expressed that they would like to see online platforms functioning at a higher speed than they are currently operating. Uyanda Ntloko (First-year JMS) said:

> *Well, I would like these platforms to upgrade or develop in terms of working faster than they do now, provide sufficient information than bias information and stop making misleading ads* (Interview: 01 May 2019).

Correspondingly, a 2010 report by Booz & Company studying the rise of digital natives predicted that, "this generation will expect fast, reliable connectivity through which they will create direct commercial links with a multitude of online business partners" (Friedrich et al. 2010, p. 4). In addition, Peters (2012, p. 699) explains that journalism is now produced to adjust for the faster pace of the information age.

Bokang Khuto expressed a similar need, saying that:

> *Online news can be made better in terms of how news is presented and how links are provided. Sometimes you must click on multiple links to access a news site, so I feel that*

news organisations should cut down on this and provide us with a direct link to a news page instead of clicking this and that before reaching the page that you want.

Theme five: The future of news

According to Nel and Westlund (2013, p. 182), "many in industry and academia have (normatively) prescribed rather cyberoptimistic, even technologically deterministic, views on how the future will and should be shaped." Similar sentiments were shared by Kharisma Mashego, who said:

> *I would like to see more Apps. We [Generation Z] like things simplified so I think it would be really cool to have an app that has all the online media publications where you can compare top stories and see the different takes that each publication has (like BibleHub and Trivago). Readers should be able to send other media formats (audios, videos) on the comment section as well. Lastly, I know I'm going overboard but virtual reality is the future. I'm not quite sure of the detailed mechanics, but what if readers could be in supporting videos using virtual reality technology? I think it will super cool to read a story about President Ramaphosa delivering a speech in parliament and before you press the supporting video, you wear your virtual reality goggles and boom, you are in parliament, seated alongside the honourable MOPs. (Awesomeness!)* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

Such sentiments imply that news organisations have yet to explore the full potential of networked digital media. These innovative ideas of how Generation Z would prefer their news delivered to them means that news organisations need to invest in appropriate technology, and equipping journalists with new skills and attitudes to facilitate interactivity (Nel & Westlund 2013, p. 181). The *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News Report* concludes that, "new technologies like voice activated interfaces and artificial intelligence are on the way offering new opportunities but also new challenges for audiences, regulators and media companies alike" (Newman et al. 2018). In general, the future of news remains uncertain.

7.4 RESULTANT THEMES

An outcome from the interviews conducted with the 20 Generation Z respondents was that they all consumed some form of news, although they do not follow the news avidly. What is clear, however, is that they are "information omnivores and technophiles", as described by Purcell et al. (2010, p. 45). In the new digital landscape, news has become omnipresent and accessible in multiple formats, on multiple platforms and on numerous devices. With the world moving

towards an increasingly digital, mobile and social media environment, competition for audience attention is intensifying. “More and more people get news via digital media, they increasingly access news via mobile devices (especially smartphones) and rely on social media and other intermediaries in terms of how they access and find news” (Reuters 2016, citing the Council of Europe report in Dugmore 2018, p. 38).

The 20 Generation Z respondents interviewed in this research use multiple platforms to access news on a typical day, with social media being the most commonly used and preferred channel. All the interviewees incorporated a wide variety of news topics into their news consumption routines. They engage with the news in hybrid ways, for example, consuming a bit of news content from social media, a news feed from a news organisation on Facebook, a friend’s status or story update, radio or TV broadcast media, free-of-charge local print newspaper and some satirical memes based on current affairs across digital platforms. Social media is at the centre of Generation Z’s relationship with news. In this new multi-platform media environment, Generation Z’s relationship to news and their news consumption experiences have been enhanced in three ways: by being portable, personalised and participatory.

7.4.1 Portable

First, Generation Z news experiences have become **portable** in the sense that they all confirmed that they own cell phones and access news using this device. Most of the respondents choose to use their cell phones because of their portability and convenience. For example, Catherine White explained that: “*My mobile phone is convenient. It’s with me all the time*” (Interview: 11 May 2019). Generation Z choose to use mobile phones to access news because most of them described that it is “*easier*” than traditional media. For example, Bokang Khuto said: “*I use my phone most of the time because I’m always holding it, it makes life much easier*” (Interview: 27 April 2019).

Peters (2012, p. 699) posits that because audiences experience the changing notions of space, speed and convenience, “journalism is now produced to facilitate increasingly mobile places of consumption (Space).” According to the *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Newman et al. 2018), the importance of smartphones and people’s dependence on them shows no sign of slowing down. The preference of the 20 Generation Z respondents for highspeed connection to the Internet using a mobile phone highlights Tapscott’s (2009, p. 49) finding that “connecting to the Internet with a mobile phone is cheaper than connecting by computer, which is why they’re growing so fast in Africa...”.

The 20 Generation Z experiences emphasise what Schroeder (2010, p. 76) implies, that mobile phones, including the use of the internet on mobiles, facilitate access to media content by anyone, anywhere and at any time. "Mobile phones are devices for more than interpersonal communication on the go, for example when they are used to access online news" (*Ibid*). This means that Generation Z no longer need to wait for a fixed moment of the day or sit down with news as appointment viewing; instead, they want to be able to satisfy their news needs instantly. Tapscott (2009, p. 44) also emphasises that, "the Net Generation isn't content to wait until 6 p.m. for the nightly news. They want it where and when they want it." As a result, they prefer to use the internet as it closely fits their need to "snack" news, rather than having to wait on conventional media (Meijer 2007, p. 109).

7.4.2 Personalised

Second, Generation Z news experiences have become **personalised** through customising their news preferences on their home page to include news from sources and topics that particularly interest them. In terms of personalisation, Kharisma Mashego explained that:

> *I really like cookies.*[28] *(Baked or computerized, cookies are just the best!) Because of cookies, I get customised webpages. There is nothing worse than paging through a newspaper that has news stories you have zero-interest for. Complete waste of time and money* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

Similarly, Sive Matinjwa said that she prefers using social media because she believes it is the fastest way to get access to news. She also mentioned that there are a lot of benefits of using social media for news, such as getting an opportunity to filter the content that is available according to her preference. While Kharisma Mashego explained that, in terms of personalising her news sources, she subscribes to *News24* and *Bizcommunity* for several reasons: "*For instance, it gives me more news choices and I can access news anywhere, anytime*" (Interview: 11 May 2019). This is in keeping with the findings by Qayyum et al. (2010, p. 182), who found that "young people wanted news on demand and to customise what information they received and how, when and where they received it."

[28] By Google definition: An HTTP cookie is data sent from a website that is stored on the user's computer by the web browser. Cookies allow websites to remember information or to record the user's browsing activity so that the website personalises the user's browsing experience.

Tapscott (2009, p. 34) explains that, digital natives love to customise and personalise; explaining that, "today's youth can change the media world around them – their desktop, Web site, news sources and entertainment. They have grown up getting what media they want, when they want it and being able to change it." Tapscott (2009) further added that they don't just access the Web, they are creating it by creating online content.

One of the ways in which Generation Z is getting personalised content and creating their own online content is through social media. The 20 Generation Z respondents reported that social media was the most important source for receiving news relative to other sources. With Facebook and Twitter attracting numerous active users, Messing and Westwood (2012, p. 3) emphasise that "the relationship between social media and news consumption must now be considered to be a fundamental part of our media environment." For instance, the *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News Report* also found that many of their respondents (65%) preferred to get to news through a "side door", social media, search engines or news aggregators, rather than going directly to a news website or app (Newman et al. 2018).

Messing and Westwood (2012, p. 3) identify that social media shapes the modern media landscape in two ways. First, the two theorists explain that social media displays content from different news providers in a single location and, consequently, users no longer need to select a news source; instead they select the story itself. "This represents a fundamental break from past modes of news consumption wherein people habituated themselves to a trusted source – instead social media users can select news from a wide range of sources deemed by friends or fellow internet users to be interesting or important," (Messing & Westwood 2012, p. 3). Second, Messing and Westwood identify that these developments allow users to select content even when they visit traditional news source websites directly because news providers now embed recommendations which appear on the story's original website. In addition, many embed stories recommended by a user's Facebook friends in the homepage of the original website. Nel and Westlund (2013, p. 186) also suggest that the rise of social media has triggered a third phase which is recommendations through social media, suggesting that recommendations "greatly advance the social sharing options that previously had only been possible through email forwarding".

Finding news via social media has become more widespread than going to the websites and apps of news organisations themselves. Social media acts as a platform that connects consumers with news publishers and other third parties because social media as a platform does

not produce its own news content (Newman et al. 2016). This also suggests that we are in an era where media is everywhere, and Generation Z use all kinds of media in relation to each other because of convergence. Generation Z engage simultaneously in multiple media activities, for example, a Generation Z working on their assignment may juggle multiple windows, scanning the web, catching up on their favourite series, while chatting with friends and listening to the radio – shifting rapidly between tasks. For example, Sarah James revealed that: "*I access Facebook mainly using my phone and at other times on my laptop. Even when I'm working, Facebook is always there on a tab open*" (Interview: 01 May 2019). Tapscott (2009, p. 106) suggests that "media multitasking is a quintessential characteristic of the Net Generation brain."

7.4.3 Participatory

Third, the new media environment enables Generation Z to **participate** in the creation of news. Purcell et al. (2010, p. 4) explain that "participation comes more through sharing than through contributing news themselves." Generation Z contribute to this by commenting about news in the comments section or by disseminating news via postings and using the share or retweet functionality on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. Kharisma Mashego stated that:

> *The comment section might raise a laugh at times, but I get to see different viewpoints from other readers, and it allows me to be part of the discussion* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

In addition, Catherine White shared that she prefers using Facebook for news because:

> *It is so much easier when something pops up news wise or when someone shares something from some article or page and I just access it that way* (Interview: 11 May 2019).

These interview responses from Generation Z respondents are revealing that a clear shift is taking place in audience's preferences for new consumption and exercise their ability to participate in news through sharing and commenting online. This shift is clearly a move away from print consumption towards broadcast consumption and participation in digital media. Through the sharing and commenting functionalities as discussed by Loosen and Schmidt (2012), Generation Z can be seen as "empowered networks".

Furthermore, the conceptualisation of "produsage" by Bruns (2008, 2010, 2012) means that these platforms have made it possible for users to act as recipients of news in one instance, while also reacting as editors of news content by sharing and commenting on news, as suggested by Loosen and Schmidt (2012). For instance, a user on Facebook can hit the 'share' button and post a comment that supplements the shared item or publishing of a link to the news article and this means that the roles of news consumers have become mixed. There is an increasing level of interactivity among both journalists and audiences through social media which is influencing patterns of accessing news. For this reason, Nielsen and Schroder (2014, p. 472) suggest that, "we are moving from a traditional 'news cycle' dominated by journalists and professional sources to a more complex 'information cycle' that integrates ordinary people in the ongoing construction and contestation of news."

7.5 News as a Shared Social Experience

Purcell et al. (2010, p. 2) in the *Pew Research Center's Project* highlight that news experiences, especially on the internet, have to a great extent become a shared social experience. This is because individuals can now swap links to news in their status updates, post news stories on their social networking site feeds, highlight news stories in their Tweets and hold discussions on social media news posts. According to Head et al. (2018, p. 17), "growing up with the ability to share and broadcast on social media is a characteristic that distinguishes this generation from others before them." This means that digital natives are the first generation of news consumers who have the full power of mass-communication and access to technology that is characterised by "speed, ease, wide choices and socially optimized and shareable content" – all provided by the contemporary internet and social media (The News Study Report 2018, p. 17).

The internet as a news platform has been integral in enabling these changes. Considering this, two significant technological trends have influenced news consumption: social media and mobile phones. First, social media has influenced news consumption behaviour, making news a social experience in multiple ways for Generation Z. Using social media, consumers can "filter, assess and react to news" (Hamzah and Mustafa 2014, p. 61). These social media features make news consumption a socially engaging activity, as respondents expressed that they get news items from people they follow, friends, individual journalists and news organisations on social networking sites. Second, the use of smart phones to access news has meant that news can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Bokang Khuto's response that the

mobile phone "*…is like a drive-through*" clearly highlights Purcell et al.'s (*ibid*) point that "news is pocket-sized". This means that Generation Z have fitted consuming news "on-the-go" using their mobile phones. The mobile device was in most cases understood by the respondents as the single most indispensable example of media technology, not only for news consumption but for keeping in touch with family members.

Generation Z seem to favour news media that make the news experience interactive, personal and enables social engagement. This means that Generation Z are not passive consumers of content produced by a few powerful news professionals or organisations but are active users who can produce and share or publish their own news. "Instead of consumers, they want to be prosumers – co-innovating products and services with producers," (Tapscott 2009, p. 36).

News consumption has become an overwhelming experience of headline notifications, alerts, tweets, posts and stories that come from news sites that Generation Z choose to follow, while other content comes uninvited on their timelines. As a demographic group, Generation Z are an important subset of news consumers. Head et al. (2018, p. 4) in *The News Study Report* highlight that, "to a large extent, the news habits young adults have today will determine the future of news production." Therefore, understanding the role of journalism in society, rests on understanding how young people gather, access, assess and engage with news now and the role news plays in their lives.

7.6 Multi-modal Connectedness

Due to the fact that the current media environment offers Generation Z an overwhelming number of media content choices, Schroeder (2010) introduces the concept of "multi-modal connectedness" which examines the whole range of information and communication technologies (ICTs) that individuals use in their media news consumption practices. The respondents interviewed appeared to be similarly connected in multi-modal ways. Schroeder (2010, p. 82) describes multi-modal connectedness as a useful tool for studying cross-cultural differences and similarities. He explains that, "the notion entails that people are increasingly tethered to each other via communication devices (whether we call such connectedness 'connected presence', 'co-presence', or 'always on')" (ibid).

The findings from this research suggest that the news diet of Generation Z is both multi-modal and multi-social in the sense that news not only comes from news organisations but from their peers and equally from social media platforms. This finding suggests that Generation Z have

diverse pathways to news, and they choose from a diverse menu of items that they regard as newsworthy (Head et al. 2018, p. 6). News is becoming woven in a variety of ways, not only from a news feed, a Facebook post or tweet, but platforms such as Instagram and more private platforms such as WhatsApp are channels in which some Generation Z consume their news by viewing the 'status stories' of the people they choose to follow. However, there is still an overwhelming reliance on Facebook and Twitter. What also become clear is that there is no one news organisation or social media that entirely dominates the total news experience of Generation Z news consumers; instead, they snack news headlines, stories and video snippets on multiple platforms on their smartphones.

Generation Z have complex patterns of media use, as they actively combine different news media sources, old and new, although with a preference for new media. The fact that Generation Z combine different news media sources means that they have higher levels of news literacy, which is according the Newman et al. (2018) associated with different news diets from a range of sources. Digital and mobile media offer more media and content options, higher mobility and users have more control over their content selection.

Considering this, Yuan (2011, p. 999) proposes a "repertoire-oriented approach" to news consumption. This approach is driven by the abundance of news consumption choices that Generation Z enjoy because of new media offerings. Consequently, Generation Z exercise an increasing degree of selectivity. In exercising selectivity, Taneja et al. (2012, p. 3) explain that users create "subsets of all available options and consume content from this smaller set." Taneja et al. (2012) refer to these subsets as "repertoires". Early studies focused on repertoire formation in television viewing, however, subsequent studies expanded the concept of repertoires beyond television viewing, to interpret consumption patterns across multiple media.

According to Yuan (2011, p. 999) "individual news users integrate multiple media platforms to form personal news repertoires for their news gratifications." This means that a person has a set of media sources that they consistently select for information. In a contemporary media environment, Generation Z take advantage of a whole range of media that can provide them with information on current events, from using mobile phones, to social media and print media, wherever they can find it.

7.7 Oversimplified and Fragmentary News

According to Head et al. (2018, p. 13), "technological changes have come to news production at a time of shrinking newsrooms [and] there are fewer reporters and diminished newsroom capacity." As a result, there has been a change in the way news is reported as well as the way it spreads. The findings from this research suggest that in their news consumption practices, Generation Z are wary of the proliferation of fake news and the oversimplified and fragmentary headlines that they come across on social media platforms. Most of the respondents mentioned possible journalistic bias of news coverage from tweets, citizen journalism and clickbait. This exemplifies how dramatically news distribution and reporting has changed. As a result, some respondents described their considerable distrust of news items posted on social media. They voiced their concerns about credibility of news from social media platforms and some expressed that they tend to trust print media more. As one interviewee said:

> *I don't use social media (both Facebook and Twitter) for news because mostly they are unreliable news and false news. So, I make sure that I go to a reliable source like News24, which I trust gives credible news. I go [directly] to the website for news. I [also] rely on print media because it's a hard copy, I trust that it has [gone] through many editing processes before it can be approved to go out to readers. With social media, at some point there can be a mistake because it's rushed news* (Bokang Khuto, Interview: 27 April 2019).

The idea that news on social media is 'rushed news' is an idea that some Generation Z hold; that the news is oversimplified and omits critical information while presenting fragmentary news. In terms of using WhatsApp as a platform to consume news, Bokang Khuto added that: "*With WhatsApp, you are basically getting news from other people who also heard the news from other people, so you can't trust them. You actually have to investigate yourself if a story is true*" (Interview: 27 April 2019). This opinion demonstrates that many Generation Z know that they need to evaluate, interpret and verify news as it is delivered today.

Understanding Generation Z's concern about 'fake' or unreliable news is a difficult area to research. Newman et al. (2018) explained that the term is "both poorly defined and highly politicised." However, like the findings by Newman et al. (2018, pp. 18-19), I find that when Generation Z expressed their concern about 'fake news', they are just as concerned about "poor journalism, clickbait, or biased/spun journalism." This is the type of misrepresentation that Generation Z say they are most often exposed to. This tells us that Generation Z regard trust, accuracy, telling the whole story, being unbiased and maintaining a balance as central elements that online news should maintain. In such an instance, the respondents have referred to trust

and credibility interchangeably, or with one seen as a component of the other. Generation Z's concerns relate to similar kinds of deception, largely perpetrated by content contributors on online platforms.

Generation Z are very much aware of the social civic importance attributed to quality news. In a similar study, Meijer (2007 p. 105) found that young people can make a distinction "between real and other news, between important and trivial news, between weighty matters and light news, between quality information and entertainment." According to Yuan (2011, p. 1003), "people's choices of news media are associated with their perceptions of news credibility." Creditability is an important consideration for Generation Z when selecting which news to consume and which source to consume it from in an information-rich environment. The responses from Generation Z respondents highlight that quality, truth and credibility are important to Generation Z. With media companies establishing themselves on online platforms, Newman et al. (2018) found that, "winning consumer trust is becoming the central issue of our times as businesses compete for attention in a digital world and where user allegiance can transfer in the blink of an eye." Hence, journalists need to retain conventional quality standards on online news.

The position of print news in the lives of Generation Z

Nielsen and Schroder (2014, p. 474) posit that "the rise of social media does not represent a complete break with the past mass media environment, but that new media and new forms of media use increasingly supplement (and only sometimes supplant) older and more established forms of media use." As such, the Generation Z respondents in this research showed a preference for print rather than digital newspaper formats. Their responses demonstrate a similar finding made by Qayyum et al. (2010, p. 181), that although young people are less likely to read a newspaper, they are more likely to find it credible. Despite the lowering circulation numbers experienced by the three media companies investigated in this research and particularly the *Daily Sun,* which explicitly stated that their print circulation was declining every year, some Generation Z still rated print newspapers as credible for news rather than news on social media, smartphones, e-readers, desktops and laptops.

Such responses demonstrate that Generation Z still regard traditional media as important to their news consumption experiences. However, technology has given them an overwhelming

experience, such that they prefer consuming their news on new media platforms. Their preference for consuming news on new media platforms is because they can be active participants in the news creation, dissemination and editing processes. According to Purcell et al. (2010, p. 8), this narrative indicates "the rise of a new kind of hybrid news consumer/participator" and "is tied to technological change [and] generational differences." This has shifted the relationship between news producers and the news consumers. In summary, despite the declining print newspaper readership against the rise of online news use, Generation Z do still read some form of print media only for the reason that they consider print to be more credible as a news source compared to online news sources, nevertheless, they prefer to consume their news from online sources.

7.8 CONCLUSION

Despite the data limitations of this research in terms of the sample size, this chapter has revealed that Generation Z pay less attention to conventional media-based news, be it television or newspapers. Instead of television, they prefer YouTube; and instead of newspapers, they opt to get their news on social media feeds. If Generation Z read newspapers at all, it is usually because it is either free of charge, it's a local town-based newspaper, or they are exposed to newspapers because their parents still buy them. An astonishing remark, however, is that some Generation Z still seem to place more trust in news delivered in traditional media platforms like newspapers, although they don't feel connected to these media.

To Generation Z, many topics in standard news programmes are hardly appealing. For example, all the respondents expressed a broad interest in news and showed a particular interest in current affairs and entertainment news which has grown inordinately. With a large disinterest in hard news, Barnhurst (1998, p. 205 in Meijer 2007, p. 98) has even gone as far as to claim that "the products of institutional journalism are largely felt to be irrelevant to their lives." Those who showed interest in topics such as politics felt personally affected by it, referring a lot to the South African elections that took place on the 8th of May 2019. Mindich (2005 in Meijer 2007, p. 98) suggests that "the marginal significance of news and current affairs programs in the life of youngsters is indicative of their limited social involvement."

The media landscape has been moving towards a multi-channel environment that offers an array of media services available anytime and anyplace. This then influences where Generation

Z find their information, how they interact with each other and which news they value. Meijer (2007, p. 97) posits that "some critics have argued that we are moving towards an 'experience economy'. If this is the case, the media must learn to create appealing worlds of experience, not just as a way to attract young people but as part of a general service-oriented approach that will ensure the media's success in the future as well."

Prior studies by Nelson and Lei (2018, p. 622) have concluded that "the digital audience spends little time actually consuming news via their mobile devices." The results from this research are contrary to the findings of such prior studies, as this research concludes that mobile devices have become the primary platform for news consumption. Furthermore, this research goes one step further, demonstrating that Generation Z have more media options to choose from. They cope with this abundance of media content by creating repertoires of selective media use. These findings also highlight that Generation Z are not resistant to move to more private apps like WhatsApp and Instagram for reading and particularly discussing news. However, the findings also suggest that large and less private social networks (mainly Facebook and Twitter) are still largely used for finding and reading news stories. Newman et al. (2018) argue that, "if these trends towards messaging apps are strengthened, it could create new dilemmas for publishers around being able to engage with ordinary citizens."

"The media environment has only become more complex with increased fragmentation and audience autonomy" (Napoli 2011 in Taneja et al. 2012, p. 5). This means, today's news organisations need to respond to an increasingly experience-oriented society. The future of news is on the internet as it integrates all media (audio, video, text). As a result, Meijer (2007, p. 113) argues that, "through their specific use and appreciation of news, young people will for reasons of efficiency, time, convenience, feelings of security etc consult the latest news that has their specific interest more often through the Internet."

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS: EXPERIMENTING DIFFERENT MODELS TO ATTRACT YOUNG AUDIENCES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter answers the main research question: Are South African media companies innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences? The chapter does so by analysing the arguments and discussions that have been made in previous chapters to draw some final reflections and conclusions.

This research set out to explore the strategies that three South African media companies, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings, are using to engage younger audiences, particularly Generation Z. Therefore, the resulting findings emanating from interview material will be examined through a discourse analysis process. Analysing interviews in terms of discourse analysis allows the researcher to focus on particular themes in a concentrated manner. The response discourses of the 20 Generation Z will be discussed in order to assess whether the strategies that the editors said they employ to attract Generation Z are indeed attracting young audiences to consuming news. Furthermore, this chapter presents the gaps as well as challenges that news organisations face in terms of how to make their news content unique so as to appeal to a young mass audience. Thereafter, it discusses how the three media companies have, to some extent, similar and equally different approaches in their newsroom operations; and how they are experimenting with different models to attract young audiences. In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates that these news organisations have not yet explored the full potential of the networked digital media vis-à-vis the youth market.

8.2 THE DISCOURSES THAT FRAME THIS RESEARCH TOPIC ARE:

Digitisation and digital-first concepts

The three news organisations operate similar newsroom models because they have all expanded their brands to the fixed internet and their journalistic strategies focus on cross-media publishing. They are creating content for mobile websites, social media and mobile apps as part of their cross-media strategies. Other similarities that exist are that they all have digital

teams that work on their digital platforms in terms of managing Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For example, *IOL* News has a 'mobile-first' approach which is focused on distributing news content on multi-platforms where mobile is dominant. This includes social media platforms and mobile apps. *The Young Independents* has a 'multichannel' strategy which is focused on ensuring that their news website is mobile-friendly and optimises the users mobile experience with swipe-friendly and tap-friendly content. The *Sowetan* has a 'digital-first' focus which means that most of their stories break online and on all their social media platforms first. While the *City Press* also ensures that it has a 'mobile-first' approach to the way it presents news. It was also the only news publication that mentioned a focus on "prioritising quality over quantity" and mentioning that, "we try to stick to the basics of good, quality journalism" (Alison Visser, Email Interview: 21 January 2019).

However, they are not all investing in strategies to reposition themselves adequately within the changing media landscape, which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles than traditional media, as they have not all mastered producing content for their website platforms. For instance, Bafana Nkosi (Acting Editor: *Daily Sun*) mentioned that,

> our website is not exciting – what is happening is that we are not coming up with new stories on the website, unless it's something that has happened which we will put there – most of the time we take all of the stories from print and we load them online and people read them from there (Personal Interview: 15 January 2019).

In terms of discourse analysis, Carbo et al. (2016, p. 369) posit that "it is also necessary to know the context we are studying, through approaching experiences and revision of other similar works." Thus, it is important to mention that the work by senior research associate, Nic Newman of The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) mentioned that, "The past models won't work if you apply them and expect people to grow up – that's not going to happen, that's the starting point" (journalism.co.uk 2 September 2019). Notably, there is a shift from the old strategy by the three news organisations under investigation was to prioritise publishing on print media before publishing on digital platforms. Previously, this meant that news organisations would cut-and-paste content from their print editions and republish the same news content on their online platforms. As a step away from this, the *Daily Sun*, for example, is using audience comments to online stories to guide the angle of their print news stories. The acting editor, Nkosi explained that audience comments are used to shape the print news edition which is published after an online news version has been posted. This involves revising already produced news stories from a different platform, a move from the old hierarchy

of duplicating the print version. The reason behind this strategy was that, "not everyone reads comments, and this is a strategy we are trying to implement", which tells us that a news organisation like the *Daily Sun* is going through experimentation in its approaches to online publishing with no certainty of what will work or fail.

Merging old and new strategies to news publishing

The three news organisations have not entirely let go of their old operations like their paper-based motherships. In the hope of maintaining their old audiences, the news organisations continue to offer their print news while concurrently offering online options as complementary products to media practice, hoping to attract new and young audiences. Equally, Thembela Khamango (Executive Editor: *Sowetan*) confirmed that "Journalists are no longer just thinking about the print copy but accompanying multimedia elements such as photos, video and audio clips now have to be considered when one pitches a story" (Email Interview: 17 January 2019). This is supported by the statement made by the *Daily Sun* acting editor Bafana Nkosi who said, "We won't make the mistake of assuming that everyone has moved to online and forget about print readers, which is why we still have at least 120 000 people buying the print edition, so we can't neglect this 120 000 readership…" (Personal Interview: 15 January 2019). This tells us that daily newspapers like the *Daily Sun* have developed electronic publishing ventures in relation to their paper-based editions. This represents a merger of content production between the printed newspaper and online news production. Consequently, this means that for the *Daily Sun*, the web is a reproductive platform. All these efforts are directed at trying to enhance the integration of new and old media in a converged world.

Shifting from old strategies also means that Generation Z aspire to unique news content that suits each platform and not a reproduction or 'reversioning' of news for different platforms. For instance, Saajida Francis (Editor: *The Young Independents (TYI)*) has come to understand that digital natives have a unique set of needs when it comes to their online experience, with them wanting to remain engaged with news content. As a result, Francis described that *TYI* has a "multichannel strategy that uses digital media to make millennials ***think, feel, and do***" (Email Interview: 23 January 2019). This desire to provide content that engages digital natives at different senses is important if news organisations want to attract young audiences as part of the ways of presenting stories to an online audience.

What is certain is that the three media companies analysed are responding to the changing media landscape by launching their print and online news products concurrently. Although

both the online and print content is meant to target different news audiences, they have not determined out how to accommodate the specific news needs of separate audiences. Essentially, these media companies offer online and print news as complementary products that can be consumed by the same audience group. They have simply offered audiences two media options, either print media or online media. There has been a general news output online that is meant to cater for online audiences despite the generational differences, whether young or old. For instance, Riana Howa (Editor: *IOL News*) explained that "…we are not only writing for the future audience but the current one as well. The importance is to package content in a way that speaks to both" (Email Interview: 14 January 2019).

The continued uptake of the print editions by these news organisations also relates to the fact that news outlets continue to receive much of their profits from print publications, even in the face of declining circulation, rather than receiving large profits from digital offerings. This is because news organisations search for alternative business models to fund a sustainable journalism through their online ventures. Furthermore, the continued uptake of print media tells us that news consumption is not a simple choice between traditional and new media, but an active combination of different news sources into complex patterns of media use. We see this in Generation Z, who explained that they read everything and that their news choices depend on what catches their attention. While others explained that "It always depends on what is happening currently and what affects me" (Karabo Dikobe, Personal Interview: 25 April 2019). However, Generation Z have a big preference for popular and light news media, and less interest in hard news topics. This means that Generation Z combine news genres into one very diverse media repertoire. From this point of view, the three news organisations are not catering adequately to youth although they are making considerable attempts in the right direction.

Multimedia news production in newsrooms

News organisations have shifted from processing linear print texts to processing multimodal texts. For example, Riana Howa (Editor: *IOL News*) explained that the news organisation considers the format that suits the story that they are telling, and the information is then conveyed through multimode approaches "video, images, graphics, listicle, longform etc". She further confirmed that "our news distribution is multi-platform where mobile is dominant". This is because contemporary society, including Generation Z, turn to different sources of information like print and online media to keep updated on matters of the world. To demonstrate that Generation Z compose their media diets out of a supply from different media

platforms, two Generation Z respondents Michelle Banda (Personal Interview: 27 April 2019) mentioned that "I really read everything and what I read depends on whether the headline catches my attention" and Nonhlanhla Gumede (Personal Interview: 27 April 2019) mentioned that "It's a balance of both, whether print media or online media. It's very situational – it depends on where I am, at what time and what I'm doing."

News content has moved from operating in a mono-modality form (where modes operate in isolation), to a multimodal form of communication which involves the integration of new kinds of texts, for example, moving images, sound, colour and a range of photographic, drawn or digitally created visuals. For example, the *IOL News*'s website homepage takes readers right to the scene, bringing life to the page by offering a multimedia section. The website also carries less plain running text, and instead has chunks of texts connected to images, graphics and some of the information is presented in bulleted lists.

A multimedia approach as well as cross-media approaches are fundamental 360-degree strategies because they are aimed at news consumers who own and use more than one digital device to engage with media. Although Generation Z follow the news on multiple media platforms, they do not necessarily use all these media. Instead, they choose and rely upon small subsets or repertoires of their preferred media which are smart phones. For example, one Generation Z respondent, Bokang Khuto confirmed that "[I prefer] to use my phone to access the news on the internet because it makes it is much easier and my phone is always in my hands". Other respondents have also gone to the extent of describing that "using the mobile phone is like a 'drive-through' because it offers access to news 'on-the-go', at anytime and anywhere" (Bokang Khuto, Personal Interview: 27 April 2019). Hence, it is considered as the single most indispensable example of media technology, not only for news consumption but for keeping in touch with family members.

As a result, some of the news organisations are working towards innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences by considering publishing content that is suitable for mobile phones. For example, Thembela Khamango (Executive Editor: *Sowetan*) confirmed that,

> [The *Sowetan's*] new website is responsive which means it renders well on a variety of devices and screen sizes. This means whatever videos, images or info graphics we present with the story can be viewed on any device the reader has. They don't have to wait until they get to a PC to engage with the content.

Social and cultural convergence within newsrooms

The production of multimedia content is closely tied to convergence as both multimedia and convergence aim to increase the cooperation of technologies and staff. This cooperation is taking place in all three news organisations investigated in this research.

According to the convergence theory described by Boczkowski (2004:177), newsrooms are socio-material spaces in which technology, work and organisation intersect in everyday organisational life. This is evidenced by *The Young Independents*, whose unique strategy is not only convergence in terms of media technologies and content, but social and cultural convergence in terms of hiring young staff, which the news editor explained as "hiring under 35s who understands and relate to the content needs of digital natives." This is particularly important as news organisations grapple with who gets to tell the story, what kinds of stories are told, how they are told and to which audience they are told. This means that convergence is introducing changes in journalistic practice and opening the arena for a multiplicity of strategies, from ensuring multi-skilled journalists, to convergence at the newsgathering level, at the production level and at the distribution level.

A matter that arises in this instance is whether convergence has jeopardised the quality of news journalism? This question arises because the three news organisations have adopted convergence for the sake of convergence, which Lawson-Borders (2003, p. 94) advises against. An important finding of this dissertation is that these news organisations have not chosen appropriate mediums to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape as there is no acknowledgement that not every story is suitable for all platforms.

The mobile-first approach evidenced by both news organisations and Generation Z

A mobile-first approach as presented by Newman et al. (2018) is seen to be practiced by *IOL News*, which the news editor Riana Howa (Email Interview: 14 January 2019) explained as "deciding what format suits the story we are telling and the information we are conveying (video, images, graphics, listicle, longform etc) and secondly what will the user experience be on mobile." The user experience on mobile is particularly important as "adults [age] 18-34 spend over one-third of their daily media usage on smartphones" (The Nielsen Total Audience Report, Q3 2018). The Generation Z examined in this research showed themselves to have a strong connection to their mobile phones, which are also their preferred device to access online content. The Generation Z described that using their mobile phones made life "much easier".

For instance, Michelle Banda (Personal Interview: 27 April 2019) expressed, "I use my mobile phone to access the news because I carry it everywhere. My laptop is too heavy for me to be walking with it, so my phone is just portable." Alison Visser (Digital Editor: *City Press*) also confirmed that "About 90% of our online audiences access our platforms on phones…so we have a mobile-first approach to the way we present our news" (Email Interview: 21 January 2019). Saajida Francis (Editor: *The Young Independents* – Email Interview: 23 January 2019) also believes in employing "the right place, right time, right-screen tactic", as young people have substantially greater news consumption via smart phones than on desktops or laptop computers.

News organisations like *IOL News* are responding to the mobile phone proliferation by ensuring that mobile news content is dominant. Another similar strategy implemented by *The Young Independents* (TYI) is a multichannel strategy which ensures that their website is "… mobile-friendly (thirty-eight million South Africans (67%) own a mobile phone). The goal is to optimise their mobile experience with swipe-friendly and tap-friendly content" (Saajida Francis, Email Interview: 23 January 2019). Whereas the *Sowetan* ensures that its website renders well on a variety of devices and screen sizes.

These mobile-first approaches mean that news organisations are offering news content in more than one form, which means that they are transforming themselves into multi-platform media enterprises. They have spread their brands across various platforms and have created cross-media portfolios. However, this may not be adequate, as the news organisations are faced with the challenge of creating content for different generational audiences who require content to be delivered on different platforms. On the one hand, they juggle creating content for old media, which is mostly consumed by Generation Z parents, and, on the other hand, they are converting that same content for online platforms hoping to attract young audiences. The attempt at trying to attract young audiences, while concurrently trying to maintain existing audiences in the face of economic challenges remains a mutual challenge shared by the three news organisations. This has even caused publications like the *Daily Sun* to experience falling print circulation numbers. The same challenge is also experienced by the *Sowetan,* whose editor Thembela Khamango (Executive Editor) explained that "…the plan is to provide more content targeting the younger generation and still keep some of our current coverage to ensure we retain traditional readers, as we attract new ones" (Email Interview: 17 January 2019). Therefore, the segmentation of audiences is necessary as people have diverse interests and utilise media in

different ways. Thus, news organisations are challenged with finding ways to meet those needs and when.

Creating cross-media portfolios may not be adequate to attract young audiences because it means that the news organisations are experimenting with multiple platforms with no certainty of what will work. They are basically 'throwing the net wide'[29] with the prospects of attracting young news consumers. They may also be spreading their brands across various platforms as a result of wanting to remain 'relevant' and 'moving with the times' without targeting or directing their strategies at one type of media platform, as audiences manoeuvre across various platforms.

The youth prefer getting their news on social media

A similarity that arises between the *Daily Sun* news organisation is that it does not employ a news app and the Generation Z interviewed expressed that they have a lack of interest in news apps. Bafana Nkosi (Acting Editor: *Daily Sun*) mentioned that they do not have a news app for their mobile audiences and that a collaborative app between the *Daily Sun*, *Soccer Laduma* and *Kick Off,* which only provided soccer stories, did not work. Generation Z similarly expressed that they do not like news apps because they dislike the constant notifications and, instead, prefer to access news through social media or news aggregators. For instance, one Generation Z respondent, Karabo Dikobe (Personal Interview: 25 April 2019) expressed that "…news apps are annoying because of the many notifications that keep popping up every minute with headlines… they can be a little bit in your face with giving you news."

This research finds that mobile news apps were the least preferred sources to access news among Generation Z. While they get their news on their mobiles, the youth do not like mobile apps. Instead, Generation Z commonly consult social media platforms as sources of news, relative to other sources like news apps, news websites and even print newspapers. This resonates to the findings by the RISJ (2019) research which identified that:

> young audiences are spending less time with news websites and apps and calls on publishers to try to emulate the experiences of Facebook and Netflix, to weave content into preferences and to reconsider the values of the news in terms of inclusiveness, negativity and agenda.

[29] To 'throw the net wide' is a metaphor for fishing with a net. The assumption is that the wider you throw the net, the larger an area of water it will cover, so the more likely you are to catch a fish.

This places social media at the centre of the story of Generation Z's relationship with news. Particularly, Facebook and Twitter have become increasingly important for accessing news, as most Generation Z respondents said they follow news outlets on social media as compared to visiting their actual websites. One respondent highlighted that "I prefer using social media for news because I believe it's the fastest way to access news and it feels like everything is at your fingertips" (Sive Matinjwa, Personal Interview: 09 May 2019). Another preference in using social media is based on the opportunity which it provides in filtering content according to individual preferences.

Correspondingly, the three news organisations have a high dependence on Twitter and Facebook because these platforms enable interaction and online participation with news content in ways that are easier and faster than other platforms. Twitter is an important platform in Generation Z's news consumption experience. Generation Z experience Twitter as a reliable news source because of its use of first-hand reporting of events. Twitter is also preferred because it enables users to engage with the news through retweeting, clicking on links easily and its convenience in commenting on news. One respondent went as far as saying, "Twitter is quick, I feel that we get the news first on Twitter before any other media and I appreciate that. I like the instant effect" (Karabo Dikobe, Personal Interview: 25 April 2019). Generation Z appreciate speed and the instantaneity of social media. The need for speed in news content was also found to be true in research by The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) and strategic insight consultancy Flamingo, which found that "young audiences want instant gratification from news without it being dumbed down" (journalism.co.uk 2019).

However, none of the three news organisations mentioned strategies aimed at targeting audiences on more private and personal platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram. WhatsApp is increasingly becoming an important means to receive, share and discuss news with friends, colleagues and family in a more private setting. This is because WhatsApp and Instagram statuses function like a Facebook timeline, where friends share news stories. As opposed to the three news organisations, Generation Z mentioned that they use messaging apps like WhatsApp for news. One Generation Z respondent noted that "…the first thing I do in the morning is to check WhatsApp and sometimes I come across something newsworthy from someone's status update..." (Sive Matinjwa, Personal Interview: 09 May 2019). Catching news headlines on status updates means that audiences do not have to actively search for news, but it is presented to them through shared approaches and by clicking on one or two stories they are able to keep up to date.

This finding is similar to the *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News* report, which concluded "there to be a rise in the use of messaging apps [like WhatsApp] for news as consumers look for more private (and less confrontational) spaces to communicate" (Newman et al. 2018, p. 9). However, contrary to this, other digital natives like Nonhlanhla Gumede still felt that the use of WhatsApp and Instagram for news consumption "is very limited because it is mainly used to text and to talk to people and not mainly as a source of accessing news" (Personal Interview: 27 April 2019). Others expressed that they consider Instagram as a "secondary news platform" (Sarah James, Personal Interview: 01 May 2019). The use of WhatsApp and Instagram for news consumption by Generation Z is still a new phenomenon, eliciting mixed feelings for most. Therefore, there was ambivalence expressed about WhatsApp and Instagram, even though the youth were saying they preferred social media.

The marketisation of news on social media

Although young audiences browse in their own private self-determined social media realm of discourses, the recommendations collected by news outlets can also limit users to a particular frame of reference. This is also emphasised by Bouvier and Machin (2018, p. 181) who explain that "this can mean that social media tends to lock [audiences] into viewpoints that [they] like." The move to publishing news on social media by the three news organisations may have meant that audiences have escaped the top-down, elite voice of news organisations delivering a bulletin at a set time. However, news on social media platforms are now directed to capturing audiences into patterns of consumption. This is theorised by Bouvier and Machin (2018, p. 182) who mention that, "social media offers a confined and controlled space for semi-public interactions, under the conditions of a commercial logic."

Consequently, this research finds that news on social media is created based on marketisation and commodification. This means that the move to providing news on social media is not only part of 'casting the net wide' to attract news consumers, but it is also part of a monetisation strategy to offer news on platforms to which advertisers have migrated. As news organisations struggle to make news sales through paywalls and subscriptions, and as they continue to experiment with other business models, advertising revenue has been one of the popular revenue sources. "Many news organisations, old and new, rely on advertising…" (theguardian.com 2019). For example, Saajida Francis (Editor: *The Young Independents*) mentioned that "Our multichannel strategy uses digital media, digital advertising and conventional advertising…" – adding that "We enjoy thinking of out-of-the-box strategies

when doing a marketing campaign by using social media [and] digital advertising…" (Email Interview: 23 January 2019). Media24 also has 'The Space Station', which is also Naspers' digital media sales house which executes digital advertising sales across websites, mobile sites and apps from brands at Media24 and 24.com.

The uptake of media monitoring by news organisations

There is an uptake of online media monitoring taking place within newsrooms as digital teams are asked to measure a story's performance on online platforms in terms of the number of views, readership and other engagement, whether it's on social media or a news website. For instance, media monitoring practices occur at the *Daily Sun* newsroom whereby the news outlet is using feedback from online metrics to guide its news production. For example, if the metrics show that a story is popular, the news outlet then places that story prominently on the website homepage and it builds on that story guided by audience sentiments. The news outlet then commissions stories on a similar topic in the future. This means that audiences have, to some extent, influence over the angle in which news is reported. This is also evidenced by what the digital editor Alison Visser at the *City Press* said, "… our coverage is quite reliant on what we think our readers want" (Email Interview: 21 January 2019). What they think readers want comes from audience metrics, "engagement, the bounce rate and the time spent on the article and within the *City Press* stable" as explained by Visser (ibid). The uptake of online media monitoring means that there is a lot of investment put into generating and optimising the social media engagement metrics of news stories, however, news organisations understandings of these metrics remains questionable.

Personalisation of news content

Like monitoring audience numbers and audience engagement with news content, news organisations have mastered delivering texts to audiences by tailoring content to personal needs. In the social media environment, news outlets can target news content according to consumer preferences, as stories are delivered to customers based on data analytics. Now that news organisations are constantly monitoring traffic via web analytics, patterns of reading are traced and modelled to process news consumption of audience behaviour in order to shift resources and recommend content to suit personal needs. For example, news texts on *IOL News* website offers what they call 'Related Articles' on the sidebar of the website. In terms of social media, a news feed on Facebook is tailored to individual user profiles, and news outlets draw on previous news choices and preferences to offer recommendations of news content.

Likewise, Generation Z also confirmed their preference of using Facebook for news, with one digital native, Sarah James, noting that "When using Facebook, I click on one link, then related recommended articles pop up and I like these recommendations" (Personal Interview: 01 May 2019). This means that Generation Z do not want to spend unnecessary effort searching for news by going to news websites; instead, they want to be served with news options while they browse and engage in other virtual socialising on their Facebook feed/timeline. Generation Z express this need by saying "...with social media, I don't necessarily have to go and search for the news, the news finds me" (Modiegi Mashamaite, Personal Interview: 01 May 2019). This means that the discourses presented to news consumers through news, entertainment and other things 'you may also like,' are patterned in ways aligned to their previous online activities, which include consumer behaviour. This means that while social media may appear to present a sense that the monopoly or gatekeepers of traditional media have been eroded, the communicative notions of power are still at play by news outlets in the form of algorithms and web analytics.

The three news organisations understand Generation Z, their needs and that they consume content differently to any other generation. Riana Howa (Editor: *IOL News*) for instance understands that, "Generation Z want to know a lot about a trending topic in a short amount of time. They also expect greater personalisation, as there is so much content available these days… So, we aim to give information…that encourages engagement" (Email Interview: 14 January 2019). Likewise, in terms of personalisation and engagement, Generation Z respondents like Kharisma Mashego, expressed that:

> I love online media for several reasons, but interaction takes front page. 'Leave your comment', 'Share your thoughts', 'Like'; these call-to-action phrases serve one purpose: to engage with the prospective audience. I absolutely love seeing these phrases at the end of a post and applaud websites that feature them – communication is a two-way street after all (Personal Interview: 11 May 2019).

Engagement and personalisation make Generation Z feel that their opinions are valued and that they are part of the discussion. They are not just given the news in print, which they can't engage with it.

Online media is preferred but questioned

An important finding is that whilst Generation Z do not like print media, they prefer online media and regard it as relevant to their media consumption needs; however, they question its credibility. Highlighting that, "I think that a part of this has to do with that fact that anyone can be a journalist on social and online media. Subjective reporting seeps through the facts, headlines are exaggerated and simple things like grammar/spell errors go unnoticed and ultimately change the context of the story," said Generation Z respondent, Kharisma Mashego (Personal Interview: 11 May 2019). Generation Z expressed that they are more likely to trust what they read in a newspaper than what they read online. The ability to attribute different levels of credibility to media sources means that Generation Z are fully aware of the social civic importance that is attributed to quality news, and that quality, truth and credibility are important to Generation Z.

Such an awareness by Generation Z means that news organisations need to retain conventional quality standards on online news. Alison Visser (Digital Editor: *City Press*), for example, believes that the basic ethics of journalism should be maintained, saying that "We need to ensure that trust is not broken, and that we stay true to the basics of truth, accuracy and fairness…" (Email Interview: 21 January 2019). Hence, Generation Z's relationship with print media is based on their belief that it's credible, even though they are less likely to read one. Generation Z respondents like Nonhlanhla Gumede, expressed that, "With print media, you can be sure that it's edited. It seems to be more authentic in the sense that a journalist physically went to cover an event" (Personal Interview: 27 April 2019). Correspondingly, Michelle Banda expressed that, "I trust that before [news] go through printing, it has gone through a thorough check, although it does sometimes have minor misleading information" (Personal Interview: 27 April 2019). Essentially, their lack of trust in the credibility of online news is based on the belief that poor journalism, clickbait and biased/spun journalism proliferates online.

Even with their scepticism of news content on online platforms, Generation Z are nonetheless connected to online media for its interactivity, ability to make participation with the news easier and the fact that it is faster than traditional platforms. One respondent opined, "Online media affords an opportunity of media interaction i.e. being able to interact with the news producers" (Sive Matinjwa, Personal Interview: 09 May 2019). Further confirming their preference for online media, another Generation Z respondent expressed that "Online is the way to go! I'm more connected to my phone. I can't really live without my phone because I'm not about to be buying newspapers" (Michelle Banda, Personal Interview: 27 April 2019).

Influence by Generation Z

All three news organisations are influenced by Generation Z to a great extent. For example, Bafana Nkosi (Acting Editor: *Daily Sun*) sees this influence in their circulation figures. Nkosi mentioned that "Generation Z does not read *Daily Sun*, especially the print version" (Personal Interview: 15 January 2019). This is particularly true considering that the 2019 mid-year population estimates (MYPE) reported that the youth (aged 18-34) constitute almost a third (35.1%) of the population in South Africa, making them a majority in South Africa's population, while print circulations decrease. Newspaper purchasing is prominent among Generation Z parents who fall in the "Adults (aged 35-59) category" and "make up only 27.1% of the population" (Mid-year Population Estimate (MYPE), 2019). Thus, a question that arises is: if news organisations were really catering for young people, would circulation go up considering the youth are the majority in South Africa? Riana Howa (Editor: *IOL News*) also believes that Generation Z is the future generation of news consumers. The *Sowetan* executive editor, Thembela Khamango also confirmed that "Generation Z are part of a bigger market that has changed how news is consumed and we cannot afford to ignore them." Thus, news organisations are on the lookout for new content that would interest Generation Z.

To further demonstrate that the three news organisations understand Generation Z needs, the editor of *The Young Independents* Saajida Francis noted that "…technology heavily influences Generation Z's in-store purchase behaviours" and that mobile apps and phones are more heavily used by digital natives than any other generation. Furthermore, to demonstrate their understanding of Generation Z, Thembela Khamango (Executive Editor: *Sowetan*) explained that, "[Generation Z] love video clips and visual presentations… Now, now, now is when they want the latest story…" (Email Interview: 17 January 2019). Likewise, Generation Z do take advantage of a whole range of media in consuming news, from using mobile phones, to social media and print media wherever they can find it. All these behavioural patterns and news repertoires radically influence the news organisation's decisions and approaches to journalism and news production. Generation Z are significantly influencing the news consumption patterns within the network era that is characterised by the central features of the internet, speed, accessibility and simplicity in terms of how news content is created and distributed by news organisations.

8.3 THE CHASM BETWEEN THE STRATEGIES OF THREE SOUTH AFRICAN NEWS MEDIA COMPANIES AND GENERATION Z NEWS MEDIA CONSUMPTION

First chasm: Old generation vs new generation

Given the decline in traditional media consumption, there is a gap between news organisations offerings and Generation Z news media consumption. A notable trend is the consensus amongst all three news organisations that there is a gap between Generation Z's news consumption and each media company's news offerings, to the extent that the *Daily Sun* acting editor Bafana Nkosi believes that, "there will always be a gap especially as trends keep changing" (Personal Interview: 15 January 2019). Alison Visser (Digital Editor: *City Press*) equally agrees that "there is always a gap" between their news offerings and Generation Z news consumption needs (Email Interview: 21 January 2019). The *City Press* digital editor further believes that "No news organisation can cater for every possible reader" (ibid).

By acknowledging the chasm, the news organisations are aware that they must adapt or die. This chasm mainly lies in the different generational audiences that the three news organisations must cater for. On the one hand, they still have the old generation who prefer traditional media, and, on the other hand, they have the young generation who require digital media offerings. This means that for these news organisations to survive as contemporary news outlets, they need to juggle the various audiences simultaneously at play.

In harnessing this generational chasm, news organisations need to equip their journalists with new skills that can meet the expectations of an empowered network of audiences. They must continuously invest in appropriate technology and have a young component of voices on the staff list. Prioritising the employment of young staff is a strategy being adopted by *The Young Independents* who are "hiring under 35s who understands and relate to the content needs of digital natives" (Saajida Francis, Email Interview: 23 January 2019). At the *City Press,* the "young component of voices on the staff list are encouraged to write about issues that interest them" (Alison Visser, Email Interview: 21 January 2019). While Bafana Nkosi (Acting Editor: *Daily Sun*) also explained that "We don't just hire anyone. When we interview you, we ask you on which platforms are you on. We want journalists who will be able to multitask…" (Personal Interview: 15 January 2019). Such strategies are aimed at hiring people who understand how news content can best appeal to the readers of the future.

However, no one strategy has been found to work for these news organisations. For instance, Alison Visser (Digital Editor: *City Press*) acknowledged that "We have not necessarily nailed our strategies, but we are constantly re-evaluating and experimenting with our content" (Email Interview: 21 January 2019). Furthermore, explaining that, "We don't have as much video content as we would like, and our experiments with podcasts are also very new" (ibid). This further proves Newman et al.'s (2018) fact that "media organisations are going through experimentation in approaches to online multimedia news with no certainty of what will work or fail." In addition, this also proves to be similar in the findings by Daniels (2013) which found that "there was pressure for newsrooms to catch up with their audiences through experimentation with different platforms, as media consumer patterns [are] changing." The outcome at this point is the exploration of the tangled interactions between traditional media forms and contemporary technological possibilities.

Riana Howa (Editor: *IOL News*) from a different perspective understands that to try and close the gap between Generation Z news consumption and *IOL*'s news offerings, they need to look at "content personalisation, multimedia storytelling and have a mobile focus" (Email Interview: 14 January 2019). While Saajida Francis (Editor: *The Young Independents*) understands that "relatable online content is king" (Email Interview: 23 January 2019). Likewise, Thembela Khamango (Executive Editor: *Sowetan*) also acknowledged that as much as they have content targeting young people, it is not enough – hence the gap between Generation Z and their news offerings. This gap exists as news organisations find themselves amid tumultuous change, driven partly by technological and economic uncertainty on a global scale.

Second chasm: Digital divide

A second chasm that exists is brought by the 'digital divide' conundrum. Generation Z are experiencing the digital divide as presented by Van Dijk (2005) and Berger (2005). These theorists explain the digital divide notion relates to the inequalities of access to digital technologies in their various forms. Consequently, this research finds the pervasive nature of the digital divide in operation as Generation Z choose their news consumption platforms. The digital divide experience goes beyond not having access to a computer or a smart phone but includes the inability to engage with new technologies and the inability to engage on online platforms because of the lack of data or Wi-Fi. The Generation Z respondents in this research shared that they face issues that relate to data access which affects the device they use to access news. This experience proves Wasserman's (2011, p. 149) argument that for many Africans,

both mobile handsets and their running costs are too expensive to permit the full use of the capabilities offered by mobile technologies.

Only two of the news organisations from the three investigated showed an awareness of the digital divide conundrum. Thembela Khamango (Executive Editor: *Sowetan*) demonstrated an understanding of the challenges still faced by mobile users as she confirmed that the *Sowetan*'s new website responds or renders well on a variety of devices and screen sizes. Khamango expressed that users can view videos, images or other infographics on any device without having access to a PC to engage with content. The *Sowetan* also has a mobile site for audiences who still use feature phones that lack the advanced functionality of a smartphone which is still able to give them access to the latest news.

Similarly, Alison Visser (Digital Editor: *City Press*) understands that there are varied contextual influences which lie outside journalism that should not be overlooked. These include social, cultural, political and economic factors. Visser explained that when they publish news content such as videos, images and podcasts, they do consider mobile users. Adding that "we try to keep videos as small as possible, so they don't take forever to download and chew data." Furthermore, acknowledging that "News consumption is definitely affected by issues such as disposable income and the price of data, so we bear this in mind when we present our news" (Email Interview: 21 January 2019). Consequently, Visser expressed that the *City Press* does not have as much video content as it would like. This digital divide prevalence points to South Africa's social dilemma, which is marked by a yawning chasm between the rich and the poor.

As a result, this research finds that the digital divide exists in the lives of Generation Z because even though the digital native respondents in this research have access to mobile or smartphones and access to the Internet by virtue of being Rhodes University students, they do still suffer or experience the digital divide outside of university and in their personal lives away from campus. The Generation Z interviewed distinguished how they access news when they are at university and when at home, stating that they have access to print media and TV news at home because that is the media available to them through their parents. One Generation Z respondent, Ntuthuko Mlondo, explained that:

> [My news consumption] is split between life at university and life at home because I have internet access at Rhodes. At Rhodes, I access news from Facebook either on my phone or through my laptop. When I am home, I access my news through Facebook on

> my phone because it's cheaper using data bundles on a phone [than a laptop or computer] (Personal Interview: 26 April 2019).

While another respondent, Karabo Dikobe said, "I only read newspapers and watch the news when I'm at home. So, when I'm at Rhodes, I use Twitter and the internet a lot because I'm connected to Wi-Fi" (Personal Interview: 25 April 2019). News organisations are still learning to prepare online multimedia news at reasonable costs as audiences opt to use mobile devices for multimedia news consumption. This argument is supported by the *2018 Reuters Institute Digital News* report (Newman et al. 2018), which found growth in the consumption of online video. However, this is "largely through the adoption of native video formats by social media platforms (autoplay, short texted clips, Facebook Live, Periscope, Snapchat video, etc.)" which are all mobile friendly. Such a finding demonstrates a convergence between mobile device use and social media engagement.

Third chasm: Credibility in news content

In terms of Generation Z, they require news outlets to present news in a concise and factual manner. There still appears to be a gap in terms of credibility in news content according to Generation Z. The respondents interviewed expressed a need for credible news and filtering measures on online news platforms. For instance, Simamkele George expressed that, "…I would like to see more informative and credible news that is more relevant and educational" (Personal Interview: 04 May 2019). This shows that there is a gap in terms of how news is reported and the ways in which fake news is filtered by news organisations.

In terms of format of news content, Generation Z require more relatable visuals, more illustrations, pictures, videos and colour. For instance, Michelle Banda felt that news is still text heavy, expressing that, "Sometimes I feel like news outlets should break down the text – it's too much for my generation. The thing is, we get bored while reading through long texts" (Personal Interview: 27 April 2019).

Fourth chasm: Supply of video content

A further chasm identified is in the supply of video content. Generation Z expressed that they are not satisfied with the current video content produced by news outlets, expressing that "incorporating multimedia would be amazing to see more of" (Sarah James, Personal Interview: 01 May 2019). Other respondents like, Catherine White, also noted that "…I would like to see more visuals and video content in terms of news on social media platforms"

(Personal Interview: 11 May 2019). This further confirms that Generation Z prefer news that is presented as visuals and video over news that is presented as text.

The chasm in terms of the supply of video news content is seen in the response by Alison Visser (Digital Editor: *City Press*) who mentioned that although the *City Press* does publish video content, "We don't have as much video content as we would like and our experiments with podcasts are also very new." Apart from this, there was not any other emphasis on the production of video content by the other news outlets: *Daily Sun, IOL News* and *The Young Independents*. While Thembela Khamango (Executive Editor: *Sowetan*) made specific mention that the *Sowetan* journalists are expected not just to think about print copy but "accompanying multimedia elements such as photos, video and audio clips" when they pitch a story. Furthermore, Khamango added that "[Generation Z] love video clips and visual presentations so newsrooms now have accounts on video platforms such as YouTube to cater for that" (Email Interview: 17 January 2019).

Therefore, the lack of adequate strategies to supply video news content by most of the analysed news outlets means that the news organisations cannot be said to be innovating in their strategies to attract young audiences. This is because the news organisations did not prove to have strategies that are aimed at Generation Z who have a big diet for video content as they mostly consume news via digital platforms and social media. In consequence, there is a chasm in the supply of video content between news organisations and Generation Z news consumption needs.

Fifth chasm: Relatability and speed of news content

In terms of relatability, news content seldom touches on the lives and experience of young people. To bridge this chasm, news needs to be linked more closely to their sense of the world and be presented in more entertaining style and increase light and positive news. The chasm in terms of positive news is that Generation Z still felt that news organisation should deliver more success stories, expressing that, "I would like to see a bit of success stories because most of the time you see all these negative stories. Not to say that this is bad, but a bit of success stories would have a positive impact in our communities" (Sive Matinjwa, Personal Interview: 09 May 2019). News organisations still need to rethink the balance between focusing on negative disruptions which will always take place and stories that can educate and spotlight what works well. Similarly, the research by RISJ (2019) equally showed that "young audiences value news which helps with self-development whilst providing a source of entertainment."

A further gap that exists is in terms of fast and reliable connectivity. In a world where real-time chats have made rapid communication the new norm, Generation Z requires speed in the flow of information among their vast networks. One respondent expressed the need for higher speed in news content compared to how news organisations are currently operating. This means that Generation Z continue to expect fast and reliable connectivity. Hence, journalism needs to adjust to the faster pace of the information age. The need for speed relates more closely in terms of how links to news are provided. One respondent expressed that, "Sometimes you must click on multiple links to access a news site, so I feel that news organisations should cut down on this and provide us with a direct link to a news page instead of clicking this and that before reaching the page that you want" (Bokang Khuto, Personal Interview: 27 April 2019). This proves that Generation Z have zero tolerance for anything other than instant gratification. Similarly, the study into 'How young people consume news and implications for mainstream media' by RISJ (2019) equally found that "There's literally no patience. If you think about how traditional organisations have set up their sites to be interruptive and not load instantly, it's not hard to see why those experiences have not resonated in the way Facebook and Instagram, for example, has."

Sixth chasm: Interactivity with news media

Generation Z have a technologically deterministic view and are cyberoptimistic. They noted a gap in the news industry and expressed that they would prefer a 'news hub' – describing that "it would be really cool to have an app that has all the online media publications where you can compare top stories and see the different takes that each publication has (like *BibleHub* and *Trivago*)" (Kharisma Mashego, Personal Interview: 11 May 2019). There is also a gap in terms of interactivity that is enabled by online platforms. Mashego further expressed that "Readers should be able to send other media formats (audios, videos) on the comment section as well." They have also gone to the extent of describing how news organisations are not taking up "virtual reality technologies" in catering for their news experience (Kharisma Mashego, ibid).

8.4 CONCLUSION

The gaps presented above mean that news organisations have not yet explored the full potential of the networked digital media. Generation Z are a highly fluid and fast-moving segment of the population and news organisations are not fully meeting their needs for innovation and

creativity in terms of news media. They are also not showing investments in appropriate technology. The three news organisations have strategies in theory to give digital natives insightful news that is well-packaged, easy to read and that involves constructive engagement. In light of this, like Nick Petrie, deputy head of digital, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* in an interview on journalism.co.uk (2019) found that, "The product isn't the problem, the delivery is and the way in which they [Generation Z] find it. All that attention about how to create great experiences for users has gone on Facebook and Instagram, actually I think fundamentally we have an execution problem" The three news organisations under investigation are repurposing single stories for different platforms and they are trying to increase co-operation between their print and online news production. Thus, Generation Z have access to the same content via their tablets, cell phones, podcasts, e-readers and other mobile devices as opposed to being restricted to newspapers, television or radio channels.

There is no one media platform that entirely dominates the total news experience of Generation Z news consumers. Therefore, the three news organisations remain challenged in how to make their content more unique in order to appeal to a young mass audience. Although the three media companies have, to some extent, similar and equally different approaches to newsroom operations and the types of media content produced, they are in the midst of experimenting with different models to attract young audiences. This can be seen as these news organisations no longer have centralised or decentralised newsrooms, but now have integrated newsrooms. This integration can be seen in all processes of the news ecology – in the production, content, dissemination and uses of news, as well as direct engagement with audiences.

In terms of Pavlik's (2013) definition adopted in chapter two of this research regarding innovation[30], this research concludes that the three South African media companies, namely, Media24, Independent News & Media and Arena Holdings, are not entirely innovating in their news media content to attract young audiences, particularly Generation Z. This research also finds that in the process of taking new approaches to media practices and forms, the three news organisations are failing to maintain a commitment to quality and high ethical standards. This was expressed in the responses of the interviewed Generation Z respondents, who shared that the requirements of quality, truth and credibility are not fully met by news organisations.

[30] Innovation in news media in the context of this research is defined as "the process of taking new approaches to media practices and forms while maintaining a commitment to quality and high ethical standards. Innovation is driven largely by technological advances and economic challenges" (Pavlik 2013, p. 183).

Innovation in terms of how the three news organisations meet user needs reflect only three of Pavlik's four measures of innovation:

Although there are challenges with creating, delivering and presenting quality news content, the news organisations demonstrated:

- attempts to engage audiences in interactive ways such as personalising content;
- experimentation with new methods of reporting that are optimised for the digital and networked audiences like the uptake of social media; and
- development of new management and organisational strategies for a digital, networked and mobile environment in terms of ensuring social and technological convergence within their newsroom contexts.

The three news organisations need to continue in their search for ways to use social media as a vital component of innovation which can enable them to effectively create new content forms, engage new and young audiences, and reinvent methods of work. In addition, the increasing adoption of mobile technologies is enabling innovative opportunities for news organisations to focus on delivering news content suitable for mobile screens. By implementing such strategies, managing resources and human capital, news organisations can create content strategies that can sustain them in the twenty-first century and attract young audiences.

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INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Editors from the three Media Companies:

Francis. S. 2019. Email Interview with *The Young Independents* editor on 23 January 2019.

Howa, R. 2019. Email Interview with *IOL* editor on 14 January 2019.

Khamango, T. 2019. Email Interview with *Sowetan* executive editor on 17 January 2019.

Nkosi, B. 2019. Personal Interview with *Daily Sun*'s acting editor on 15 January 2019, Media24 Auckland Park.

Visser, A. 2019. Email Interview with *City Press* digital editor on 21 January 2019.

20 Generation Z

Banda, M. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 27 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Dikobe, K. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 25 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Dyakophu, S. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 23 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Evans, J. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Bachelor of Journalism specialising in Digital Media student on 24 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Fowler, D. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 12 May 2019, Rhodes University Library.

George, S. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 04 May 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Goldberg, C. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 25 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Gumede, N. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 27 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

James, S. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Bachelor of Journalism specialising in Digital Media student on 01 May 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Khuto, B. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 27 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Mashamaite, M. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Bachelor of Journalism specialising in Digital Media student on 01 May 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Mashego, K. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 11 May 2019, Rhodes University Library.

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Nyulu, S. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Bachelor of Journalism specialising in Digital Media student on 24 April 2019, Rhodes University Library.

Sigenu, L. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies student on 04 May 2019, Rhodes University Library.

White, C. 2019. Personal Interview with Rhodes University Bachelor of Journalism specialising in Digital Media student on 11 May 2019, Rhodes University Library.

APPENDICES

20 GENERATION Z

Appendix A: REGISTRAR APPROVAL LETTER



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR
P O Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
E-mail: registrar@ru.ac.za
Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8101
Fax: +27 (0)46 603 8127

Mr Lucky Dlamini
c/o Department of Media Studies
University of Witwatersrand
1 Jan Smuts Avenue
Braamfontein
Johannesburg

28 February 2019

Dear Mr Dlamini

Name of research proposal: An analysis of whether South African media companies are making provision for Generation Z news media consumption.

This serves to confirm that you have been granted permission to conduct your proposed research at Rhodes University as requested.

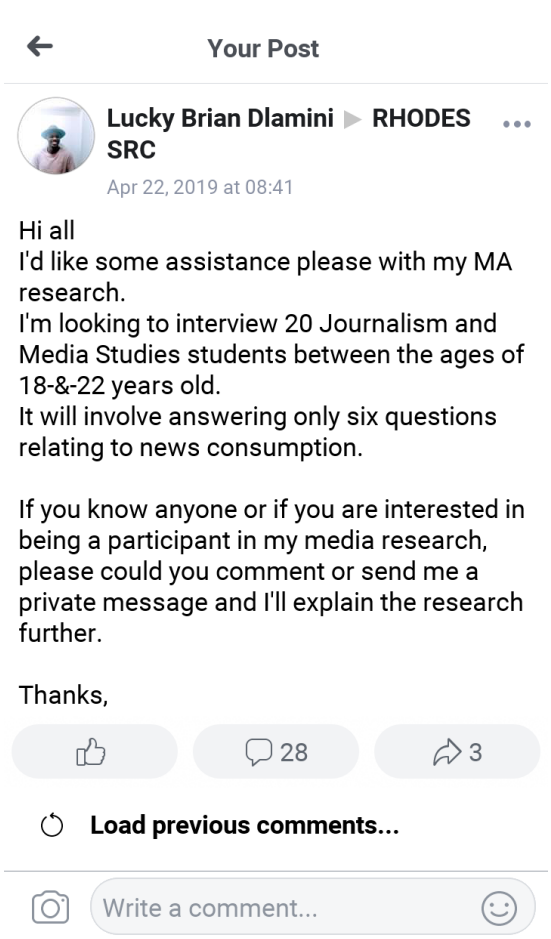
The University if not obliged to make any arrangements in terms of this research. The onus is on the researcher.

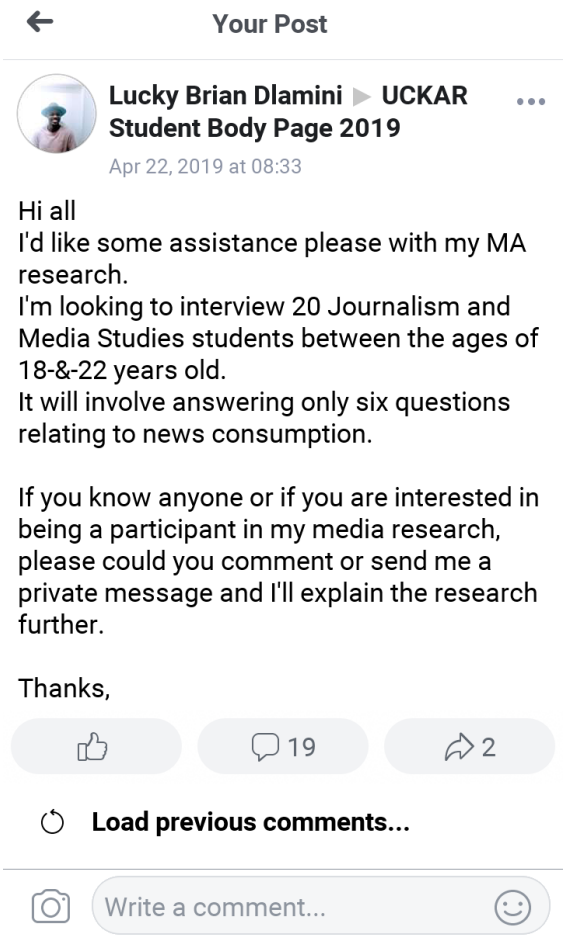
Yours sincerely

A Moodly

Dr Adéle Moodly
REGISTRAR

Appendix B: RHODES UNIVERSITY FACEBOOK PAGES





Appendix C: FORMAL LETTER SENT TO 20 GENERATION Z

Greetings,

I am investigating whether three South African media companies (*Media24, IOL and Tiso Blackstar*) are making provision for Generation Z news media consumption. **Generation Z** is the generation born after millennials, although there is no definitive starting or ending date for Generation Z, most were born from 1997 onward. Generation Z are also commonly known as digital natives, net generation, Facebook Generation, centennials and post-millennials. Basically, this generation is the first to have never known life without the Internet, social media and smartphones. The aim of this research project is to find establish whether South African media companies are innovating to attract the Generation Z cohort.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in a face-to-face audio-recorded interview, whereby I will ask you questions about your media or news consumption habits and about the platforms that you use to consume news. The duration of the interview will take about **15minutes** of your time. The interview will be conducted at Rhodes University and the time of the interview will depend on your personal availability. This is a once-off activity (i.e. you will be required to participate in a single interview session). You have been selected as a potential respondent because you were born from 1997 or onward and are therefore considered as part of the Generation Z cohort.

The research does not involve treatment or payment and there are no feasible risks to participating. Therefore, participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. As a participant, you also have the freedom to refuse to answer questions about which you feel uncomfortable and can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study.

Anonymity will be maintained if requested and pseudonyms will be made to retain your anonymity. Confidentiality is an important aspect that will be kept throughout the research. The information gathered will be made available in the final dissertation and as it is a Wits dissertation, it will be made available online through the university library website. Anyone who may want to mine the data gathered would need to first require their own HREC clearance.

If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Should you have any questions, please contact me or my supervisor using the following contact details:

Researcher name: Lucky Dlamini

Email: LBrianDlamini@gmail.com

Phone number: 072 830 3491

Supervisor name: Professor Glenda Daniels

Email: Glenda.Daniels@wits.ac.za

Phone number: 011 717 4248

Yours sincerely,
Lucky Dlamini

Appendix D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

13. How do you access news? i.e. what platforms do you use to access news and why do you use those platforms (e.g. do you use social media, computer or mobile phone)?
14. Do you view Instagram and WhatsApp as a platform for accessing or sourcing news and why? AND What do you think of Twitter and the mobile phone as means of accessing news?
15. What content do you consume from the media and why? If news, what type of news content (e.g. edutainment, entertainment, politics, business, etc) and why?
16. Do you regard social and online media as a relevant/credible means of providing news as opposed to print media and why?
17. Do you feel connected more to online media or do you feel connected more to print media (i.e. newspapers) and why?
18. What would you like to see more on online media platforms (i.e. websites, Apps and social media) in terms of news, that you think would be relevant to your Generation (i.e. Generation Z)?

Appendix E: CONSENT FORM

<u>Title of Project:</u> An analysis of whether South African media companies are making provision for Generation Z news media consumption.

<u>Name of researcher:</u> Lucky Dlamini

I ……..**(name and surname)**, student number……. confirm that:

Consent affirmation	**YES** (Please tick if you consent)	**NO** (Please tick if you **DO NOT** consent)
The research has been explained to me and that I understand the research aims and objectives.		
That I will be required to attend an interview session to answer questions relating to the research.		
That the interview will be audio recorded.		
That the research does not involve treatment or payment and that there are no feasible risks to participating.		
That my participation is voluntary and that I can refuse to participate without penalty.		
That I have the freedom to refuse to answer questions about which I feel uncomfortable and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.		
That my anonymity will be maintained should I request it to be.		
That confidentiality aspects have been explained to me and that I understand where the information gathered will be made available.		

…… (Participant signature)
…… (Participant name)
…… (date)

THREE MEDIA COMPANIES

Appendix F: FORMAL LETTER SENT TO NEWS EDITORS

As part of my studies, I have undertaken a research project that investigates whether South African media companies are making provision for Generation Z news and media consumption. Generation Z is the generation

born after millennials, although there is no definitive starting or ending date for Generation Z, most were born from 1997 onward. Generation Z are also commonly known as digital natives, net generation, Facebook Generation, centennials and post-millennials. Basically, this generation is the first to have never known life without the Internet, social media and smartphones. The aim of this research project is to establish whether South African media companies, like … are innovating to attract the Generation Z cohort.

As part of this project I would like to invite the news editor or manager to take part in an interview via phone or email communication. This activity will involve answering five questions (*interview schedule enclosed*). This will be a once-off activity (i.e. participants will be required to participate in a single interview session). The duration of answering interview questions will take about 15minutes of the participants' time. Interested news editors or media managers who volunteer to participate will be given a consent form that they will be required to sign and returned to me as the researcher before the commencement of an interview session.

The research does not involve treatment or payment and there are no feasible risks to participating. Therefore, participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. Participants also have the freedom to refuse to answer questions about which they feel uncomfortable and can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study. No costs will be incurred by your media organisation.

Anonymity of the participants is not guaranteed as they can be identified based on their official role as news editors or media manager. Confidentiality is an important aspect that will be kept throughout the research. The information gathered will be made available in the final dissertation and as it is a Wits dissertation, it will be made available online through the university library website. Anyone who may want to mine the data gathered would need to first require their own HREC clearance.

If you wish to receive a summary of the final dissertation, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Should you have any questions, please contact me or my supervisor using the following contact details:

Researcher name: Lucky Dlamini

Email: LBrianDlamini@gmail.com

Phone number: 072 830 3491

Supervisor name: Professor Glenda Daniels

Email: Glenda.Daniels@wits.ac.za

Phone number: 011 717 4248

Your approval for me to conduct this study in your media organisation will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call or email next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time.

Yours sincerely,
Lucky Dlamini

Appendix G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

11. What strategies are The Young Independents involved in to reposition themselves within the changing media landscape which sees young people accessing news on their mobiles rather than traditional media?

12. Does Generation Z influence The Young Independents as a news organisation? If so, how? And if not, how are they not influencing the organisation?
13. Could there be a gap between Generation Z's news consumption and The Young Independents' news offerings, given that there is a decline in traditional/legacy media consumption?
14. What are your ideas to turn mobiles into audiences: Do you try to do this?
15. Is Generation Z shaping the future of news consumption?

Appendix H: CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: An analysis of whether South African media companies are making provision for Generation Z news media consumption.

Name of researcher: Lucky Dlamini

I ……..**(name and surname)**, from media organisation (name) …… confirm that:

Consent affirmation	**YES** (Please tick if you consent)	**NO** (Please tick if you **DO NOT** consent)
The research has been explained to me and that I understand the research aims and objectives.		
That I will be required to answer interview questions that will be sent to me via email or via telephonic interview should I make such a request.		
That the research does not involve treatment or payment and that there are no feasible risks to participating.		
That my participation is voluntary and that I can refuse to participate without penalty.		
That I have the freedom to refuse to answer questions about which I feel uncomfortable and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.		
That my anonymity is not guaranteed.		
That confidentiality aspects have been explained to me and that I understand where the information gathered will be made available.		

…… (Participant signature)
…… (Participant name)
…… (date)

Appendix I:

The example below demonstrates the issue of accuracy. The headline refers to ‘TUT students’ while the article speaks about students from ‘Mangosuthu University of Technology’. This example partly refers to factual error and partly to the speed at which news is published – showing that increased speed to publish online has meant that journalists have shortened the time to process and verify information.

